

Augustinian Friends Prayer Resource Guide

A PRAYER FOR WISDOM: from Michael Leunig's A Common Prayer

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Let us pray for wisdom. Let us pause from thinking
and empty our mind. Let us stop the noise.
In the silence let us listen to our heart.
The heart which is buried alive.
Let us be still and wait and listen carefully.

A sound from the deep, from below.
A faint cry. A weak tapping.
Distant muffled feelings from within.
The cry for help.

We shall rescue the entombed heart.
We shall bring it to the surface, to the
light and the air.
We shall nurse it and listen respectfully
to its story.

The heart's story of pain and suffocation,
of darkness and yearning.
We shall help our feelings to live in the sun
Together again we shall find relief and joy.

**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 and
will be sent to you 4 times a
year.

It is centred on the Gospel
readings for coming Sundays
and quotes from Augustine. It
also contains a prayer orien-
tated letter from our Chaplain
and some tips on Lectio Di-
vina – the traditional Augustin-
ian method of scriptural reflec-
tion and meditation.



Praying with Children

Prayer, like the seasons, is always changing. One of the biggest changes is when children or grandchildren enter our lives. After the wonderful joy of their arrival, we slowly realise that *our* lives have changed forever. This includes our prayer lives. Where once we may have spent 20 minutes in silent meditation, or praying the rosary, we find there is barely a moment's rest in the day.

Fortunately, since Vatican II, there has been a steadily increasing interest in adapting traditional forms of prayer to lay and family life. This has been an important and positive development in the Church's teaching in the area of prayer. Lay theologians and masters of prayer have emerged who are providing us with guidance that remains true to the spiritual traditions but is apt for our times.

I remember one lovely story in a book about prayer that I read nearly 10 years ago. One of our great modern masters of prayer had been approached by a woman, the mother of a large family, who complained to him 'that 30 minutes of quiet prayer on a retreat is fine, but such a feat is impossible at home with the demands of being a parent to seven growing children!'

He asked her if there was any moment during the day when she had peace and quiet, but she could recall none whatsoever. She went away from the retreat disappointed. Then two weeks later she came back full of excitement saying 'I had been praying for the last 2 weeks about my dilemma and then, washing the dishes one night, I started to sing the refrain of an old hymn from my childhood and I found great peace!'

Her teacher smiled and said 'God finds a way through. Keep singing that refrain. It will fill your heart and is your meditation'. She went away a happy woman.

This is the key when our lives are busy and there doesn't seem to be a moment of rest. If we are open, God breaks through. We might find ourselves stranded at an airport, waiting for a late bus or train, caught in traffic or beside a broken down car waiting for help. These are all moments when we can open up and use the moment to pray or reflect. Instead, too often, we express useless anger and frustration, damaging ourselves with the stress.

On a personal level, I remember struggling with the fact that I seemed to have no time for prayer or quiet spiritual reading after our son came along. He had some health problems including reflux and glue ear they were to result in years of sleepless nights for my wife and I. For some years I had been used to twice-daily meditation and regular retreats — and greatly admired the Desert Fathers and Mothers who had dedicated their lives to prayer, often in long night vigils. One night, when our son was about 6 months old, I was trying to rock him to sleep at 3 am in the morning after another reflux incident. I started singing my favourite Taize chant 'Ubi Caritas' to soothe him, and me! It was then I realised that my prayer had been answered. This was my night vigil there was no need for me to go to the desert!

Children are like this. They help us to break through. They bring us back to the Present and help us understand that *this* is the only place we can love. The only moment in which we can be Christ to each other is in the reality of the NOW. The past and the future are beyond our control.

When we have children, and then grandchildren, they help us to return to 'the wellsprings of our faith' as we teach them the way of Christ. Or perhaps, it is with their questions and simplicity that they teach us.

No wonder Christ admonished his apostles saying 'Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' (Luke 10:14)

Paul Griffiths

From our Chaplain

June 30th., 2003

Dear Friends,

in the last few days Australian scientists have released the news of a breakthrough in cancer research which enhances the body's ability to generate T cells and gives the immune system a chance to begin combating all kinds of invasions that beset the biological structure of human beings. I have just come out of a prolonged bout of the 'flu (with a few other side complications) where my immune system seems to have gone into hibernation, and while such a condition is not death defying, it leaves me thinking that I could positively benefit from just such a treatment.

One of the results of my ongoing struggle with all the symptoms that the T.V. ads tell us we are heir to during the winter season, is my decision to cancel a trip to Rome to attend an International Conference that was due to start on June 29th. That will tell you how bad things have been! Unlike St. Augustine, who did not relish having to travel even as far as Carthage, I have always enjoyed the chance to drive or fly to any place that beckoned and to find the journey as enjoyable as the destination itself.

When a person is sick, and some of you may be more chronically so than I have been, the struggle to get through each day is exhausting, and the many pleasant things you may have planned are jettisoned like cargo from a sinking ship without a moment's regret. In the midst of my fevers and aches and pains I took great comfort from one of St. Augustine's sermons which he gave in his cathedral one Easter Sunday. He is trying to explain how, when we reach heaven, we will never be bored of being happy all the time, and he says "This won't happen".

"Someone says, perhaps, 'And how can it happen, that this goes on all the time, and never gets boring?' If I can show you something in this life that can never get boring, will you believe that everything will be like that? Yes, food can get boring, drink can get boring, entertainment can get boring, this, that and the other can get boring; good health, though, has never been found boring. So just as in this time of the mortality of the flesh, this time of frailty, this time of the weariness of the burdens of the body, it has never been possible to get bored with good health; so there, in the same way, there will never be any boredom with charity, with immortality, with eternity."

Sermon 229 B, 2

My one prayer during this difficult time when my body seemed to be letting me down so badly, was to pray to Jesus to BE with me now, in this present physical vacuum, and then when I was better, to continue to accompany me on my way to the Father.

A final reflection from Augustine (compiled by Fr. Ben O'Rourke, OSA)* says it all:

"What is withered in you will flower again. Your sickness will be healed.

*What is fading will be fresh again, and what is warped
made whole and strong and sound.*

And all that is weak in you will not drag you to the grave.

*But your wholeness will abide, will remain with you before God,
who remains strong and abides for ever"*

with much love,

Paul

*Return to Your Heart: Augustinian Press, Clare Priory, 1995

Tolle Lege (Take and Read)

It is suggested that you reflect on the readings taken from the Sunday liturgy during a quiet time in the previous week. Where the quotes from St. Augustine appear they are meant to offer some guidance and encouragement in allowing the "Word" to illumine in you what it is God wants you to grasp and understand.

July 6 14th. Sunday in Ordinary Time Mark 6: 1 – 6

" the people already knew all about Jesus, so far as concerned his humanity. They knew what he looked like, where he came from; his parentage; and the place of his birth. So he rightly said that they knew him and where he came from; yes, but their knowledge was according to the flesh and the human form he bore. But, as concerned his godhead, he told them . . . 'I was sent by the one who truly is; and him you do not know.'" (Homilies on the Gospel of John, 31, 3-4)

July 13 15th. Sunday in Ordinary Time Mark 6: 7 – 13

July 20 16th. Sunday in Ordinary Time Mark 6: 30 – 34

July 27 17th. Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6: 1 – 15

The one who multiplied the five loaves in the hands of those who broke them is the one who multiplies the seeds germinating in the ground, so that comparatively few grains are sown and great granaries are filled. But because he does this every year, nobody is astonished. It's not any paltry quality of the performance that cuts out astonishment, but its steady regularity. (Sermon 130, 1-2)

August 3 18th. Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6: 25 – 34

August 10 19th. Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6: 41 – 51

August 15 The Assumption of the Virgin Mary 1 Cor. 15: 20 – 26

August 17 20th. Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6: 51 – 58

Don't be surprised that our hearts can feast in such a way that they are nourished, and what they are nourished on is not diminished. God gives precisely that sort of food to our bodily eyes. . . . This light is seen by everyone, it feeds everybody's eyes. The sight of everyone who sees it is nourished, and the light continues undiminished. If two people see it, it remains as much; if more people see it, it remains the same. . . . If that, then, is what the food for our eyes is like, what must God be for our minds? (Sermon 28, 2 – 3)

August 24 21st. Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6: 60 – 69

August 27 Monica, Mother of Augustine Luke 7: 11 – 17

August 28 Our Holy Father Augustine Acts 2: 42 – 47

August 31 22nd. Sunday in Ordinary Time James 1: 17- 18, 21- 22,27'

AUGUSTINIAN FRIENDS SHARING THE SPIRITUALITY OF AUGUSTINE

Editor and Chaplain: Paul Maloney osa (02) 9631 0340 Assistant: Paul Griffiths

PO BOX 679 Brookvale NSW 2100 Phone: (02) 9905 3049 Fax: (02) 9938 4465