

Augustinian Friends - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

March 1st., 2012

Dear Friends,

each year during the month of February I get involved in teaching a Course on Augustinian Spirituality with a particular emphasis on issues of Social Justice. This year I have had 4 volunteers from Melbourne and Sydney who have come to discover what St. Augustine has to say on realities of life that are the same today as they were in his own time. Most of these volunteers will subsequently choose an area of need in their city or neighbourhood to invest time and energy in the coming year.

The taking up of such a burden would seem to be impossible were it not for an aspect of St. Augustine's spirituality which we discovered by researching the works of a 17th century French Augustinian Friar by the name of Ange Le Proust (1624-1697). As well as being a University professor and a Provincial of the Order he became a mentor for a community of nun's who are still known as the *Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova* founded for service and assistance to the poor. In their archives was a manuscript written by Fr. Le Proust entitled "a treasure of spirituality" which contains what he calls 'an admirable secret' available to all who pay attention to the writings of our holy Father Augustine and the apostle Paul. This admirable secret consists in inspiring everyone with the important counsel from the Letter to the Galatians: '*help carry one another's burdens, in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ*'. (6:2)

"This is achieved by a union of hearts in the bonds of mutual charity, and in a community whose only aim is to unite and bind individuals together under the same yoke, to bear each other's burdens, making the yoke sweet for one another and it's burden light. . ."
(Ange Le Proust)

Augustinian spirituality emphasizes *mutual* charity under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Words like bond, union, yoke all reflect a type of rhythm of relationships. We are all called by the great commandment to do works of charity, but Augustinian spirituality implies a shared charity where we carry the yoke and burden of the Gospel *together*. This mutuality which makes the command to Love possible and life's burdens light is the 'admirable secret'.

It was a delight to share this *secret* with the volunteers which now I share with you, and on the back of this page I offer a succinct version of the Rule which unpacks ways in which we can continue to bear each other's burdens,

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 Rule of St. Augustine from a Lay view point.

This synopsis of the Rule is the result of a study made at Clare Priory in 2009

Chapter I: 'Purpose and Basis of the Common Life'

'Live together in one mind and heart on your journey to God through life. God is love and we must love each other. Share everything humbly - your riches and experience, time and talents for the glory of God. Give from your heart, not just material things, *but yourself*. Don't seek your advantage only but try to be of benefit to everyone'.

Chapter II: 'Prayer'

'Persevere faithfully in prayer: think over in your hearts the words that come from your lips. Let the words that come from your lips be alive in your hearts'.

Chapter III: 'Moderation and Self-Denial'

'Remember we are equal but not the same: we should all have what we need but simplicity should be our guide in life. Enjoy what you have but try not to be too attached to this. At meal-times be thankful and encourage conversation around the table, being mindful of God in each other'.

Chapter IV: 'Safeguarding Chastity and Fraternal Correction'

'Exercise mutual care over your purity of life; seek inner beauty and purity of heart especially with regards to the opposite sex. Be open and accountable to each other because God looks after you through your brothers and sisters. Be vigilant for each other'.

Chapter V: 'The Care of Community Goods and Treatment of the Sick'

'Desire and work for the best for everybody. Though remember this includes looking after yourself adequately. Be compassionate to those who are ill and give them all the time and help they need from you. Try to do all you have to do cheerfully!'

Chapter VI: 'Love and Conflict'

'Avoid conflict but if it occurs be conciliatory so as to prevent further escalation. Be quick to give and receive forgiveness, but forgive even if not forgiven. Always love one another from the heart,'

Chapter VII: 'Love for those in authority as our way of obedience'

'Pray and work in a spirit of love, charity and friendship for and with the friars to further Christ's Kingdom, giving thanks for the richness and depth that this brings to our lives.'

Chapter VIII: 'Final Exhortation'

'Lovingly observe all that is written here, living not as slaves but as free people in the love of Christ

Refer to this text frequently and use it to view yourselves as in a mirror.'