

Friends of St. Augustine - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

February 28th. 2013

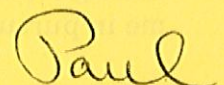
Dear Friends,

you may be surprised to receive this Prayer Resource by itself without an accompanying copy of *Amici* but I thought it was important to share with you (especially those who will not be able to attend the Congress in Brisbane), some of the themes that will be pursued there by the guest speakers and the rest of the participants.

When you read the Sermon 340 of Augustine which I have included for your reflection you will be stunned by how appropriate his words are at the present moment if we are to apply them to Pope Benedict XVI whose resignation is to occur sometime today! He too, with Augustine, asks for our prayers and support relying on the shared dignity we have in common with him by reason of our Baptism. But the duty of carrying out the office of Bishop is the task which they both found so burdensome and Augustine would sympathize because he, at 72, also handed over the responsibility for the Diocese to a young Bishop so that he could spend the last years of his life reviewing the contents of his library. The prophetic theme contained in his sermon provides the first part of our Conference topic: ***“For you I am a Bishop”*** with all its burdens and dangers. Augustine continues the theme in one of his Letters (21,40) where he writes: *“... In this life, and especially in these times, there is nothing more taxing, more arduous, more hazardous, but at the same time no greater happiness, in the eyes of God than the office of priest”*.

God is equally happy with the office of the Laity which is given to them at the moment of their Baptism: *“they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ and carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world”*. (Lumen Gentium 31) The second part of our Conference topic ***“with you I am a Christian”*** will clarify this exciting challenge. Ordained and Lay ministers do not have different missions or levels of dignity but only one task, namely, to give witness to the presence of the Kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ and be the means of it permeating ever more deeply into the world’s consciousness. By the end of this Fifth National Congress of Laity we would hope to come away encouraged by the words of Augustine: *“When you hear the Lord saying “Where I am my servant also will be”, you are not to think merely of good bishops or priests. Be yourselves also, in your own way, ministers of Christ by the goodness of your lives, by giving alms, by preaching his name and doctrine . . .*

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.



Augustinian Spirituality as the Basis for our Acting Justly in the Modern World

This essay was handed in as an assignment by one of the seven Volunteers who attended the three week 'Intensive' which took place at the Broken Bay Institute during the month of February. The young writer is a 19 year old University student who will put into practice what he has learned from the Course by working part time in Redfern as an Augustinian Volunteer over the next twelve months.

Spirituality is what our faith, values, ideals and aspirations look like in everyday attitudes and behaviours. As we are all unique in our experiences and in what we have been taught, our personal spirituality is also unique.

Augustinian Spirituality also differentiates itself from other spiritualities through its particular emphasis on the lived experience of its author. Augustine draws everything back to love. For him, the difference between right and wrong is measured by the difference between self-centred love and "agape". In *The City of God* he sees the history of mankind as the battle between these two forms of love. In Augustinian Spirituality the love for God is expressed as the love for each other. Hence the love for the poor and those in need is an expression of love for God. "Authentic love for a human being is at the same time love of God". For this reason, Augustinian spirituality has a great emphasis on community where we "make room for our brothers and sisters, bearing each others burdens". Augustine, seeing that God is communal in the Trinity, realizes that we, being made in the image of God, must also reflect our love not only to those close to us but also to the greater community.

The two aspects of Augustinian spirituality that call out to me are those that I feel to be lacking in my own life: *Hospitality* and *Interiority*. The study of Augustinian values and beliefs has raised the awareness of my own shortcomings and inspires me to incorporate such values into my own life.

Prior to this Course my view of the world was rather narrow. There were aspects of society that I looked down upon without really understanding. I failed to see the good in people and forgot that no one is born evil. Hence the idea of God existing in the core of each and every one of us really shocked me and changed the way I look at the world. As a result I'm now inspired to love others openly, and to be hospitable to everyone I meet regardless of the way they look or act. Also, the way this raises the question "How can I love God who I cannot see, if I can't even love those who I can see", which makes me want to grow in love for humanity so that I can also grow in love of God.

I feel that hospitality is something that should be incorporated into my life in the future because being hospitable to others allows us to make a positive influence on the lives of those around us. In the society we live in, where strangers are often not considered friends, simple day to day hospitality can go a long way in making the world a better place.

The concept of Interiority appeals to me because it hadn't occurred to me previously to search within myself for God. I'd always imagined my spirituality as a journey working towards God, like climbing a cliff with God waiting at the top. But the concept of interiority enforces that God is within us, at our core, in our hearts and thus always with us. This made me feel more secure, like God was close, rather than a goal in the distance that I hoped to one day reach. Also, it encourages me to learn more about myself, find out who I am as a person, who I want to be, and what I can do to achieve that.

Essentially, the reason that these appeal to me is that by incorporating both interiority and hospitality, I feel as though I can improve myself not only as a person, but that through these two things I can best strengthen my relationship with God and they will assist me in pursuing my quest to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Aaron Perez


ST. Augustine –Sermon 340 : ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION
Date uncertain. [1]

1. From the moment this burden, about which such a difficult account has to be rendered, was placed on my shoulders, anxiety about the honor shown me has always indeed been haunting me. But this sort of consideration†2 troubles me much more when the anniversary brings back afresh the old memory of that day, and sets it before my very eyes in such a way, that I feel as though I were coming up today to receive what I have already received all that time ago. What, though, is to be dreaded in this office, if not that I may take more pleasure, which is so dangerous, in the honor shown me, than in what bears fruit in your salvation? Let me therefore have the assistance of your prayers, that the one who did not disdain to bear with me may also deign to bear my burden with me. When you pray like that, you are also praying for yourselves.†3 This burden of mine, you see, about which I am now speaking, what else is it, after all, but you? Pray for strength for me, just as I pray that you may not be too heavy.

I mean, the Lord Jesus wouldn't have called his burden light,†4 if he wasn't going to carry it together with its porter. But you too must all support me, so that according to the apostle's instructions we may carry one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). If he doesn't carry it with us, we collapse; if he doesn't carry us, we keel over and die.†5 Where I'm terrified by what I am for you, I am given comfort by what I am with you. For you I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian. The first is the name of an office undertaken, the second a name of grace; that one means danger, this one salvation.†6 Finally, as if in the open sea, I am being tossed about by the stormy activity involved in that one; but as I recall by whose blood I have been redeemed, I enter a safe harbour in the tranquil recollection of this one; and thus while toiling away at my own proper office, I take my rest in the marvellous benefit conferred on all of us in common.

So I hope the fact that I have been bought together with you gives me more pleasure than my having been placed at your head; then, as the Lord has commanded, I will be more effectively your servant, and be preserved from ingratitude for the price by which I was bought to be, not too unworthily, your fellow servant.

How he can love freely, and still look for a reward

2. I am certainly obliged to love the redeemer, and I know what he said to Peter: Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep (Jn 21:16). This was said once, said again, said a third time. Love was being questioned, and toil commanded, because where the love is greater, the toil is less. What shall I pay back to the Lord for all that he has paid back for me? (Ps 116:12). If I say that what I am paying back is my herding his sheep, even here it is not I who am doing it, but the grace of God with me (1 Cor 15:10). So when can I be found to be paying him back, since he gets in first every time? And yet, because we†7 love freely, because we are herding his sheep, we look for a reward.

How shall this be? How can “I love freely and that's why I'm herding sheep” be consistent with “I request a reward, because I'm herding sheep”? This couldn't possibly happen, in no way at all could a reward be sought from one who is loved freely, unless the reward were the very one who is being loved. I mean, if what we are paying back for his having redeemed us is our herding his sheep, what are we paying back for his having made us shepherds? Being bad shepherds, you see—which God preserve us from—is something we are by our own badness; whereas good shepherds—which God grant we may be†8—is something we can only be by his grace.

The faithful asked to help him in his duties by prayer and obedience

3. So it is, my brothers and sisters, that commanding we implore you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1). Make my ministry fruitful. You are God's agriculture (1 Cor 3:9); from the outside receive the work of the planter and the waterer; from the inside, though, that of the one who makes you grow.†9 The Turbulent have to be corrected, the faint-hearted cheered up, the weak supported;†10

the gospel's opponents need to be refuted, its insidious enemies guarded against; the unlearned need to be taught, the indolent stirred up, the argumentative checked; the proud must be put in their place, the desperate set on their feet, those engaged in quarrels reconciled; the needy have to be helped, the oppressed to be liberated, the good to be given your backing, the bad to be tolerated; all must be loved.

In all the vast and varied activity involved in fulfilling such manifold responsibilities, please give me your help by both your prayers and your obedience. In this way I will find pleasure not so much in being in charge of you as in being of use to you.†11

The bishop and the faithful should be praying for each other

4. Just as it is very proper for me to pray earnestly for God's mercy to bring you to salvation, so it is right that you too should be pouring out prayers to God for me. Nor should we judge this to be unsuitable, since we know that the apostle did it; so much indeed did he long to be recommended to God by their prayers, that he himself made his plea to every community with the words Pray for us (1 Th 5:25; 2 Th 3:1; Rom 15:30; Col 4:3). And that's why I should indeed be saying this, being able in this way both to encourage myself and instruct all of you. Just as I, you see, have to give thought with great fear and anxiety to how I may blamelessly carry out my duties as bishop; so you for your part must make a point of showing a humble and eager obedience to everything that is commanded you.

So let us pray together, dearly beloved, that my tenure as bishop may be of profit both to me and to you. It will profit me, if I tell you what has to be done; and you, if you do what you hear. You see, if we all pray tirelessly, I for you and you for me, with the perfect love of charity, we shall all happily attain, with the Lord's help, to eternal bliss. May he be graciously pleased to grant us this, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

NOTES

1. There is no indication of date. My instinct is to date it well on during Augustine's episcopate, to about 415.
2. Reading *hujusmodi* consideratione with the Maurists. A later edition reads *hujus molis* consideratione, by consideration of this load.
3. Reading *pro vobis* with the Maurists, instead of the *pro nobis*, for me, of the later edition; a meaningless tautology.
4. See Mt 11:30. The later edition leaves out the word "light."
5. A not very striking contrast is being made: *nobiscum si non portat, succumbimus; si nos non portat, occumbimus*.
6. A text quoted in Vatican II's document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 32; in the chapter on the laity, curiously enough, not in that on the hierarchy and the bishops, where one would have thought it belongs.
7. He and Peter, and all bishops and priests, ideally speaking.
8. A contrast in the Latin between *quod a nobis absit* in the first parenthesis and *quod ab illo nobis adsit* in the second.
9. See 1 Cor 3:6.
10. See 1 Thes 5:14. These are things Paul is telling the Thessalonians to do; so Augustine is reminding his people that they have to share his pastoral burden of doing all these things as needed, for their fellow sheep.
11. *Vobis non tam praeesse quam prodesse*.