

# Augustinian Friends Prayer Resource Guide

## Co-Leaders' Message

Advent is a time to recall the cry of the early Christians:-

Maranatha!

Come Lord Jesus!

Just as the early Christians made this their cry of faith, so we strive to do the same today in the midst of the many voices that impact on our lives. Augustine understands the complexity of how communication takes place, first of all in Revelation, and then in our everyday speech:-

*"John is the voice, but the Lord is the Word who was in the beginning. John is the voice that lasts for a time;*

*from the beginning Christ is the Word who lives forever.*

*Take away the word, the meaning, and what is the voice?*

*Where there is no understanding, there is only a meaningless sound.*

*The voice without the word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart. However, let us observe what happens when we first seek to build up our hearts!*

*When I think about what I am going to say, the word or message is already in my heart.*

*When I speak to you, I look for a way to share with your heart what is already in mine.*

*In my search for a way to let this message reach you, (so that the word already in my heart may find a place also in yours), I use my voice to speak to you.*

*The sound of my voice brings the meaning of the word to you and then passes away.*

*The word which the sound has brought to you is now in your heart, and yet it is still also in mine.*

*When the word has been conveyed to you, does not the sound seem to say:-*

*'The word ought to grow, and I should diminish'?*

*The sound of the voice has made itself heard in the service of the word, and has gone away, as though it were saying:*

*'My joy is complete'.*

*Let us hold on to the word; we must not lose the word conceived inwardly in our hearts."*

*(Sermon 293,3)*

May you hear our voices  
as we pray that Christ may dwell in your  
hearts this Advent time,  
leading you to a peace filled Christmas.

Monica & Mary.

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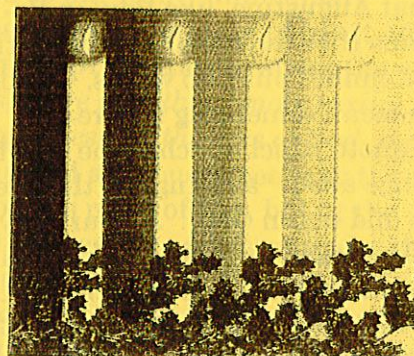
tions on the Sunday  
Scriptures.

### 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.



In our last Resource Guide we posed the question:- How important is Prayer?

Four readers from South Yarra contributed their responses.

There has been further conversation on this question with two new voices emerging to offer their reflections on Augustine and his views on Prayer.



### Augustine believes:

"Prayer is a spiritual thing and the truer it is to its nature the more pleasing it is to God."

Sermon 210.9

### From Echuca,

Peter Kotsiakos has this to say:-

Augustine's spirituality is like a multi-faceted diamond. Focussing on any surface brings rich rewards.

One aspect of Augustine's spirituality revealed in his writings which greatly appeals to me is his emphasis on love. His words are not arid or ascetic. His joy in the love of God infects us and makes our hearts burn within us.

I like the way Augustine takes the idea of the Trinitarian community of love and incarnates it in his own community of love and hospitality.

The quotes from Augustine in the last edition of the Prayer Resource Guide were all worthy of reflection.

I was particularly consoled by his reminder that prayer has a voice of its own quite distinct from the voice of the one who prays. I assume that Augustine, like Paul in Romans, means that the Spirit expresses the prayers we cannot put into words. Or does Augustine mean something different?

The other quote which touched me was that prayer brings about "a change in the one who prays and not in God". All our prayers, whether of petition, or praise, or just being in the presence of God, hopefully make us more God-like, but they do not change God.

### From Brisbane

Jim McDonald speaks:

In Book XI of *The Confessions*, Saint Augustine is discussing the meanings of "time", "past", "present" and "future". A little more than three-quarters of the way through his considerations, he almost gives up on the thinking:

*I confess to you, Lord, that I still do not know what time is. ... My God, I am in your presence. You see that I do not lie, for I say only what is in my heart.*

*It is you, Lord, that keep the lamp of my hopes still burning; shine on the darkness about me."*

Augustine is using Samuel's words and the words of the psalm to give some meaning or reason to his lack of success in understanding the timelessness of God.

Mind you, Augustine does not give up on his intellectual torturing of himself; but, sooner or later, he is forced by his own thinking to the conclusion that there is no point to time unless it is time with God. Augustine finally acknowledges that, while the Father is eternal, he (like all of us) has been fussing about with the problems of the past and what the future may or may not hold.

To Augustine nothing is more important now than *the prize, God's heavenly summons.*

*While his thoughts are torn this way and that in the havoc of change, this will be the way of the world until he is purified and melted by the fire of your love and fused into one with you.*

(It makes you think of that other very famous line from Augustine, doesn't it!)

This, to me, is the Augustinian way of prayer: bow down my intellect to God; let Him shine on the past, present and future of my life in His own way; and prepare with Him, in those ordinary events of my life, for the reward that is to come.

This is the way of Augustine. It is not something that others see, hear or know about; it is *"another kind of interior prayer that never ceases, and that is the desire of the heart."*

Thank you Peter & Jim for thoughts so beautifully expressed.

Other reflections are welcome. Mary & Monica

December 4th. 2005

Dear Friends,

this year Christmas came early for me and a dozen of my Augustinian classmates as we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of our Ordination to the priesthood at a reunion held at Villanova University, Pennsylvania, in the last days of October. The afternoon began with a get-together over drinks as we familiarised ourselves with faces and figures so different from the ones in the photo albums we had brought. Once this adjustment to age had been made we found ourselves back in the easy friendships that had existed in our youth. St. Augustine could have been describing us, both then and now, when he wrote: *“ . . . When exile dejects us or any evil whatever afflicts us, then there are good people who not only understand the art of rejoicing with those who rejoice, but also weeping with those who weep — people who know how to speak a cheerful word and how to hold a conversation that does us good. In this way, much that is bitter is softened, much that weighs us down is lightened, and many failures are overcome. But it is really God who does this, through and in people. . . . on the other hand, whenever one is without a friend, not a single thing in the world seems friendly to them”* (Letter 130,4)

The anniversary Mass was celebrated in a new chapel that has been built at the heart of the University campus as part of the restoration of the Monastery which has long been the Mother-house of the Villanova Province. Through its glass walls we could see the students and their visitors walking among the multi coloured trees of an autumn afternoon. I had been given the task of preparing a homily for the occasion. I found myself sharing with my classmates the belief that without anyone telling us how to do it we had created out of our Augustinian experience a model of priesthood different from the hierarchical one that generally existed elsewhere. I believe the Augustinian model of priesthood is fraternal rather than clerical and that we are meant to take Jesus' words very seriously “You must not let yourselves be called Rabbi since you have only one Master and you are all brothers”. (Matt. 23:8) We express this fraternal model by “travelling together” with our fellow pilgrims, offering a helping hand to those who need it, and accepting a helping hand from them when we are flagging.

Our Prior General, Fr. Robert Prevost, OSA, in a keynote address to Augustinian men and women at a convention in South Korea in July spoke of this same fraternal relationship between the community members and their Augustinian leader. He asked the participants:

*“How does this concept get ‘translated’ into our real life experience? Do I live out my role as a brother who encourages, who gives life, who brings people together, who helps show the way along the path, and yes, who sometimes corrects as needed, as an older brother or father should do in a family?”*

*We are speaking then, of a relationship of fraternal love and mutual trust. And in saying that, we obviously find ourselves with several challenges, perhaps the greatest of which is around the building up of authentic trust among community members.”* (*The Servant Leader in the Perspective of Augustinian Spirituality.* APAC Convention July 2005)

Such a model of leadership would call on the ‘intuitive-feeling’ aspects of the personality we know Augustine possessed and would draw on empathy and imagination in solving problems that invariably arise — and far from being authoritarian would bring a creative and supportive quality to the task.

St Augustine died in the 40th. year of his priesthood so our Ruby anniversary came just in time for us to enjoy the absolute contentment of being together in unity of heart and mind with those who were ordained in our year. He once wrote quite prophetically about the vocation he shares with us. *“In this life, and especially in these times, there is nothing more taxing, more arduous, more hazardous, but at the same time no greater happiness, in the eyes of God, than the office of priest.”* (Letter 21,4) There have certainly been taxing and arduous times over the years, and the sadness at our final departure from Northern Victoria is proof of this, but at the same time there is no greater happiness than the office we have been given to perform under the patronage and informed by the spirituality of our Holy Father Augustine.

*“As we do what we love, what we love to do shapes our lives, sings our gratitude.”* May Christmas come early for you this year as it has for me, and may we honour the presence of the Christ child in all those we meet,

With much Love,

Paul

## 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. "Take and Read" the passage and stay open to Augustine's question "What is God wanting me to know now?" Then let God's grace illumine your understanding.*

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|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>December 11</b> | <b>Third Sunday of Advent</b>  | <b>1 Thess. 5: 16-24</b> |
|                    | <i>Every day people pray, religious people never miss the times of prayer. As the apostle too says, 'Always rejoicing, praying without breaking off.' That's the same as, 'One ought always to pray, and not lose heart.' . . . I don't know what it is, but it must be something stupendous for which it is necessary to pray always and not lose heart. Something much more than our health is immortal life. That's what we've got to pray for till the very end, as long as we are living here, until we find ourselves living without end, when there will be no more asking, but only rejoicing.</i> |                          |
|                    | <i>(Sermon 77B, 1)</i>   |                          |
| <b>December 18</b> | <b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>   | <b>Luke 1: 26-38</b>     |
|                    | <i>I appear to be questioning the virgin rather impudently . . . but I can see the virgin answering me and giving me some advice: "You are asking me where all this comes to me from? Let the angel answer." Tell me, angel, where did Mary get all this from? "I have already said where, when I greeted her: Hail, full of grace."</i>   |                          |
|                    | <i>(Sermon 291,6)</i>  |                          |
| <b>December 25</b> | <b>Christmas Day</b>   | <b>Hebrews 1: 1-6</b>    |
| <b>January 1</b>   | <b>Mary the Mother of God</b>  | <b>Luke 2: 16-21</b>     |
|                    | <i>In that chamber, that is, in the virgin's womb, the divine nature coupled the human to itself; there the Word became flesh for us, so that coming forth from his mother he might dwell among us, and that going ahead to the Father he might prepare a place for us to dwell in. So let us celebrate this day as a high and happy holiday, and faithfully long for the eternal day through him, who being eternal was born for us in time.</i>  |                          |
|                    | <i>(Sermon 195, 1-3)</i>   |                          |
| <b>January 8</b>   | <b>The Epiphany of the Lord</b>  | <b>Matthew 2: 1-12</b>   |
|                    | <i>We too, by acknowledging and praising Christ as both king and priest and the one who died for us, have, as it were, honoured him with gold and frankincense and myrrh. It only remains for us to spread the good news about him, by pursuing a new way, not returning by the way we came.</i>   |                          |
|                    | <i>(Sermon 202, 2-4)</i>   |                          |
| <b>January 15</b>  | <b>Second Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>  | <b>John 1: 35-42</b>     |
|                    | <i>He showed them where he was staying; they came and were with him. What a blessed day they spent! What a blessed night! Who will tell us what they heard from the Lord? Let us build a home in our heart and make a dwelling to which he may come and teach us and converse with us.</i>   |                          |
|                    | <i>(Homilies on the Gospel of John 7, 8-10)</i>  |                          |
| <b>January 22</b>  | <b>Third Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>   | <b>Mark 1:14-20</b>      |
| <b>January 29</b>  | <b>Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>  | <b>Mark 1:21-28</b>      |
| <b>February 5</b>  | <b>Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>   | <b>Job 7: 1-4, 6-7</b>   |
| <b>February 12</b> | <b>Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>   | <b>Mark 1: 40-45</b>     |
| <b>February 19</b> | <b>Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>   | <b>Mark 2: 1-12</b>      |
|                    | <i>By this miracle and these words he made it evident that he had used his physical powers in order that people should believe he has the power to free souls from sin, that is, he used his visible powers to win faith in his invisible powers. He accomplished all this through the Spirit of God, because he wished to give us God's grace and peace: grace through the forgiveness of sin, and peace through reconciliation with God.</i>   |                          |
|                    | <i>(Unfinished Commentary on Romans, I, 23)</i>  |                          |
| <b>February 26</b> | <b>Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>  | <b>2Cor. 3: 1-6</b>      |
| <b>March 5</b>     | <b>First Sunday of Lent</b>  | <b>Genesis 9: 8- 15</b>  |
| <b>March 12</b>    | <b>Second Sunday of Lent</b>   | <b>Romans 8: 31-34</b>   |
| <b>March 19</b>    | <b>Third Sunday of Lent</b>  | <b>John 2: 13-25</b>     |
|                    | <i>So why did God want to make a temple, or have a temple made? To be a figure of the body of Christ. Look now for the temple which Solomon made, and you will find a ruin. Why is that temple a ruin? Because what it signified has already come to pass. So it's the body of Christ that is God's temple. What are our bodies? Members of Christ. Let us trust the body of Christ and our bodies to be the temple of God which has the Holy Spirit in you.</i>   |                          |
|                    | <i>(Sermon 217)</i>  |                          |