

# Augustinian Friends - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

September 21st. 2011

Dear Friends,

last Wednesday evening I went along to Manly Vale parish Hall to share some thoughts on Augustine's idea of life as a pilgrim journey (perigrinatio) along which we travel together on our way to God. The title of the talk was "*Sing Alleluia and keep on walking*" and I intended to focus on the fact that it was a joyous and even triumphant procession because Christ was leading us along an admittedly hard and narrow path.

As you may also read elsewhere, it was a very enjoyable night and ideas flowed freely among the audience. So much so that I began to see the topic in a new light particularly as I heard Sylvia Phillips, our National leader, describe the graced way in which she had been invited to first join "Augustinian Friends". Fr. Brendan Quirke made her an offer she couldn't refuse (as only Brendan could) to come to one of the Priory gatherings. From then on her life as a lay person in the Catholic Church was transformed from one of individual duty to one of communal delight at hearing many of the ancient riches of Augustine's thought being conveyed in ever new ways to a group of kindred spirits.

She reminded us of the purpose of our Association, which is to support the spiritual lives of the members and to provide them with a broad base of understanding what it is Augustine teaches as essential in our following of Jesus Christ.

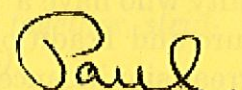
*"The steps, you see, which we take along the highway are the love of God and of our neighbor. If you love, you're running, and the more consistently you love, the faster you run, while the less you love, the more sluggish your progress along the road".* (Sermon 346B, 2)

With insights such as this Augustine provides us with ways of dealing with the complex questions that arise from our vastly changing world scene (and our not always understandable Church scene). It became clear to me after last week's meeting that many people have to deal with these issues on their own and here we have a valuable gift we can invite them to share in, one which offers them the opportunity to accompany Augustine on a spiritual journey as relevant today as it ever was.

*"As pilgrims on the way, sing in hope, but keep on marching. Are we making progress in good works, in true faith, in right living? We are in the right way. So don't rest for the sake of singing, but sing and march in the hope of eternal rest."* (Sermon 2563)

And make sure you invite a friend to come along too,

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.

## THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO VATICAN COUNCIL II

It is said that a good story is always worth repeating especially if the story teller has lived longer than his listeners who are either too young to have heard it before or are old enough to have forgotten the details. This story was told at the time of the Vatican Council II to explain what had been happening in the Catholic Church for the past century and a half.

Leading up to 1962 (the year good Pope John XXIII surprised everyone by opening some windows in the Vatican to let the Holy Spirit breeze through), the image the Church had of itself was of a perfect Institution, practically self contained and meant to operate quite separately from the rest of society. It was equivalent to the Orient Express, that fabled train that travelled across continents on its own tracks in air-conditioned splendour while the rest of the world stumbled along by cart and horse or on bicycles, barges or by foot. The Catholics looked out of the windows of their dining car, or sleeping quarters or club cars at the passing throng and never felt they had to be part of this struggle because they had everything they needed on board (the seven sacraments, the priests to administer them and the Pope at the front driving the train) - until they arrived at their own station where they were deposited safely into the hands of God.

With the publication of the various documents of Vatican Council II the Orient Express was stopped dead in its tracks and the passengers were told that they were going to have to get out and join the rest of the world in its pilgrimage towards God which was not along straight lines after all, but over mountains and difficult terrain that required travelling with the rest of humanity, yet helping them with their burdens, guiding them along the right paths, and contributing to the up-building of God's kingdom within the modern world.

Many took on this role of being a pilgrim *'People of God'* and began to use their talents in all sorts of new and inventive ways. But, so the story goes, there were a good number of Catholics who stayed on the train waiting for it to start up again. In the intervening years some have returned to make themselves comfortable in the abandoned compartments and there are even signs that others are trying to stoke up the fires so that the train can move again!

A more helpful image of the Church was formulated by the Council Fathers in their major document or 'Constitution' using the opening words "Lumen Gentium" to describe Christ (and his body, the Church) as the 'light of the nations'.

*"Christ is the light of the nations and consequently this holy synod, gathered together in the Holy Spirit ardently desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring to all humanity that light of Christ which is brightly visible in the face of the church. . . The present-day situation lends greater urgency to this duty of the church, so that all people, who nowadays are drawn ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ". (LG1)*

This fuller unity in Christ applies as much to the faithful within the Church as to those whom they accompany through the pilgrimage of life. Each member is by baptism consecrated and inserted into the body of Christ and becomes a sharer in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of the Head. The Council Fathers recognized that the Holy Spirit is manifested not only in the magisterial teaching from above, but also from the grass roots of the laity who have a 'sense of the faith' (*sensus fidelium*) which guides them as surely as Scripture and Tradition guides the whole community. This concept is not often quoted but it has great significance for the Church in many parts of the world today where the voice of the

laity finds expression in many - modes from twitter to Facebook and every available blog on the web in order to have their say in matters that affect their life within the Church. To the extent that such methods of communication are being used we are now in a position to know which way the wind is blowing on a wide number of issues and to detect the turbulence that prejudice, ignorance and anger generate compared with the gentle murmur of the breeze of the Holy Spirit.

*"The whole body of the faithful who have received an anointing which comes from the Holy One cannot be mistaken in belief. It (the Spirit) shows this characteristic through the entire people's supernatural sense of the faith, when, "from the bishops to the last of the faithful", it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals. (LG , 2, 12)*

The role of the laity before Vatican II was minimal with most of the emphasis given to the role of ordained ministers, the hierarchy and the Pope. Evelyn Waugh, in one of his novels, pronounces that lay involvement in Church matters was tantamount to madness. The rights of laity were mainly to receive the sacraments handed down by the clergy and, in the well-known adage, 'to pray, to pay and to obey'. In 1917 the Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope Benedict XV allowed the laity the opportunity to form associations but only if they were under clerical direction.

In the 46 years since the Council ended it may seem that not much has changed apart from the Indian summer of Liturgical reform. But there has also been the unleashing of scriptural scholarship at every level; the development of a new basis for understanding moral theology; the renewal of the prayer life of individuals and groups; and the ongoing interest in adult spiritual formation among an increasing number of tertiary trained laity.

As Fr. Joseph Lam, OSA, pointed out at the conclusion of a series of articles published in the Australian Augustinian Newsletter (*"Vatican II and the role of the Laity"*):

*"Lay ministries are an integral part of the Church's mission to the world. They are not assistants or servants of ordained ministers. Rather, through baptism lay people are mature Christians who are sacramentally called and confirmed by God to serve the world from within the Church. The late Blessed Pope John Paul II encouraged the lay people to dedicate their lives to this task: "There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, to live out their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world'." (J.P. II, to World Congress of New Communities, May 30th. 1998)*

Forty years ago the wry conclusion to my train story was that we would all climb out of our comfortable compartments and become pilgrim people with the rest of humanity, carrying the lamp of faith and love to light up the whole world. Anyone left on board would be regarded as out of touch with where the Holy Spirit was leading us. In this new century quite a different scene is being played out and it is the people who have stayed on the train who are exerting the most influence as to the immediate direction the Church is going. What is required of both parties in the foreseeable future is to come together and listen to one another so that a clearer understanding of each point of view can be reached.

In his sermons St. Augustine often asks his listeners, as spiritual pilgrims, both to challenge and support each other in love as they travel through life. He counsels those who make the journey of faith to take an interest in each others struggles along the way and to delight in the insights they share. We should not engage in theological argument for arguments sake but try to seek consensus. *"Whenever you notice that you have gone wrong come back to me; or that I have, call me back to you. In this way let us set out along Charity Street together, striding towards Him of whom it is said "Seek his face always". (The Trinity I, 1. 5)*

## Sing Alleluia and keep on Walking

*"There is only one sweet homeland, one true homeland, everything else is pilgrimage"*

(Commentary on Psalm 61, 7)

"You ask, "What does walking mean?" I'll tell you very briefly: it means *forging ahead*, in case you should possibly not understand, and start walking sluggishly. Forge ahead, my brothers and sisters; always examine yourselves without self-deception, without flattery, without buttering yourselves up. After all, there's nobody inside you before whom you need feel ashamed, or whom you need to impress. There *is* someone there, but one who is pleased with humility, let him test you. And you, too, test yourself. Always be dissatisfied with what you are, if you want to arrive at what you are not yet. Because wherever you are satisfied with yourself, there you have stuck.

If, though, you say "That's enough, that's the lot," then you've perished. Always add some more, always keep on walking, always forge ahead.

Don't stop on the road, don't turn around and go back, don't wander off the road. You STOP if you don't forge ahead. You go back if you turn back to what you have already left behind.

You wander off the road if you apostatize.  
The lame man on the road goes better than the sprinter off the road.

Sermon 169, 18

### **Out of the mouths of Babes.**

"God must have rolled over"

Among the insights shared at the meeting of Augustinian Friends held at Manly Vale last week was a delightful anecdote prompted by the comment that on many occasions we can learn from the unspoiled wisdom of little children. The story went like this:-

When a three year old little girl was told that her Grandmother had died she solemnly told her parents "God must have rolled over". At first they could make little sense of this statement until they realized that of all their children, this little one would often come into their room at night and stand by the bed in absolute silence until one of them woke up with the sensation that someone was watching them. If it didn't work on one side of the bed she would go and stand on the other side, still without a word, until one or other of her parents woke up and rolled over so that she could get in to the warmth and security of their welcome.

From this she reasoned that in order for her Grandmother to be welcomed into heaven, God must have rolled over to make room for her under the giant eiderdown of His love and mercy.

Since much of this edition has been dealing with our pilgrim journey through life it is good to know where it will all end, when God makes room for us in heaven! Paul