

AUGUSTINIAN FRIENDS - PRAYER RESOURCE GUIDE

SHARING THE SPIRITUALITY OF AUGUSTINE

Co-Leaders' Message

Inside this issue:

Co-Leader's Message & Formation article	1-2
Chaplain's Letter	3
Tolle Lege – Take and Read.	
Augustine's Reflections on the Sunday's Scripture.	4

Here we are at the start of Lent 2006! Do you feel as if Lent has crept up on you, or does Christmas still seem near?

Are you prepared to embrace this season often called the 'springtime' season of the church, which some declare is really the 'springtime' of the soul.?

Here in Australia as we come out of Summer and ease into Autumn how can we be assisted to more fully understand this aspect of Lent?

Augustine once prayed these words,

'Lord, to cut myself off from You means to die.

To return to You means to rise again.

To remain with You means to live, to truly live."

As leaves fall to the ground, as that same ground is prepared for seed, as the daylight hours shorten, perhaps we can dwell on those words of Augustine

If we separate ourselves from the Lord by neglecting our spiritual life we do feel a sense of loss and death. But to return (and Lent is a season of return), means to rise again, to begin again, to take new opportunities to deepen our relationship with the Lord. Truly, to remain in the Lord means to really live!

As the seasons of nature cause life to be renewed and leaves to return let us ponder this idea of **RETURNING**.

Henri Nouwen wrote, "**Lent is a time of returning to God.** It is a time to confess how we keep looking for joy, peace and satisfaction in the many people and things surrounding us, without finding what we desire. Only God can give us what we want. So we must be reconciled with God and let that reconciliation be the basis of our relationships with others.

Lent is a time of refocussing,

of re-entering the place of truth,

of reclaiming our true identity."

For Augustine Lent was a time of reconciliation and forgiveness among brothers and sisters.

O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the others.

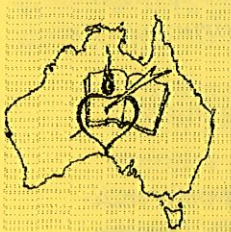
Let me find You again. Amen.

Nouwen also wrote, "Lent is a time to get in touch with our experience of absence, of emptiness, so that in the midst of our overcrowded lives we can remind ourselves that we are still waiting for the One who has promised to fulfil our deepest desires".

So, As Augustine would say, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You".

O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the other ones.

Let me find You again.



The Purpose of the Prayer

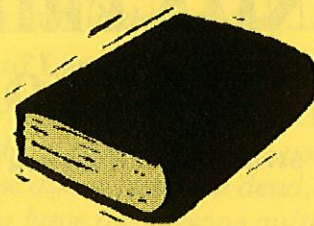
Resource Guide

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 centered on the Gospel readings for coming Sundays and quotes from Augustine. Formation material is offered by different members. It also contains a letter from our Chaplain oriented towards prayer and Augustinian Feasts and themes.

On the first day of Lent—Ash Wednesday—the Scriptures reassure us that God is rich in faithful love and waiting to welcome us home.

"Return to the Lord, your God,
for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing." Joel 2:13



Let us enter this Church season trusting that God will draw near and help us in our desire to 'return'. Augustine once wrote:- "**Lent is the epitome of our whole life.**" Sermon 205

This strong statement seems to tie in with Nouwen's idea of Lent being a time of '*reclaiming our true identity*'. Fr. Ted Tack OSA in his book *If Augustine Were Alive Today* gives an Augustinian perspective to our '*true identity*'. Maybe reading these excerpts during Lent could be useful.

Fr. Ted Tack writes,

How, then, according to Augustine, are we to respond to the challenge of Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him?

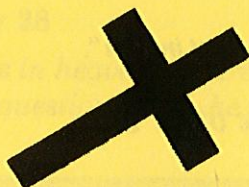
Augustine comments on these expressions on many different occasions, but in summary, and in a very down-to earth way he has this to say.

For the love of Christ we must:

1. *bear up under the various ways in which the world tries to turn us aside from our faith;*
2. *Put up with all that is troublesome;*
3. *Keep the commandments;*
4. *Be motivated by mercy and love as Christ himself was;*
5. *Trust not in ourselves but in Christ;*
6. *Carry the cross of our mortality;*
7. *Most of all, we must carry one another's burdens mutually.*

*That's quite a program, especially when we consider that most of these ideas were suggested first of all to the **laity**.*

But quite truthfully, says Augustine, it is the entire Church which is called to follow Christ.



Further comments from Fr. Tack,

*From what we have seen concerning Augustine's thought and actions, it seems clear enough that his attitude towards bearing the cross, did not vary to any significant degree, either when he was talking to the **laity** or to religious.*

He always insisted on these same points:

1. *The necessity of taking up the cross and following Christ.*
2. *The need for safeguarding one's health while doing this.*
3. *The presence of a personal sense of responsibility, guided by generosity and prudent moderation*
4. *The absolute importance in, as in all things, of love as the ultimate norm.*

When we carry our crosses, not only individually, but also as a community, they become much lighter, especially when, as Augustine emphasises time and time again, they lead us to greater unity and love.

May this Lenten season be for all of us a time of **returning**, of returning to the '*place of truth*'.

Returning indicates that I have been there before, that I am making a shift, turning and heading there again.

"Our hearts **are** restless until they rest in You".

Let this be your prayer this Lent,

"I am returning to you, Friend of my heart. I am grateful that I belong to you and that you are always ready to welcome me home."

Inviting God In. Joyce Rupp

God bless, Mary and Monica.

March 1st. 2006

Dear Friends,

recently I was privileged to meet an 85 year old Tibetan monk who is the Abbot of the Tabo ancient monastery which is on the Indo-Tibetan border in the western Himalayas. The Abbot greeted me by ceremonially placing a white silk scarf over my shoulders and handing me a gift. When I opened the packet I found postcards of the various paintings and shrines of his monastery that date back to 996 A.D. It is the oldest continuously functioning Buddhist Monastery in India and this holy man has been responsible for restoring it over the last thirty years to its former role as a seat of learning.

When we sat down to drink tea together I told the Abbot, with the help of an interpreter, of the origins of my own Order which had its first stirrings around the time the Tabo Monastery was founded. Instead of being made of mud bricks high up in the rarified altitude of the mountains, our Augustinian foundations were of stone or were dug out of caves in the forests and countryside of Tuscany. For example, at Santa Lucia in the middle of a wood near Sienna it can now be established that there was a hermitage existing before the year 1000 A.D.. This would have housed one of a number of rustic communities whose members followed the Rule of St. Augustine and who lived, not alone, but "at one" with each other in simplicity and in service of the scattered neighbouring populace.

Around 1231 the Tuscan Hermits began to join together in loose confederations which resulted in 1244 in a first confluence or "little union" of houses under the protection and supervision of Cardinal Richard Annibaldi, a powerful official of the Papal court. With the Cardinal's encouragement a number of other hermit groups joined with the Tuscan Hermits twelve years later to form the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine. So, on April 9th. 1256 — exactly seven hundred and fifty years ago this year — Pope Alexander IV issued the bull "Licet Ecclesiae" which called into existence the fourth of the great Mendicant Orders, so instrumental in reforming the Church in Europe at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The mendicants (begging friars) initiated a new style of life. They did not live in large monasteries, but in smaller and poorer houses (convents). The Friar's lifestyle was more flexible than the monk's since they did not have the vow of stability and could move from place to place to preach to a growing town populace, hear confessions, teach in schools and universities and live off alms rather than on the income of monastic property.

A remarkable feature of the early years following 1256 was the speed and thoroughness with which the Order adapted itself to the role given it by the Holy See. It was asked to divert its energies into pastoral work in cities and towns. It quickly became an order of men who were not merely exemplary in their lives but who were well educated, capable of meeting the challenge of the new education. (Augustinian Spirituality, Rome 1976, p.116)

The Venerable Abbot Khen Rinpochey was sent to the Tabo Monastery at a time when it was in virtual ruins and with only three monks in residence. In spite of suffering a mild stroke he has led the monastery into the modern era while maintaining the traditions and wisdom of the past. In his time a school has been built for girls and boys, orchards, gardens and green houses have flourished, solar power and recycling have been introduced and housing provided in the villages that are solar passive but incorporate traditional building techniques. The Abbot is in Australia to seek financial sponsorship for young men in India who are once more eager to become monks.

On the morning that we met he gave me something more than a white scarf. He, a monk from the East, reminded me of the ancient tradition we as Augustinians have inherited in the West, beginning with the original Rule of St. Augustine and 750 years ago evolving from hermits into mendicants. The Abbot also showed me how adaption and renewal must continue in each age in response to the changing world of our different faith communities. We can apply the words of Augustine to both our traditions: "Let nothing of the past prevent us from listening, and let no present things hinder us from giving thought to the future. Move on to what lies ahead." (In Ps. 66, 10)

May the holy season of Lent be a time when we can restore not only our own hearts but the communities to which we belong, so that they become signs of renewed vigor and hope to all those whose lives they touch.

With much love,



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 text and be open to Augustine's question "What is God wanting me to know now?" Let God's grace illumine your understanding.

March 19

Third Sunday of Lent

John 2: 13-25

The Father wasn't born of the virgin, and yet this birth of the Son from the virgin was the work of both Father and Son. The Father did not suffer on the cross, and yet the passion of the Son was the work of both Father and Son. The Father did not rise again from the dead, and yet the resurrection of the Son was the work of both Father and Son. You have the persons quite distinct, and their working inseparable.

(Sermon 52, 14)

March 25

The Annunciation of the Lord

Luke 1: 26-38

These things are wonderful, because they are divine; they are beyond our powers of expression, because they defy investigation; human lips falter in explaining them, because so do human minds in examining them. Mary believed, and what she believed came about in her. Let us too believe, so that we too may benefit from what came about.

(Sermon 215, 4)

March 26

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Ephesians 2: 4-10

Let us give thanks to our Lord and savior, who for no preceding merits of ours cured us when we lay wounded, and reconciled us when we were enemies, and redeemed us from captivity, brought us back out of darkness into the light, called us back from death to life.

(Sermon 333, 7)

April 2

Fifth Sunday of Lent

John 12: 20 - 30

Therefore, brethren, when you hear the Lord saying: "Where I am, there too shall my servant be", do not think only of good bishops and clerics. You too serve Christ in your own way: by a good life, by almsgiving, by proclaiming his name and teaching to whomever you can.

(Homilies on the Gospel of John 51, 12-13)

April 9

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Isaiah 50: 4-7

April 16

Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord

John 20: 1-9

April 23

Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 4: 32-35

April 26

Our Mother of Good Counsel

Acts 1: 12-14, 2: 1-4

April 30

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24: 35-48

May 7

Fourth Sunday of Easter

1 John 3: 1-2

So by meditating on all this, dearly beloved, let us always be looking forward to our everlasting joy, and always praying for courage and strength in our temporal labours and trials—whether we up here for you, or you for us. I mean to say, brothers and sisters, you shouldn't think that our prayers are needed by you, and that your prayers aren't needed by us. We all need each other's prayers for one another, because these very prayers for one another are fused together by charity . .

(Sermon 305A, 10)

May 14

Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 15: 1-8

May 21

Sixth Sunday of Easter

John 15: 9-17

May 22

Feast of St. Rita of Cascia

Romans 12: 9-21

You see, when you do your enemy a kindness, and are not overcome by the evil in him, you will have overcome evil with good; often enough he will repent of his hostility and be angry with himself, because he has harmed such a good person. That burning, then, is repentance, which like coals of fire consumes his hostility and ill-will.

(Sermon 149, 19)

May 28

Ascension of the Lord

Mark 16: 15-20

He is in heaven, we are on earth. As though he were far away from us, is that it? God forbid! If you question space, he is far away; if you question love, he is with us.

(Sermon 395, 2)