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Friends of St Augustine // July 2022

Leader's Message

In May it was a wonderful feeling to finally be on my way, with Fr Paul, to Far North Queensland to visit Friends groups in Mareeba and Cairns. It was almost two years to the day since Covid put a stop to our planned visit.

On our first full day we headed down the mountain, with Jeanette Hartley from Mareeba to meet with the Cairns group. Although there is no Augustinian parish in Cairns it was interesting how many of the members were familiar with the Order.

This group does not benefit from the support that comes with being in an Augustinian parish however with guidance from Fr Saldie and the leadership of Gina Rossbach they have met regularly and grown. I am very grateful to Gina for accepting the role of leading the group from its beginning and generously organising the gathering.

The rest of our visit was spent with Mareeba Friends enjoying the abundance and warmth of their hospitality. It was wonderful to see this long established and well organised group thriving. Fr Paul and I were treated to coffees, lunches, dinners and warm Queensland sunshine. We even managed to fit in a formation session! This trip buoyed the spirits of all involved. I am so thankful to the Mareeba and Cairns groups for their hospitality and to Fr Rob who looked after us with warmth and generosity at the St Thomas of Villanova Priory.

I was very lucky to travel with Fr Paul to San Gimignano and stay at the Augustinian Convento in 2019 prior to the International Lay Conference in Rome. Some of you will have made the same pilgrimage and like me found it to be a very special place. On the edge of a walled medieval town atop a hill in Tuscany it has a mystical ambience. Those of you who travelled prior to 2019 would have enjoyed the hospitality of Fr Brian Lowery OSA. Fr Brian left an indelible mark on Convento Sant'Agostino and I have included in this newsletter a piece on the dedication of a marble bench that now sits in the courtyard garden in his honour.

This year our formation topic is The Rule of St Augustine and with all our formation topics our goal is to identify contemporary challenges and then explore Augustine's teachings and spirituality to find a way to respond to these challenges. Augustine offers much to help us on our personal spiritual journey however I was considering the challenges humanity faces globally; the plight of refugees, inequity in the supply of Covid vaccines, war in the Ukraine and came across this quote in our formation material. I see these words as a challenge to each of us to never underestimate our responsibility to one another.

You say, the times are troublesome, the times are burdensome, the times are miserable. Live rightly and you will change the times. The times have never hurt anyone. Those who are hurt are human beings; those by whom they are hurt are also human beings. So, change human beings and the times will be changed.

Saint Augustine (Sermon 311,8)

Jacky



*When people share
their joy in common
the happiness of each
is greater because
each adds fuel to the
other's flame.*

The Confessions
Book VIII

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News from Friends - Mareeba & Cairns



St Thomas of Villanova Priory, Mareeba

The year 2022 has started well for us here in Mareeba. After gaining a few new members over the past couple of years, the group is looking forward to learning more about Saint Augustine. At our AGM, I found myself agreeing to take on the responsibility of being the group leader again, after my rest period of some years. I am both humbled and eager to do my best for the group here and for the Friends of Augustine in general.

Our year began, as is now our tradition, with a beautiful breakfast at the home of Teresa and Gennaro Marinelli. This sets us up well for our gatherings during the year.

Our first spiritual evening was held on the 28 April, where I used the program set up by Maureen. It contained such in depth spiritual studies that we were able to choose from a selection of material for our four evenings. The evening concluded with a small meditation from the CD by Father Paul Maloney OSA.

In May we were delighted to welcome Father Paul and our national leader, Jacky, to Mareeba. It was a great few days with much conviviality as well as learning about Augustine. Cairns members were also able to benefit from Father's knowledge while Paul and Jacky were in the north. The few days were not nearly enough time, but Mareeba hopes to have both Father and Jacky back again in the near future.

This coming week was to be our annual trip to Cooktown, another of our traditions, but alas! The weather there is so dreadful at the moment that we have no hope of doing our work. A new date will be set.

Our greetings go out to all our friends in Augustine, wherever you are and we hope you join with us as we all pray for the work of our Augustinian fathers in the Asia-Pacific.

Jeanette Hartley



Mareeba Friends Gathering



Bernadette & Jeanette, Mareeba Leaders on either side of Jacky & Fr Paul



Cairns group in the grounds of St Monica's School, Cairns

News from Friends - South Yarra

The difficulties of lockdowns and limited social interactions have not dimmed the desire of our South Yarra group of Friends to meet and continue our spiritual journey in friendship together.

We were very happy to be able to meet face to face again and so we bade farewell to 2021 with an informal home gathering hosted by Mary McCormick. The joy at being together was deeply felt by all. This gathering also gave us an opportunity to re-set and plan optimistically for 2022. Mary has generously continued to host our subsequent gatherings. We have had three of these so far this year and are using the excellent guide prepared by Maureen Atkins, *Augustine: A Window on Contemporary Challenges*. The material contained therein is outstandingly well-researched and carefully chosen to be scholarly yet accessible to all. The focus on contemporary challenges is so timely in our increasingly troubled and complex society and it provides us with strategies to help navigate them with positivity. The progress of the Plenary has been of particular interest so far. We will continue with the programme in our future gatherings this year.

A particular challenge for us in South Yarra has been the death of our much-loved member Genine McCarthy. Genine was a lady of great spirituality, warm and caring, who always shared generously in our discussions. Her funeral was held in our parish church of St. Josephs and her nephew noted during his eulogy how important and sustaining the friendship our group was to her. She is sorely missed by us all and we celebrated her memory together at lunch after the funeral Mass. Yet, despite our diminishing numbers, we are sustained in our commitment.

Judith Duncan

News from Friends - Coorparoo

The following sentiments have been expressed by two new members of Friends Coorparoo; Brent Cornford and Sean Hodgson. What follows are some of Brent's reflections:-

I didn't hesitate to join the new Coorparoo Friends group as I was keen to learn more about the Catholic Church and in particular about St Augustine.

I was initially concerned that not being a Catholic I would be excluded from participating. Thankfully, Sylvia assured me this wasn't a problem and that the Friends group was inclusive and welcoming to all faiths. My journey of learning soon commenced!

I really enjoyed preparing the Friends event when St Augustine's conversion was discussed and I eagerly worked with the leadership team to develop a presentation and activities to stimulate conversations and reflections on what his writing meant to our own lives and, more broadly, our community today.

It was a fantastic evening of food, yes wine too, and friendship; where respectful discussions took place about faith, family and our local parish. I'm excited to see how we can integrate future learnings about St Augustine into the other ministries within St James and out into Coorparoo and beyond.

The role that the Friends of St Augustine plays in our church is vital to keep his flame alive and the Catholic Church relevant for today and into the future.



St Joseph's Church, South Yarra

**“My
greatest
comfort
and relief
is in the
consolation
of friends”**

St
Augustine



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.



News from Friends - Coorparoo cont.

Sean writes:

*Finding new audiences for Catholic teaching and St Augustine:
In early 2022, as church congregations were increasing following the worst of the COVID pandemic, Friends of St Augustine, Coorparoo sought new Keepers of the Flame for St Augustine and his crucial influence and role in the development of the Catholic faith.*

Passionate and vibrant presentations about the Friends of St Augustine cohort were given to all parishioners, leading not only to an increase in members, but a new leadership team under the guidance of stalwart, Sylvia Phillips.

Brent, Sean and Jan Lepp have brought fresh insights, proactive creativity, and stimulating reflections into our gatherings in the short time they have been members. May The Holy Spirit keep guiding us.

Your Friend in St. Augustine
Sylvia



Brent Cornford, Sean Hodgson
& Jan Lepp

Dedication & Blessing of Memorial Bench in Honor of Fr. Brian Lowery, O.S.A.

The following is the article as in appeared in "The Augustinians" newsletter from the St Thomas of Villanova Province in the US

The cloister courtyard of Convento Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano now hosts a travertine marble bench to honor the memory of Fr. Brian Lowery, O.S.A., who served in San Gimignano for many years. The bench was created by Brian's good friend and sculptor, Marco Di Piazza and is in the shape of a boat.

It represents the journey we all take in life and offers the visitor a place to sit in silence and to listen. The blessing and dedication took place on April 30, 2022 in the presence of the Community of Augustinians assigned to Convento Sant' Agostino, the Mayor of San Gimignano and more than 75 invited guests from Belgium, Holland, England, Italy and the USA.

Two Ukrainian refugee girls helped the artist to unveil the beautiful memorial and sculpture. Music was provided by the San Gimignano Chorus and testimonies were offered by Fr. Joseph Farrell, O.S.A., Prof. Joseph Kelley, Marco Di Piazza, and other friends. A live stream link was set up so that Brian's family and friends from all over the world could view the event.

We invite you to watch Fr. Joseph Farrell's heartfelt testimony of Fr. Brian's legacy by clicking the below link. It is less than three minutes and its sure to touch your spirit, especially if you were fortunate enough to know Fr. Brian.

<https://vimeo.com/707231915/08c20319f5>



Convento Sant'Agostino,
San Gimignano



Travertine marble bench in memory
Fr Brian Lowery OSA

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.

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

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