

AUGUSTINIAN FRIENDS - PRAYER RESOURCE GUIDE

SHARING THE SPIRITUALITY OF AUGUSTINE

Co-Leaders' Message

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As Co-Leaders we have been reflecting on and questioning the purpose and value of the Prayer Resource Guide.

Augustinian Friends came into being due to the fact that the Augustinian priests have influenced our spiritual journey.

They have led us to Augustine who we believe is both *Resource* and *Guide* in our quest to know and love God more deeply.

The Prayer Resource Guide begins with the word *Prayer*.

In this issue we offer some responses from South Yarra parishioners to the following question:

HOW IMPORTANT IS PRAYER ?

Prayer makes me stop and become aware that I am alive. Words are not necessary—just an open heart for God to come in.

Formal or spontaneous, prayer gives me power to 'go with the flow' of the world around me; to trust and to be not afraid."

This is what **Celina da Silva** had to say about Prayer.



Lawrence Atley responded to the question in this way:

"I cannot exist without prayer. My hopelessness is resolved usually by asking God's help. I feel guilty for asking all the time without giving too much thanks."

Jessica Wells said:

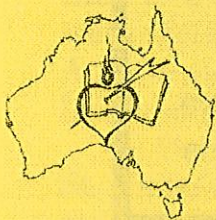
"I pray all day, one way or another. Often it's conversational and relating to what's in front of me. I pray while I work with my patients. 'God's will be done here.' Quietly guide me Lord! How would I know what to do otherwise? Thank you, dear Lord, look after it for me, Lord."



Trevor Robertson believes:

"Prayer is a time to think about others, a time to thank God, a time to renew our love for Christ and our Christian faith.

It is a time for reflection and time to seek guidance in matters concerning our everyday life. It is a chance to be one on one with God and a chance to block out the troubles and pressures of our world."



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 orientated letter from our Chaplain.

Here are some responses to the question from Augustine's perspective.....

"Prayer is "the affectionate reaching out of the mind for God." (Sermon 9.3)

"Prayer is a 'turning of the heart' to God and consequently 'a bringing about a change in the one who prays and not in God'."

(On Sermon on the Mount 11.3.14)



" Longing is always a prayer,
even though the tongue is silent.
When does our prayer sleep?
Only when our desire cools."

(Sermon 80,7)



As Augustine remarked to one of his numerous correspondents:

"When we cherish uninterrupted desire along with faith, hope and charity, we pray always." (Epist. 130,9,18)



Augustine observes that prayer actually has a voice of its own, and quite distinct from the voice of the one who prays. This voice of prayer is the heart's desire, which, though not audible to human ears, sounds like a cry in the ears of God, and 'is called a cry by reason of the intensity of its reaching for God'.

(On Ps. 145. 4)

"It is your heart's desire that is prayer; if your desire continues without interruption your prayer continues also. Not without meaning did the Apostle say: 'Never cease praying. Does he mean that we must kneel or prostrate ourselves or lift up our hands without ceasing? If this is what we mean when we say that we pray, then I think it is something we cannot do always. But there is another kind of interior prayer that never ceases and that is the desire of the heart.'" (On Ps. 34,2,16.)

It is our hope that the next edition of the *Prayer Resource Guide* will continue this dialogue in the form of an open conversation.

So let the conversation begin!

Which of the above thoughts or quotes touched your heart?

We invite you to share your reflections.

Are there aspects of Augustine's writing on prayer you would like to explore further?

How do you see *lay* people coping with prayer in the future?

Have you come across a prayer by St Augustine that could be shared with *friends*?

Love and blessings from

Mary and Monica.

From our Chaplain

Tuesday August 23rd., 2005

Dear Friends,

seven years ago when I was on the first of what now appears to be my many journeys to Rome, I went with a friend to visit the newly opened Borghesi Villa. It had been closed for restoration for the previous twenty years and this was the first summer for many to see it in all its original glory. Among its treasures of sculpture, furniture, ornaments and paintings which had been collected by the extremely wealthy Cardinal who owned the Villa and its surrounding Gardens, I was delighted to discover in one of the rooms on the upper floor a portrait of the Augustinian friar, St. Nicholas of Tolentine. I was even able to buy a postcard of the portrait and this year we have it displayed in our living room as our way of honouring the special jubilee called by the Order to celebrate the 700th. Anniversary of St. Nicholas' death.

Nicholas was born in 1245 just at the time when groups of Hermits who followed the Rule of St. Augustine were amalgamating into what was to become part of the great Mendicant movement of the 13th. century. He joined one of those groups as quite a young boy and entered the Novitiate while still only fifteen and was ordained a priest when he was twenty-five. He was assigned to the community in Tolentine (a town quite close to Assisi) in 1275 where he remained for the rest of his life and from where his fame grew. He is described as having "*a pale face, but possessing some angelic beauty, which the coarseness of his black habit rendered more evident. He was modest and friendly, effusive but calm, wise and prudent. He was not extravagant nor ambitious. He was considered and respected by others as a saint.*"

When he died at the age of sixty on September 10th. 1305 his reputation was as renowned as that of Padre Pio in our own time. Barely twenty years after his death 371 witnesses were heard by a papal delegation who recorded each testimony in what we would now recognise as the formal process for canonization. This process took a little longer than some more recent cases so that it was not until 1446 that Nicholas was officially proclaimed a saint by Pope Eugene IV. He is regarded as the first Augustinian friar to be recognised in this canonical way and his shrine in Tolentine has been a centre of devotion for all of those seven hundred years.

One of those devotions that I remember attending as a child was the blessing of St. Nicholas' bread at the time of his Feast each year. We would go up to the altar rail as if we were going to communion but instead we would be given a hard piece of bread about the size of a fifty cent coin which we were to take home and keep until someone in the house was sick, and then we were to break a bit off, dip it in water and give it to them on a spoon so that they would recover. I think my brother and I ate ours on the way home on the theory that prevention was preferable to cure any day.

In 1884 Pope Leo XIII proclaimed St. Nicholas as patron saint of the souls in purgatory and each year at both of our Colleges there is a special Mass offered on September 10th. to remember by name the students and staff who have died and who are recalled with love by the Augustinian community who remain. There is a quality of peace, compassion and gentleness about this saint which communicates itself to our own hearts particularly at the time we are mourning the passing of our loved ones. Nicholas has truly been a bright star of hope for many over the years and the celebration of his Jubilee reminds us of the long tradition of prayer, self-discipline and concern for one another that goes to make up the Augustinian ethos which formed him and continues to form us in our own times.

As the Feast of our Holy Father Augustine and his faithful follower St. Nicholas of Tolentine approaches this year I will be remembering you all at their eucharist

with much love,

Paul

