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Friends of St Augustine // Issue 1 // Volume 22

Leader's Message

I embark upon 2022 with some hesitancy as like many I have totally given up trying to predict what lies ahead or even thinking, as I did at the beginning of 2020, "this is going to be the best year!".

The last few years have been difficult and we have all had to deal with disappointment and many have struggled with the depression and loneliness borne of isolation and uncertainty. After so long in what feels like suspended animation, I now find myself impatient to move on and tired of the inertia.

Whilst I wish to move forward, I have spent time reflecting on what has sustained and nourished me during the past few years and have settled on hope and friendship. St Augustine sees hope as an exercise of desire –

"Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wine skin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, therefore, you increase the capacity of the sack, and this is how God deals with us. Simply by making us wait he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it able to receive what is to be given to us. So, my brethren, let us continue to desire, for we shall be filled." *

To recognise when hope is fulfilled, we must know how to be grateful and Fr Paul, in his Prayer Resource, reflects beautifully on the blessings he has received from joining the Augustinian Order and why he is grateful to be a Friend of St Augustine.

As a way of preparing for the way forward, in November 2021 we held our annual group leaders' meeting again via Zoom. These meetings allow us to review the past year and plan for the coming year. Whilst the last year saw wonderful growth in Queensland, and we rejoice in this, it was a difficult and disjointed time in NSW and Victoria.

For the year ahead we decided to focus on an Augustinian response to living in challenging times and becoming aware of the Rule of St Augustine. I have included a link on the Resources page to the full text of the Rule. For members without internet access please let your group leader know and we will try to provide a printed copy.

I would like to sincerely thank Maureen Atkins our Formation Co-ordinator. Every year Maureen comes away from the leaders gathering with a collection of ideas and after, I'm sure many, many hours of diligent hard work, produces a comprehensive and user-friendly set of resources for the next year. I am looking forward to exploring the material at our gatherings.

I mentioned earlier how along with hope, friendship sustains me during difficult times and this delight in friendship is so wonderfully expressed by Karleen O'Rielly in her article, *Friendship – a topic dear to the heart of St Augustine*. Thank you Karleen.

I wish you all the very best for 2022. I pray we all have the opportunity to gather together and to help and support each other as we grow in our knowledge of St Augustine, nurturing our own spiritual growth thus enabling us to help others.

God Bless

Jacky



"Every time I enter an Augustinian house or meet someone new from the Augustinian Family, I immediately feel at home with them. It's not because we are members of the same organization or have in common the figure of St Augustine.

No, it is because I feel that we are coming out of the same spiritual energy and living the same human reality."

Brian Lowery OSA



*An excerpt from St. Augustine's Tractates on the first letter of John. Source: <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/hopemeansstretchingourhearts/>

Friendship - A topic dear to the heart of St. Augustine



Brisbane Gathering

I recall, many years ago, before I came to the Augustinian Parish in St. James, Coorparoo, Brisbane, I met a number of Augustinian Priests up on Green Mountains in Lamington National Park in Queensland. They often visited our cousin's Guesthouse for holidays. I remember fondly Frs. Dave Brimson, John Whelan, and other Augustinians. Their friendliness and good humour were infectious. This contributed to lots of happy times with the family and guests – of course, not to make mention of their pastoral care for us.

And so, when I came to St. James Parish Coorparoo, in the late 1970's, this led to my opportunity to learn more about Augustinian spirituality and identity – i.e. searching for God together, through living by gospel teachings, prayer, community and friendship.

When a Friends of St. Augustine group was established in Coorparoo in the late 1990's, the focus was on developing our spiritual lives and learning from St. Augustine's teachings found in his writings, among which is his book "The Confessions". One of the memorable sayings on friendship from his Confessions 4.8. is, *"We would teach and learn from each other, sadly missing any who were absent and blithely welcoming them when they returned. Such signs of friendship sprang from the hearts of friends who love and knew their love returned, signs to be read in smiles, words, glances and a thousand gracious gestures. So were sparks kindled and our minds were fused inseparably, out of many becoming one."* What a beautiful expression by this great saint all those years ago in the fourth century.

My sister, Elizabeth, and I had the great privilege in 2009 to join a group of eleven pilgrims (five from Brisbane and six from Sydney) to Augustinian sites in Italy and North Africa. Our spiritual guides were Paul Maloney OSA and Peter Jones OSA. The whole experience of sharing friendships with spiritual guidance gave real meaning to what Augustine said, "to travel together on our way to God."

Another very important aspect of friendship is our concern for others. Here, we take advice from St. Augustine, who says "There is no better proof of friendship than to help our friends with their burdens." We do this in everyday life as we all have problems, however, it became particularly evident in our parish when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. People became fearful and isolated in their homes and this continues to affect many even today. COVID -19 pandemic and its consequences of socially isolating people have certainly played havoc with many people's mental health well-being - again we have to be aware and "look out" for our friends. In our parish life and community, we try to focus on these values by practicing a spirit of welcome to all who come to the parish and to all we meet in our daily lives.

*"God of faithful love,
You blessed Saint Augustine with the gift of friendship.
Help us to recognise You in one another and be true friends in Christ."*

Excerpt from a prayer by Dave Austin OSA

By Karleen O'Rielly, Coorparoo Friends, Queensland



Karleen (centre) with fellow 2009 pilgrims at our 2019 Brisbane Congress



Brisbane Friends group gathering for a meal

Friends of St Augustine - an appreciation

Inspired by Pope Francis' desire for us to share our stories and "rediscover our roots and the strength needed to move forward together", Mary McCormick, in *Friends of St Augustine - an appreciation*, has skilfully brought together over 20 years of the Friends of St Augustine.

Reading the history has given me a renewed appreciation for the genesis of Friends and the clarity of purpose that has sustained the group over the last 20 years.

As we emerge from what has been a time of inactivity and isolation for many of us, we face a period of renewal and rebuilding. It was inspiring for me to become more intimately acquainted with the beginnings of Friends and the invaluable contribution of all our members. Whilst it is essential to be able to evolve and renew, we must remember our foundations.

Friends of St Augustine will be forever grateful to Mary for this valuable resource that so beautifully and practically demonstrates the fruits borne from the bond between the laity and the Order.

Copies of *Friends of St. Augustine - an appreciation*, may be purchased from Mary McCormick at a cost of \$30.00 plus postage using the order form below or by emailing Mary (details below).

Jacky Worthington

Order Form

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9/249 Burke Road

Glen Iris VIC 3146

mary_mccormick @bigpond.com

Contact Mary for postage cost for multiple copies or overseas postage

All proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Augustinian Vietnam Mission Fund.

Friends of St. Augustine



an appreciation



Mary McCormick



Friends' Jug & Bowl

A reminder to the leadership committee that their role is one of service



We remember and give thanks to all those members of Friends that are no longer with us. May they rest in the peace of the Risen Lord.

RESOURCES

Below are a variety of resources we have come across that may be of interest.

If you are viewing this newsletter online clicking on the links will take you directly to the resource. For those reading the printed newsletter if you type in the subject heading into an internet browser you should be able to access the material.



Rule of St Augustine

Source: Midwest Augustinians

<https://www.midwestaugustinians.org/roots-of-augustinian-spirituality>

Reading Augustine in a Time of Crisis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBtHKUCO_1M

Augustinian Journey

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/id1497930909>

Above app is only available on iPhones & iPad for other devices <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.augustinian.app>

Why Did Augustine Say That

by Augustine Spirituality

<https://augustinianspirituality.org/2022/01/29/why-did-augustine-say-that/>

Augustinians of the Province of Australasia

This website is full of resource material on St Augustine and the Order

<https://www.osa.org.au/>



Friends of St Augustine Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/FOSAAu>

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.

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Prayer Resource

From our Chaplain Fr Paul Maloney osa

Dear Friends,

We are being encouraged by an advertising campaign during this year's Australia Day celebration to not only remember the story of our multicultural present and our pre-historic past, but to listen to the stories and point of view of others and allow our minds and consciousness to be broadened as a result. "We all have our views, so where do we start? By listening to each other and sharing the past". This call for us to experience togetherness comes at a time when many of us have never felt more isolated. Whether we have parents confined to Nursing Homes, or children missing companionship with their classmates as a result of remote-learning, or ourselves placed into precautionary isolation because of a possible positive contact, these are experiences that will be told in the same way our parents spoke about World War II. It too was a time of anxiety, separation, hardship and fear, which nevertheless engendered a sense of being bonded closely together in facing a common danger.

The common dangers we now face in their intangibility need not be feared if we learn to listen to our past memories and decide to act accordingly. This insight came to me on a recent sleepless night when the words of an old pop song surfaced into my fretting stream of unconscious: "When your troubled and you can't sleep, just count your blessings instead of sheep, and you'll fall asleep counting your blessings". I began to wonder what blessings I could practically count on if I were to follow the advice contained in such a barely remembered but comforting song? And the answer I arrived at lay not so much in what made me grateful to be proudly Australian (even at this time of the year), but rather what blessings I had received by joining the Augustinian Order so early in my life. I began to compile a list of six reasons why I am grateful to be a Friend of St. Augustine as a compass to share with you during this crucial time when we need his friendship and example to guide us.

#1: Saint Augustine is so relevant to our times

In spite of the 1600 years that separate us from Augustine's time he is still able to speak to ours in a surprisingly modern way. An example of this is the throwaway line used by President Biden in his inaugural address paraphrasing Augustine by describing the citizens of the United States as a "people bound together by the things they commonly love". We find such gems in his Sunday sermons (or letters to contemporaries) where Augustine was able to describe events that cover many of the social issues that preoccupy us today. He had to deal with the reality of foreign incursions into a tired and corrupt empire; the mass migration of subsequent refugees; the unequal distribution of wealth and the use of slavery to maintain it; as well as confronting issues of capital punishment, torture, and the use of the death penalty, all assessed from his emerging Christian point of view.

In his famous autobiography *The Confessions* he is the first to trace the complexities of what today would be called developmental psychology particularly of the male in his journey from infancy to old age. He does this not just as a clinical exercise but in the interests of honesty in his own self-discovery - which is primarily focussed on his spiritual search for and dialogue with God whom he regards as the key to life's meaning.

#2: The Rule Augustine left is a permanent bridge between our times and his.

One of the most enduring ways that the spirituality of Augustine has been handed down throughout the centuries has been the constant existence of the Rule that he wrote when he became a Bishop in 396. The Rule remains the bridge between Augustine and the Order that later emerged in his name. Chapter 5, vs 31 reveals the heart of the Rule: "For it is written of love 'that it is not self seeking' (1 Cor. 13:5) that is to say, love puts the interests of the community before personal advantage, and not the other way around". In all the years I have listened to that advice it has taken a lifetime to realise that "True happiness will be yours if you do the same".

#3: Each member's gifts are nurtured and encouraged.

Our strength is in our diversity and as Augustinians we are encouraged to use our gifts for the good of all so that inevitably we become "more than the sum of our parts" in whatever ministry we may be involved. I have learnt not to envy that other members of the team may be more scholarly, efficient or prayerful than I might feel myself to be, because as St. Augustine advises, we already possess those gifts existing within the community and so at any time can draw on them as if they are our own.

#4. Augustinian values we had to be told we had.

What attracted me to join the Augustinians in the country town where I grew up was the sense that they were not too rigid or driven by strict rules and regulations. and that they were in fact kind and gentle men. I felt at ease with them and only gradually began to recognise that the qualities that they naturally displayed had in fact their origins in the precepts of the Rule that was read to us every Friday. I came to recognise in my brothers and in myself that the capacity for hospitality and friendship we shared were in fact mirrored in the relationships Augustine had with his students (many of whom became life-long friends), and the warmth he showed to those who gathered at his table as well as the welcome he gave to refugees and new members into the Church and wider community.

#5. Sharing our vision and ministries with the laity.

In 1965, (the year I was ordained) the Second Vatican Council affirmed that the laity have a share in the apostolate of the Church, and it called for a "broadening and intensification" of the lay apostolate. Yet, more than 50 years later Pope Francis observes that the role and function of the laity is still not being fully utilised. I have spent at least 30 of those years - especially in the Retreat House and Social Justice ministry I have been involved in - encouraging the laity to exercise the common priesthood we share by our baptism. Our parishes and schools have been practical models of how this partnership can be carried out.

#6. Why Community is so central to Augustinian life.

The harmony we speak of is not just "getting-on" with one another through our daily routine, but is the result of how closely we identify with the Community of Love generated within the Trinity in whose image and likeness we have been made. In our communities we carefully tend the fire of this Mystery which illumines our hearts and never goes out. Whether we are having a good day or a bad day in our relationships, what joins us together is a reaching for the Holy which unites us at a level beyond the reach of any passing calamity,

*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.

