

Prayer Resource

From our Chaplain Fr Paul Maloney OSA



Dear Friends,

It's well and truly winter time along the East coast so unless you have been affected by the floods I am sure you have all welcomed the opportunity to retreat into the warmth of your own homes to rest awhile. In a real sense we give thanks for the blessing of winter if it gives us the excuse to curl up softly and nestle close to our hearts as well as our heaters. St Augustine understood this feeling well. In Sermon 52 he suggests the following:

“Enter into yourself; leave behind all noise and confusion. Look within yourself and see whether there is some sweet hidden place in your consciousness where you can be free of noise or argument, where you need not be carrying on your disputes and planning to have your stubborn way. Hear the word in quietness that you may understand it”.

We cannot find ourselves entirely by ourselves, but only in others. Yet at the same time before we can go out to others we must first find ourselves. We must ponder within ourselves in order to become truly conscious of who we are. Thomas Merton understood this thought:

“The best way to love ourselves is to love others, yet we cannot love others unless we love ourselves since it is written, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” [Mark 12:31]. But if we love ourselves in the wrong way, we become incapable of loving anybody else. . . .”

Only when we see ourselves in our true human context, as members of a community which is intended to be one entity or “one body,” will we begin to understand the positive importance not only of the successes but of the failures and accidents in our lives. This season of winter affords us the opportunity to spend time with our heart, particularly if it has been wounded in any way by our successes or our failures.

“Enter into your heart, and if you have faith, you will find Christ there. There he speaks to you. I the preacher must raise my voice, but he instructs you more efficiently in silence. I speak in sounding words, He speaks within”. (Sermon 102.20)

Real silence moves us from knowing things to perceiving a Presence that imbues all things. Could this be God? When we begin to experience mutuality between ourselves and all things, we have begun to understand the nature of Spirit. God refuses to be known as any kind of object, but only as a mutuality existing in all things. So by rejoicing in the blessing of winter, we are rejoicing in God, *with much love,*

Paul

The Purpose of the Prayer Resource Guide

Each of us is on a journey to God like our patron Augustine.

The Friends prayer resource is offered to you as a support in your day to day prayer.

It is centred on the Gospel readings and quotes from Augustine. Formation material is offered from different sources including a prayer orientated letter from our Chaplain.

Lord Let Me Know Myself

Sometimes we may find ourselves experiencing a sense of unease without fully knowing the reason why. Sometimes we might be full of ambivalence in our decisions. Sometimes we think we know what we want, only to find ourselves dissatisfied, or wanting something entirely different later on. Sometimes the perception we have of ourselves does not match our actual behaviour, or does not match the perception others have of ourselves. Sometimes we may not know what caused a shift in our emotional state.

These might all be cases of lacking self-knowledge. We can always grow in self-knowledge, and in the areas where we do not know ourselves well we still trust that we are known and loved, as Rowan Williams writes, *“I do not know myself; but God knows me. God’s knowledge of me is available not as a picture I can grasp or as a piece of information, but in the form of trust in God’s love – faith, in other words.”* (Williams, Rowan. *On Augustine*. Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016, p. 14). This gift that allows me to trust in One who loves me, also gives me the courage to know myself more deeply.

Where does one begin in gaining better self-knowledge? It might be a good idea to have some type of map to guide us in the journey of knowing ourselves better. Augustine Scholar John Cavadini writes,

“The content of self-awareness, for those truly self-aware, is much more disturbing and mysterious, more exciting and hopeful, more treacherous and full of risk. Someone who is self-aware is aware not of “a self” but of a struggle, a brokenness, a gift, a process of healing, a resistance to healing, an emptiness, a reference that impels one not to concentrate on oneself, in the end, but on that to which one’s self-awareness propels one, to God.” (Cavadini, John. *Visioning Augustine*. Wiley Blackwell, 2019. p. 141)

Armed with the knowledge that God loves you, and so much that Christ gave himself for you, ask Him for the grace of self-compassion to know yourself better, so that you can better know Him and thus love Him more.

Fr. Carlos Medina, OSA

Friends of St Augustine acknowledge the Traditional Owners who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Interested in learning more about Friends of St Augustine? Please contact your local group

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