

Augustinian Friends - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

June 29th. 2009

Dear Friends,

In the ten years that I have been writing these letters to you this would have to be the first time I have had to telescope the contents of our "Prayer Resource" into one double sided page. Not that we are running out of information on Augustine to share. It is simply that there has been a lack of time to get this month's material together.

At the beginning of June I travelled to Victoria to meet up with Ruth McGowan and Maureen Atkins to go over the plans for our Fourth National Lay Conference which will be held in Brisbane in July next year. So many of the details as to the theme and topics that we wanted to cover seemed to fall into place. We have two dynamic speakers booked up, a fine venue prepared on the campus of Villanova College, and most of the ground work has already been done by the enthusiastic members of the Coorparoo committee of 'Augustinian Friends'. There is every indication that this will be "the best ever" opportunity for fans of Augustine to meet and renew their friendship with one another and with the rich heritage that binds us together.

The other project that has been of major concern - the planning for our guided Pilgrimage to Augustinian sites and holy places -has also been finalized only in the last few days. St. Augustine tells us that "*the world is a book and those who don't travel read only one page*". Well, in this time of financial recession it is more than likely we prefer to stay at home or borrow from our local library than follow such advice! Fortunately, just enough travelers have booked to go on our Pilgrimage to allow us to fulfill the dream of walking in the footsteps of Augustine from the place of his birth to the place of his burial during the month of September.

For Augustine and his world *peregrinatio* (making the journey) means more than travel, but becomes a compelling image of the Christian life - and its destination: "*There is only one sweet homeland, one true homeland, everything else for us is pilgrimage.*" (en. Ps. 61.7) This thought is echoed by a twentieth century theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote: "*There is a meaning in every journey unknown by the traveler.*"

With Augustine as our guide may we come to know that meaning as we journey together in the coming months,

With much love,



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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 and quotes from Augustine. Formation material is offered from different sources including a prayer orientated letter from our Chaplain.

Secularity, Religiosity, and Evangelization

By Jacob Choi OSA

This reflection appeared in the June 2009 edition of Newsangle which is a publication of the Augustinian Province of England and Scotland. It is reprinted here with permission.

An article in *The Times* on the 15th. of May caught my eyes. It said that students at a Cambridge College wanted to change their Grace before dinner. It was traditionally like this: ‘Bless us Lord God and bless these gifts which by your generosity we are about to eat, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen’. The new one was: ***‘For food in a hungry world, for companionship in a world of loneliness, for peace in an age of violence, we give thanks.’*** The reason for the proposed change was that the traditional prayer was ‘too religious’. So the students wanted to ‘secularize’ it. For me, what they called a ‘secular’ version was in fact consistent with Jesus’ teaching.

We sometimes think that attending Mass regularly and going to confession frequently are the most important parts of practicing our catholic faith. However, as everybody knows, in the life-time of Jesus the Eucharist was not yet institutionalized and the sacrament of reconciliation was established much later when the Roman Empire was collapsing - to teach the Barbarians a sense of responsibility for their conduct. So Jesus’ teaching was not about maintaining a sacramental life but about becoming more like God who is imaged as the Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan, and our *Abba* Father (like the father of the Prodigal Son). Jesus also wanted his contemporaries to change the way that they related to each other. Why? Because his society was sin-oriented and inhuman (like our own) which caused a lot of suffering for those who then classified themselves as ‘sinners’.

Many ‘sinners’ (i.e., the marginalized people) followed Jesus and strove to build the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Good Shepherd, and the good Samaritan as well as the kingdom of our Father. When they came together for a meal they shared not only food, but also their common suffering, vision, and hope for the future. As for the ‘law-abiding’ people of his time, they did not want to change and so Jesus’ theological teaching was a threat to the foundation of their social and moral structure.

Sometimes I hear the word ‘evangelization’ spoken about and I frequently would like to ask “What do you mean by it?” Surely it has to do with sharing the Good News that Jesus brought to us that tells us of a God who is compassionate, not judgmental, whom we are meant to emulate by the ways in which we participate in building up the kingdom of God that Jesus came to found. This ‘kingdom’ of God is the opposite of a sin-oriented society, but instead is a compassion-oriented society which expresses itself in deeds rather than pious aspirations.

Compared to the First century Jewish community in Palestine our British society of the Twenty-first century is far more democratic and humane. No one will threaten to crucify us for maintaining that God is love. But the call Jesus makes for us to become Good Samaritans touches on the same concern shown by the Cambridge University students in their so-called ‘secularized’ version of Grace before meals. It speaks of a practical way of making our spiritual and sacramental life meaningful and relevant in this multi-cultural world. Therefore we need to think about evangelization from the perspective of Jesus’ ministry to the hungry, the lonely and the victims of violence, because “inasmuch as you do this to one of the least of these my brethren, you do it to me”. (Matt 25: 40)