

# “Walking Together.....”

## A Prayer Resource

From our Chaplain Fr. Dave Austin OSA

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### *‘Augustinian Spirituality and the God Augustine Knew!’*

Dear Friends,

As I look back on my 60 years as an Augustinian, I am conscious of what feels like a very long journey of getting to know St Augustine. This shouldn't be a surprise because this search becomes our journey and helps us to break open the very story of our own personal relationships in the family and other life circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Becoming Augustinian involves a similar dynamic. My attraction to the Augustinian Way was awakened by the down-to-earth spirit of many of the Augustinians I got to know during my school years. Later as an Augustinian, we lived life in that spirit but without knowing much about St Augustine himself, his teaching and spirituality. So brilliant was Augustine's contribution to the Church and so lofty his teaching that understanding this was primarily for the scholars.

In the seminary we became familiar with the Rule of St Augustine read at meals and visiting Prior Generals encouraged us to read the Constitutions of the Order, advice generally ignored! So powerful was the message of the Rule, however, that we at least understood that community life was at the centre – affirmed by Augustine in the opening verses:

***Before all else, brothers and sisters, love God and then your neighbour, because these are the chief commandments given to us... The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, one in mind and heart on the way to God.***

‘Oneness in mind and heart’ can hold many life vocations together, reflecting as it does the core ideal of ‘community’ espoused by St Augustine and inspired by those who took seriously the teaching of Jesus in the early Christian Community in Acts (4:32-35). This invitation has prompted great interest among lay men and women - Gospel-based values of Augustinian community life so easily adapted to family life, parishes, schools, spirituality and prayer groups, intentional communities, and lay fraternities.

After Augustine's death in 430, various communities followed his Rule and laid the foundation for later growth. Extensive social change in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century prompted significant reform in Western Christianity and Pope Innocent IV invited groups following the Rule in Tuscany to come together in 1244 as the Augustinian Hermits to serve the Church in the growing cities. Pope Alexander IV confirmed the Order in 1256 and it expanded rapidly throughout Europe. The close association of vowed Augustinians and lay members dates back several centuries, giving rise to Augustinian lay fraternities, part of the Order for many years.

The ‘friendly face’ of St Augustine and his human story gradually filtered through, helped considerably by the Second Vatican Council which reminded the wider Church of the rich treasure that existed among religious congregations in their diverse charisms and spiritualities. The Council encouraged each to go back to its roots, revisit the spirit of the founder and embark on a journey of renewal. In recent years, many contemporary groups, including our own Friends of St Augustine here in Australia, have joined the ranks of lay followers of St Augustine.

Getting to know St Augustine well is a very engaging and exciting task for us and we are blessed to be part of this movement. I'm sure that Augustine would be impressed and very willing to accompany us but he would remind us that intimacy with God is our central goal as it was his. Sharing his teaching and writing is his way of leading us to the knowledge and great love of the '**God Augustine knew**'.

Augustine's gift to us in his *Confessions* is, as it were, to allow us 'to eavesdrop' on his personal search for God and to come to know and love the Jesus he knew and loved as we too discover the unique love God has for us and his significant gifts to each of us – the '**God who searches for us**'! As we together embrace Augustine's core invitation – to be '**one in mind and heart on the way to God**' – our diverse, inner gifts can blossom as we enrich the lives of those closest to us and in the wider Church.

What a wonderful time to be alive in this month of November when we are touched by the wisdom of the great Saints of the Church and the Order and carry in our hearts rich memories of those we love, now with the Lord. No matter who or where we are, in every dimension of our lives, we need to 'grow into' the vocations, roles and responsibilities of our life calling, career, leadership, marriage and parenting. Whether professed Augustinians or laity, our searching leads us into our relationship with God.

For followers of Augustine, *friends* and *saints* sit comfortably together, perhaps described well in this way:

***'As others are saints for us, urging us on and affirming us, so we too are saints for those weaker and wearier than ourselves.'***

*Grace and peace to you all for the Advent and Christmas Seasons!*

*Dave.*

*A Couple of Prayer Ideas....*

**From *Finding Your Hidden Treasure* by Fr Benignus O'Rourke OSA, pp 77-78**

Fr Benignus recalls a young friend's reflections on his struggle over many years to find the 'right' way to pray. He says: 'I find it helpful before beginning my time of silence to say the opening words of the Hail Mary, up to the word **Jesus**. I let the holy name linger. However, when I pray, I use no words. Silent prayer is not about delighting in images or language. It is about leaving aside all that is familiar... Instead of praying *for* someone, or about a particular situation, one holds these before God open-handed, believing that God will deal with that person or that situation, however he sees fit. It is based solely on trust. It is also about learning to take God at his word....'

**From Fr Kieran O'Mahony OSA – Homily notes from *tarsus.ie***

The Beatitudes offer a future promise but also a present reality. At first reading some Beatitudes may seem to describe circumstances that you would like to avoid at all costs. Read them slowly. Stay with each one for a while. Let yourself get a sense of the paradox involved in each one. Perhaps you have had an experience of a deeper and more authentic life, a blessing, when...

- 1. You were poor - you knew your need of God***
- 2. You mourned – could feel for others***
- 3. You were meek – not emotionally out of control***
- 4. You hungered and thirsted for some cause***
- 5. You were merciful rather than vengeful***
- 6. You were pure in heart – a person of integrity, whose actions and intentions correspond***
- 7. You were a peacemaker***
- 8. You were persecuted because you stood for something.***