

# AUGUSTINIAN FRIENDS - PRAYER RESOURCE GUIDE

## LETTER FROM OUR CHAPLAIN

September 14th. 2010

Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

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**Dear Friends,**

throughout this year I have been occupied giving a series of Retreat Days to different Parishes whose members were asking for ways to discover God more readily in their daily lives. The topic that gained the greatest response from my audience focused on the role 'Suffering' played in opening our eyes to God's hand at work in our world. We took as our example Mary Magdalene who, in the midst of her grief, was able to report back to the Apostle's "While I was weeping at the tomb I saw my Lord". Through suffering we undergo a process of purification - our capacity to love is enlarged - and we begin to see God (in His Son) at every turn.

I firmly believe that whatever suffering is visited upon us by life or the circumstances surrounding us, *if* it is accepted with humility, courage and a generosity born of Faith, then progress is made in the deepening of our capacity to love. If we greet the same reality with self pity, hurt pride and denial then there is no such growth, as St. Augustine so pithily puts it:

*"So, too, the tide of trouble will test, purify, and improve the good, but beat, crush and wash away the wicked. So it is that under the weight of the same affliction, the wicked deny and blaspheme God, and the good pray to Him and praise Him. The difference is not in what people suffer but in the way they suffer. The same shaking that makes fetid water stink makes perfume issue a more pleasing odour." (City of God)*

How can we make sure that when we are 'shaken' a more pleasing odour emanates? I believe the secret lies in the surrender of our independence to the care of others through whom we are ultimately entrusting ourselves to the care of God. This takes a supreme effort, as Jesus found in the Garden of Gethsemane when he allowed the love of the Father to touch his heart and transform his fears because he was no longer facing them on his own. As Augustine pointed out "*God had one son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering*". Jesus had to surrender to the Father's will in the same way that we do. "Let me be with you" is the Father's whisper to us in the midst of whatever daunting circumstances we find ourselves and it is as though such a "yes" to God releases a spring, or opens a door, so that God can flood the one who accepts (and everyone else involved) with the perfume of new grace, new love. At the end, God is giving *himself* to us to get through whatever may be the cause of our suffering

With much love,

*Augustinians On-Line*

[www.augustinians.org.au](http://www.augustinians.org.au)

Stay in touch with the latest news from the Augustinian community through the Province's website. Details of upcoming events in Augustinian spirituality and in parishes and schools around the country can be found on this easy to use site.

Links to local lay Augustinian associations and the international community can also be found on this site.

[www.augnet.org](http://www.augnet.org)

Augnet is a website containing a total of 1,800 pages about Augustine's life and work, and about history and activities of the Order of Saint Augustine. It contains pages on Augustinian Friends in Australia and England.

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## Leaders reflect on the 2010 Congress

### **Mareeba 25 August 2010 Jeanette Hartley**

*Before I write my response, I wish to congratulate Sylvia, Maureen and Ruth and other members of the Augustinian Friends/community who were responsible for any part of the Brisbane Congress which was beyond great. I cannot find the words to praise the whole weekend enough.*

As I look back over my own handwritten notes from the Congress and then read the Amici notes from Dr Joe Kelley, I was happy to see that the phrases I had written and what Joe had written, dovetailed somewhat. One of the sections which resonated with me was the pilgrimage into the soul to discover ourselves in God as well as the journeying outwards towards justice and peace: interiority and exteriority.

Cutting right to the bone for me was Augustine's writing which states, 'God does not demand much of you. He asks back what he gave you, and from him you take what is enough for you. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. When you possess superfluities, you possess what belongs to others'.

Continuing this profound thought with what Paul Wilson spoke about, it really put me in my place and I must work out what to do about this. I was motivated once again to go to Scripture for knowledge and to look at it with Augustine in mind. Insights into Augustine himself and his relationship with Monica were clarified even further, as was the knowledge of Augustine's social position and the possibilities open to him – most prestigious.

My main points are: Interiority/exteriority, Wealth/poverty/justice, Knowledge of Augustine, Scripture

### **North Harbour 27 August 2010 Sue Mackey**

How great it was to catch up with Augustinian Friends from all over the Nation at our Congress in July. It was an excellent venue and our thanks go to Villanova College for the use of the first class facilities.

also to the organising committee for the smooth running of the three days. This is no easy feat!

What a privilege to have access to our two world class presenters, who had such an excellent knowledge and understanding of Saint Augustine – his writings and teachings. Both Dr Joe Kelley and Paul Wilson made the Congress an outstanding success by their deliberations. I was particularly impressed and struck by Dr Joe Kelley's discussions on Interiority. He was able to translate this into lay-person's language and to explain how St. Augustine reflected within himself and found God within. He explained God must be within others too. The focus of our lives should be looking for God within the people we are dealing with. Paul Wilson was just as informative in what St. Augustine was talking about so many years ago and bringing it into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the challenges that he put before us. Paul gave us plenty to think about as well. Friendship and Community. Friendship to Service to others, and how we can help one another and Go Forth on our Path.

### **Holy Spirit Parish St Clair 31 August 2010 Margaret Moriarty**

Thank you to all concerned with preparations before, during and after the Conference in Brisbane. Congratulations on a job well done. I just want to share our 'good news' story.

Peter and I had very comfortable accommodation at Southbank, however, it was further out from the conference venue than we had anticipated. Peter had worked out we could catch a bus to and from the College each day, so we were fine. However, our guardian angel had made other arrangements. Trish McGrath from Villanova College took us under her wing and graciously transported us more than once back to the motel. This was especially wonderful late at night.

At the end of the conference Trish once again offered to drive us to the station, however, not wanting to be a further burden to her we graciously declined saying we were 'ok' We said our goodbyes to everyone, including Trish and we went over to the main building to get our bags, get organised and get going! As we stepped onto the driveway to leave, a car was just arriving at the gate to also leave, and you guessed it - Trish was the driver, we looked at each other and just laughed – Trish said "I'm not really stalking you- but it looks like I really was meant to give you a lift after all" Trish dropped us at the station and from there we got the train to the airport and home. Thankyou Trish for being so kind and thoughtful. I just want to say a big 'Thank you' to Trish and all the Brisbane Friends for their gracious hospitality and friendship over the weekend.

Peter and I have been to all four Congresses and they just get better each time. It's so good to see familiar faces and catch up with old friends. Best wishes to all.

### **South Yarra, Melbourne 3 September, 2010 Judith Duncan**

As I reflect on the experience of the 2010 Congress I have in mind a picture of a body of water shimmering in moonlight, a multi-faceted reflection of individual shining parts making a sparkling and cohesive whole. The overall organisation of the Congress was so smooth and well-co-ordinated, a result impossible to achieve without careful planning and behind-the-scenes effort from Maureen, Ruth, Sylvia, the Villanova community and their myriad helpers. The excitement and anticipation were palpable as we assembled to begin our journey, to go forth on our path. It was a moving experience to create the spiral path of stones representing all of us making our separate paths as one in the spiral, journeying together. Dr. Joe Kelley's presentations were quietly inspirational in taking us into ourselves, using Augustine's writings to illuminate the role of memory in leading us to the Divine Within and of making the outward journey on God's path for each of us. Paul Wilson's presentations on social conditions and the need to work for peace and justice put the challenge back on each of us; the magnitude of the problems as presented seemed very daunting. It was heartening indeed to learn of the work being done locally and overseas through Augustinian involvement and persistence, as was the reminder to be realistic, not overwhelmed!

Learning more about Augustine in the context of such freely-expressed fellowship was truly nourishing, a fitting way to provide food for the journey each of us is undertaking.



## A message from Joe Kelley

From July 1 to 4, my son Patryk and I had the pleasure and honour of joining the 2010 National Congress at Villanova College in Brisbane. It was our first trip to Australia. Traditional Augustinian hospitality, together with that famous Australian welcome, known the world over, made our visit both memorable and powerful.



See:-Maureen thanking Joe and Patryk

In these days when our Church is beset on many sides with troubles and scandals, it was good to spend time with Augustinian friends whose steadfast witness and generous service is so encouraging. Participants in the Congress brought with them a truly impressive knowledge of Augustine and an inspiring dedication to Augustinian ideals. The community and friendship that were shared during the Congress bring to mind Augustine's own words on the subject of friends and their healing love: "I admit that I find it easy to abandon my whole self to the love of them, especially when I am wearied by the scandals of the world,

and I find rest in that love without any worry. I, of course, feel that God is in that person to whom I abandon myself with security and in whom I find rest. And in that security I do not at all fear the incertitude of tomorrow stemming from human fragility.... (*Letter 73.10*)." The gathering of Friends at the Congress gave these words, written over sixteen hundred years ago, new value and currency!

I'm sure that the inevitable return to daily life and its responsibilities makes the Congress feel like an event in another sphere! But even the thirteen thousand miles that separate Patryk and me from our Australian friends cannot sever the bonds of love and respect that were forged during the Congress. Your conviction in faith, your commitment to love, and your spirit of hope have made a deep and lasting impression that is a source of encouragement. As I continue my teaching, writing, and administrative duties at Merrimack College in Massachusetts, memories of the Congress, and specifically of the participants continue to inspire me in my day to day work.

Together we explored the message that Augustinian life involves a pilgrimage into the soul to discover the divine presence. We affirmed that Augustinian community also involves a journey together out into the challenging places of society that cry out for justice and long for peace. Though the National Congress is over, it is important that we sustain each other at the local level in both of these movements—the interior pilgrimage into the mind and heart, and, strengthened by God's presence, a constant Passover into works of justice and peace.

Paul Wilson invited us into the demographic and economic numbers that detailed the realities of poverty, social exclusion, and very limited opportunity. He connected the Congress with the struggles that so many people endure day after day. Augustine would say that it is Christ, the Whole Christ present in his members, who suffers this poverty, this exclusion, and this lack of opportunity (*Exposition of Psalm 74.4*). As Paul made clear, it is our responsibility as Christians and as Augustinians to respond, each in our own way and according to our talent and means, to Christ who suffers hunger, sexual exploitation, political exile, and grinding poverty. "God does not demand much of you," Augustine wrote in his *Exposition of Psalm 147.12*. "He asks back what he gave you, and from him you take what is enough for you. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. When you possess superfluities, you possess what belongs to others."

As Australia wrestles with the issues of population growth, Fr. Tan's brave and moving testimony to his own experience of exile, separation, and having to build a new life made Australia's challenge of immigration real for all of us. I can't tell you how impressed I was with the Friends' willingness to confront such pressing problems with the openness of faith and the hospitality of Augustinian charity.

After the Congress, Patryk and I enjoyed the hospitality of the Augustinian communities at Greystanes and Brookvale. Fr. Paul secured for Patryk the opportunity to climb to the top of Sydney Harbour Bridge. (During Patryk's climb, I sat in a local pub with Paul and Keith Holland, an Augustinian classmate from my Villanova University days!). Perhaps Patryk's climb can serve as a symbol of the Congress.



Just as Sydney Harbour Bridge is itself the magnificent result of much planning and hard labour, so the Congress was the successful outcome of careful preparation and attention to detail by so many over the past two years. Just as the climb to the top of the bridge is facilitated by experienced guides, so the Congress enjoyed the input of so many who set the stage and helped us enter into a deeper appreciation of Augustine. Just at the climb to the top of the bridge is not made alone, but with others, so the Congress was an experience of being and moving together in trusting support of one another. Just as the reward of the climb is a magnificent view of the city, the harbor, and the sea beyond, so the Congress provided us with a platform from which to glimpse the territories of spirituality and social justice where we must travel to explore, and respond. Like the top of the bridge, the Congress provided us with new and powerful perspectives on Augustinian life and its relevance for today's world.

Thank you, Augustinian Friends, for the faith and love you shared with us. Thank you for the hope that you give to us and to each other. I think the following words of Augustine best describe the experience of the Congress as a time when "...signs of friendship sprang from the hearts of friends who love and know their love returned, signs to be read in smiles, words, glances, and a thousand other gracious gestures. So were sparks kindled and our minds were fused inseparably, out of many becoming one (*Confessions IV.8.14*)."

Joe and Patryk Kelley

## **Pilgrims' Progress - Eleven Augustinian Pilgrims travel to Far North Queensland**

Eleven of us arrived in warm and steamy Cairns on different flights on different days, our intention to take up the invitation to make a pilgrimage to honour Augustinian sites in Far North Queensland. By Monday afternoon we had all been greeted and gathered for refreshments with local Friends at The Coffee Works in Mareeba. A welcome package for each visitor contained informative literature for our trip, and, thoughtfully made up by Jeanette, on a string for us to wear, a scallop shell - the pilgrim's badge.

In the evening, travellers and Friends collected again for a BBQ and more camaraderie in Fr. Rob's car shed - an early night, though, ahead of an early start next morning.

Previously, the 60-odd km drive from Cairns airport to Mareeba had taken us through Kuranda (some southerners thought they had at last arrived in the real Queensland!) Alas! So brief a flit through Tropical Paradise - a mere morsel from the splendid cornucopia which is the Queensland landscape.

Now, however, we were to begin the 268 km drive north to Cooktown, a long and uncomfortable trek in bygone times, but for us a three-hour luxury in an air-conditioned mini-bus. There were scant five towns or settlements on that whole journey, but the scenery is glorious: changeable suddenly or gradually, from open woodland to densely forested hills; past countless termite mounds, over numerous dry creek beds and a few running rivers; occasionally loose cattle in the scrub, and in the sky, the odd bird of prey. Remnants of ancient volcanic plugs, extrusions, and other geological activity dot the area as peaks and boulders and escarpments. Whenever the road took us over a rise, there were gasps at each new panoramic treat. Thank goodness we had Frank on board to point out special features and share some history and anecdotes. As a Far North copper not much has escaped him (including a load of prisoners, apparently, in a vehicle which broke down on a slippery slope!)

Black Mountain was left to surprise us, though. Not till we passed it did we notice the spill of innumerable thousands of huge black blocks of granite carpeting the entire north side - amazing environmental art by Mother Nature herself! Then, at last, historic Cooktown - 'Gateway to the York Peninsular' - and virtual twin in age to Sydney. Out the pilgrims piled into the heat and humidity of the Far North: Pam, the two Lenores, David, Karleen, Elizabeth, Josie, Mary, Sylvia, Ruth, Maria - and our hosts: Jeanette, Kay, Graeme, Frank, Imelda, Vera, Anni, our celebrants Fr. Rob and Deacon Ralph, and our driver, Eddy.

The James Cook Museum is a clever marriage of the history of the site - the original 1889 Convent and school of the Sisters of Mercy - and that of the various cultural groups active in the area, including the Indigenous inhabitants, Captain Cook's ship-menders, and European and Chinese settlers in pursuit of gold, land, and livelihood. The outlook from the upstairs balcony gave us the Endeavour River and Bay, with the midday play of light and haze that so inspires the souls of those who would capture in paint or photograph, the spirit of our land...Beautiful!

Our hosts served us a delicious fresh lunch on the verandah of the next door presbytery set in a tropical garden, and then it was off to the Cooktown cemetery, to celebrate the high point of our day - Mass in honour of the Augustinian presence in this massive region. Two of Cook-town's original three Irish Augustinians are buried here - Fathers John Hutchinson (1836 -1897) and James Dominic Murray (1847 - 1914). Both were eventually created bishops of the Vicariate of Cooktown, Father Murray having spent some years in Echuca\* before returning to the North. By 1888 Father Hutchinson had recruited four Irish Sisters of Mercy to establish a school for the Cook-town district, the Order being operational there till they were evacuated during World War II. The Sisters never returned, but we salute also their sacrifices by honouring the seven early nuns who are buried in the same cemetery precinct. Our humble outdoor tribute was joyous and holy thanks to Father Rob and Deacon Ralph, and the Mareeba Friends who had prepared instruments and voices to add an extra liturgical gem. For a few minutes we silenced the birds...

The return trip was, of course, a rewind of the morning, yet different, golden with sundown and end-of-day ruminations. Wednesday's tour south would be a different lesson in history, geography, and social interaction. Thus, the following day, with a few less locals, our group climbed into the minibus and headed off in light rain to Innisfail, the round trip of about 250km being less than half of yesterday's journey. Despite the weather, the lush green human-made and natural fecundity of the "food bowl of the North" did not disappoint. Plantations of bananas, mangoes, avocados, sugarcane, coffee, tea and many other good things abound, but our main destination was the once Augustinian Parish of Innisfail. Nor did that disappoint! The Friends from Our Lady of Good Counsel, undaunted by the weather, were there in numbers. They welcomed us warmly, fed us to the full, and entertained us with a few good stories. For this wonderful hospitality we thank them! Some of Cyclone Larry's destruction of the area in 2006 was still in evidence, as we saw in our hosts' beautiful church. Nevertheless, reconstruction everywhere is progressing.

Sylvia took advantage of this midday gathering to formally thank our Mareeba hosts with the promise of a special floral arrangement for St. Thomas' church for all to enjoy at the following weekend's Mass. There were also flowers for our marvellous 'minders', Jeanette and Kay, for their exhaustive planning of our trips, their ability to deal with any change in detail, and their organization of other Mareeba Friends, who likewise, contributed so generously in time, meals and shuttle service from one point to another. Thank you, all! We returned to Mareeba inland over the Atherton Tablelands - so well named! - stopping at the Gallo Dairyland Cheese and Chocolate factory to refresh. Oh. And also to indulge in one or two (or whatever) additional gastronomic fantasies. If one wished. Slurp. Ooh, sorry about that! And if filling up from the 'food bowl' during the day was insufficient, we were at it again that evening at a local club, all dressed up and invariably screaming with laughter to the background sounds of the final of the NRL State of Origin Series. (For those who want to hear it again: Queensland beat NSW 23 to 18.)

One last word on the tucker: breakfast next morning at Vince's was sumptuous but not before guests and hosts came together in Thanksgiving, at early morning Mass at St. Thomas'. From here we said goodbye to Fr. Rob and Ralph and some of our Northern Friends, and with several colourful hot air balloons in the sky to adorn our memories, we prepared to leave Far North Queensland. As we pilgrims had come, so we left - dispersed on early, late or round-about flights, some with the thrill of Sky-rail still in their heads, most with a final site visit to St. Monica's Cathedral in Cairns.

We give thanks to all who looked after us so well, and to Eddy for his good driving, and wish Peace, Love and Blessings on everyone. The promise to continue fellowship and friendship shared in Brisbane was indeed fulfilled.

***Pilgrims' Progress written by Maria Radenov of Kyabram***

Footnote: \*Did you know that both 'Mareeba' and 'Echuca' mean 'meeting of the waters' in the respective local Indigenous languages?