

AMICI

Friends of St Augustine // December 2022

Dear Friends

Leader's Message

In September this year we held our annual regional leaders' gathering in Sydney. We gathered in person and via Zoom and as always the opportunity to share and support each other provided us with a renewed sense of purpose and encouragement. A significant outcome from the meeting was the decision to have a National Congress in Brisbane in 2023 (7-9 July) and since the meeting we have been able to confirm Fr Joe Farrell OSA as our keynote speaker. Whilst the fine details are yet to be worked out, as the Church's Synod on Synodality reaches its conclusion in 2023 our theme and Fr Joe's input will align with this important time in our Church.

I would like to never type the word Covid again however the reality is that it is still with us (I'm writing this in bed suffering from it right now) and will likely remain so during 2023 therefore we will be providing the opportunity to participate in the Congress via Zoom. Whilst being together in person brings a particular joy, the times dictate that we be flexible and embrace all the good technology has to offer.

At the gathering we also reviewed Amici as this newsletter is our primary way of communicating with you and we hope to always make it interesting and informative. As well as news from our groups, in the future, we hope to be able to provide articles on the history of Friends and worldwide Augustinian lay movement and a series on Augustinian Saints and what better saint to start with than St Monica. The mother of St Augustine, Saint Monica is a woman and saint close to my heart. I was lucky enough to visit the Basilica of Saint Augustine in Rome in 2019 where her remains are held. Seeing her tomb and being able to pray and contemplate in her Chapel is an experience that holds a special place in my heart.

Not long before going to print I was informed that the Kyabram Friends group will no longer be continuing. The group was formed when Friends began and for the last 14 years has managed to support lay spirituality in the parish without the presence of the Order and has been a shining example of Augustinian Laity in action. We will honour the group in more detail in the next edition but for now I offer my sincere thanks to Ruth McGowan who has led the group for some time and I pray the friendships forged through Friends continues to sustain them.

Finally, I wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and thank you for your support.

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 - Coorparoo - by Jan Lepp

Joining the group of The Friends of Saint Augustine at Coorparoo has been an inspiring experience that has been very important in the continuing growth of my faith. I had little knowledge of Saint Augustine's life before joining the Friends of St Augustine. As a result of our assigned readings, gatherings and discussions, I have come to appreciate his journey as a non-believer, while indulging in behaviours that led him away from his God, to his eventual conversion to Christianity. His struggles, similar to the ones which we all face as Catholics, enabled him to understand that true happiness could only be found in God.

Discussing his ideas, prayers and reflections from The Confessions which we have covered, has clearly shown me that no matter how many years have passed since his writings were published, Augustine's thoughts will always continue to have an impact on Christians. He knew that – *'there was a divine purpose at work and that God was using him in ways that he could not fully appreciate.'*

Currently, our parish St James, is resetting its vision - engaging in a new strategic plan - *'to know Christ more fully, to deepen our faith and to serve the community'*. For me, these goals fit so easily into St Augustine's message and beliefs and I am thankful for this opportunity to have started learning more about his life, his teachings and his love of God as he proclaimed -

"You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you."



Coorparoo Friends in the grounds of St James Parish

SAINT MONICA AUGUST 27

Monica is that wise and prudent woman about whom Scripture speaks, not afraid to live her faith openly nor to share it with others.



Monica was born in Tagaste, present day Algeria, in 331, to a deeply Christian family of some means. She was given in marriage to Patricius, a pagan, who was a small land-owner. Together they had three children, Augustine, Navigius, and a daughter whose name is not known to us. Strong of character as well as of faith, she sought to guide her family in their human and Christian development most of all by her own example and prayer but, when necessary, also by her persuasive words and diligent actions. Thus she brought her husband to discover the beauty of the Catholic faith, as well as the son of her many tears, Augustine. Monica figures significantly in Augustine's journey all the way through to his eventual conversion, and is remembered in history - according to his own words - as the mother "who brought me to birth, both in her flesh, so that I was born into this temporal light, and in her heart, that I might be born into eternal light" (Conf. 8, 17). Her great joy was to witness the baptism of Augustine, after his long and restless journey to the faith of the Church, by Bishop Ambrose in Milan in 387. Some months later, as mother and son, together with Augustine's own son and a small group of friends were making their way back to North Africa to begin living a monastic life, Monica died at Ostia while awaiting the ship. There she was buried and in time the site of her burial was lost. Later, however, it was rediscovered and her remains were transferred to the Basilica of Saint Augustine in Rome where they are now venerated.

News from Friends - South Yarra

In South Yarra we continue to feel how our connection to the wider Augustinian family is affirmed and reinforced at each gathering of Friends. As we are so fortunate to be in an Augustinian parish, we have been able to celebrate the feast of St. Augustine together. Our next gathering, in September was very timely as it provided an opportunity for Maureen Atkins and me to give an account of the Leaders' Meeting we had just been able to attend (via Zoom) and share some national news.

Then we focused on Session Three of Augustine: A Window on Contemporary Challenges. This gave rise to much reflection and discussion on the Rule of St. Augustine, its twelve guiding principles and how they can help shape our community life. We particularly appreciated the writings on Father Brian Lowery on the Rule, its origin and how we can interpret it in the 21st century.

The workings and deliberations of the Plenary Council formed part of our discussion, too. To quote from the Plenary Council Prayer,

Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost.....

Give us the grace to see your face in one another

and to recognize Jesus, our companion on the road.

Give us the courage to tell our stories and to speak boldly of your truth.

Give us ears to listen humbly to each other

and a discerning heart to hear what you are saying.

These words resonated deeply with us as we shared stories and concerns from our own lives and recent experiences. Identifying contemporary challenges in our increasingly troubled world is all too obvious; finding the strength and fortitude to deal with them is, of course, far from easy. But we are encouraged and can look ahead with hope to our next gathering when we will share together the Opening Prayer of Session Four: A Litany for Peace in Troubled Times.

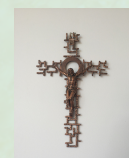
Judith Duncan



*Regional Leaders gathering at Brookvale, NSW in September
L-R Gina Rossbach, Sylvia Phillips, Lorenza Herft, Jacky Worthington, Sylvia Herft,
Jeanette Hartley, Fr Paul Maloney, Bernadette Greensill & Fr Saldie Resolado*



*Judith & Maureen Atkins joining
the Regional Leaders gathering in
September via Zoom*



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.





**Friends of St Augustine
National Congress
7-9 July 2023
Brisbane
Keynote Speaker - Fr Joe Farrell OSA**



Fr Joseph Farrell OSA is an American Friar currently residing in Rome and a member of the General Council of the Order. Fr Joe has made a deep study of Augustinian spirituality and will be in Australia to lead retreats for the Order and we are very happy to have secured him as our keynote speaker.

More details will follow in the new year. For now, please mark these dates in your diary. Whilst we hope as many as possible can gather with us in person we will also be offering participation via Zoom. The fine details are yet to be worked out however as the Church's Synod on Synodality reaches its conclusion in 2023 our theme and Fr Joe's input will align with this important time in our Church.

Synod means in Greek: "to walk together" and to walk on the same road. For Pope Francis, walking together in the same direction "is what God expects of the Church of the third millennium: that it regain its awareness of being a people on the road and of having to travel together."

You may be interested to have a look at this video from Pope Francis on Synodality and if you watch carefully you will see some of our very own Aussie Augustinians make an appearance!

<https://youtu.be/n2sE82ajfQs>

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.



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

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Prayer Resource

From our Chaplain Fr Paul Maloney OSA



Dear Friends

Recently while visiting a Year 4 Religion class I found myself presented with a question about what it meant to be humble. I immediately began to imagine all the characters in novels and plays who gave that virtue a very bad name. The landlord and his wife in *Le Miserable*, or Charles Dickens depiction of Uriah Heap who was 'ever so humble' until his true colours were revealed. And coming from a young child I wondered if they thought that to be humble meant that you have to think of yourself as somehow or other unworthy in comparison to others.

I think I may have lost them but my fall-back position in answering this question was of course St. Augustine who pondered on this dilemma and grappled with it in his own soul throughout his life. The constant theme of how pride and humility jostle with each other can be found in the pages of the Rule he handed on to us, and in his spiritual autobiography *The Confessions*. Augustine often reflected on how his moments of greatest pain and sorrow were when he relied on himself, and his moments of greatest comfort and joy were when he submitted to God's subtle grace in his life.

Augustine understands that if we make ourselves the centre of our own identities, the result is a weakened view of self that makes us appear pretentious and reckless. As a consequence, we do more harm than good. We need to return to the humble recognition that it is the love and providence of God for us that places us in the right relationship with objective reality, so that we find our natural place, neither too high or too low, within the chain of created existence

"Humility must accompany all our actions, must be with us everywhere; for as soon as we glory in our good works they are of no further value to our advancement in virtue".

Augustine appreciated that human beings are limited by our creaturely nature, but even so we can progress spiritually. The heart can transform itself through love, and the mind can open to the workings of the grace of God. Augustine tells us that as he struggled with and against belief on the road to becoming a Christian "his heart went into labour and gave birth to humility".

This is typically strong imagery from Augustine. Pride gets in the way of love, and only to the extent that pride diminishes is there any possibility of love emerging. In a letter to one of his students he insists on this point

"I would wish that you place yourself with all your love under Christ, and that you pave no other way in order to reach and to attain the truth that has already been paved by him who, as God, knows the weakness of our steps. This is in the first place, humility; in the second place, humility; in the third place, humility ...As often as you ask me about the Christian religion's norms of conduct, I choose to give no other answer than: humility." (Letter 118)

Prayer Resource cont.

Clearly for Augustine humility is one of the key fundamentals of being able to live in community with other human beings. The clue as to why humility is so important comes up constantly in his Rule. While other vices evidently produce 'evil deeds', pride (the opposite of humility) doesn't simply produce evil deeds but can set a trap for us even as we carry out good deeds:

"For pride lurks also in our good works, seeking to destroy even them. What good does it do to distribute one's possessions to the poor and to become poor oneself, if giving up riches makes a person prouder than he was when he had a fortune?" (The Rule: 1, vs 7)

Augustine's view of the 'ideal life' changed drastically after turning to Christ. Before his conversion, he believed that the ideal life was marked by power, success, knowledge, control, leisure, and external morality. After his conversion, he believed that the ideal life was marked by humility. All of the ways he tried to attain his ideal life before his conversion were marked by pride—he wanted to be self-sufficient, independent, and perfect—and this pride kept him from surrendering. It was only when he relinquished his desire for that version of ideal life that he discovered the real ideal of life, achieved in Christ, the one Person who fully humbled himself by laying down his life for us on the cross.

At the very start of the Rule Augustine sees love as the foundation and goal of community living. *"You are to live together, therefore, one in mind and heart, and honour God in one another, because each of you has become his temple". [1:8].* However, the fertile soil of love is humility. In Augustine's mind Love always includes one's ability to transcend egotism and go out to others with a generosity of spirit. In his great thesis on The Trinity, he states: *"To the extent that we are freed from the malignant swelling, which is called pride, we are filled with love."*

As the season of Advent approaches later this month may your hearts be open to receive the gifts God wants to give you without placing any barriers of pride or self-importance in the way. And if anyone asks you, what does it mean to be humble? you can tell them it is to be filled

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.

