

Friends of St. Augustine - Prayer Resource Guide

From our Chaplain

June 7th. 2013

Dear Friends,

In the two months since we gathered in Brisbane for the *Fifth National Augustinian Lay Conference* I have found myself reflecting on what a transformative experience it was for all those who attended. Something inside of us was changed as a result of the insights we gained from the speakers who, each in their own way, challenged us to live out our faith more dynamically and personally into the future.

An example was given by Bishop Eugene Hurley on the first morning when he spoke of meeting an indigenous woman who told him of the two influences that best defined her as a person. The first was the local People or Nation she belonged to, and the second was the fact she had been brought up a Catholic. "But", she said, "Catholic is not what I am, it is who I am." I wondered if I could say the same about myself, but as a result of these three days I think I am now well on the way to doing so!

Another striking feature of the Conference, which should not be surprising, was the ease with which people welcomed one another and celebrated being together from the very first moment we met on the Thursday evening at the local RSL Club . This was continued throughout the days, particularly at the Conference Dinner on board the *Kookaburra Queen* - which was a delightful setting for everyone to mix and mingle while the lights of Brisbane surrounded us.

But I was especially touched at the final Eucharist when so many came forward to receive their newly minted badges as members of the 'Friends of St. Augustine'. It indicated to me there was a faith dimension to our fellowship which lifted us above being a mere social club and made of us a true image of what it means to be Church. In one of his letters to a lady called Felicia St. Augustine could have been describing *us* during the days of the Conference when he wrote:

"It is common membership in the body of Christ which brings Christian friends so close together. By being members of the true Church and by loving one another in Christ, Christians are able to create that unity which is so hard to achieve in this life but which will attain perfection in heaven. Only within the church could people form those relationships which would attain perfection in the next life and, conversely, only by forming such mutual loving relationship could the unity of Christ's body be maintained". (Letter 208)

May 'who I am' continue to be maintained in this friendship with Christ, Augustine and one another,

With much love,

Paul

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Sermon 174. (Translated by Edmund Hill OP. New City Press. 1992).	4

The Purpose of the Prayer Resource Guide

Each of us is on a journey to God like our patron Augustine.

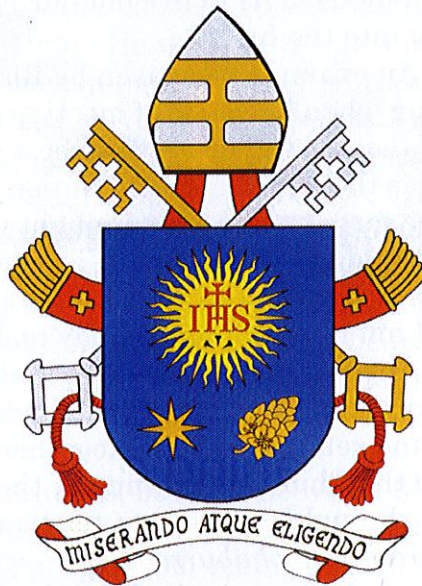
The Friends prayer resource is offered to you as a support in your day to day prayer and will be sent to you 4 times a year.

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 motto used by Pope Francis and it's link to his understanding of St. Augustine's Sermon 174. 2

The coat of arms chosen by Pope Francis is a duplication of the one designed for him when he became Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Added to the simple blue shield are the symbols of papal dignity consisting of a bishop's mitre above crossed keys of gold and silver bound by a red cord. At the top of the shield the emblem of the Jesuit Order has remained central, a radiant sun carrying the letters IHS which is an ancient monogram for the name of Jesus. The letter H is crowned by a cross and beneath the letters are three black nails.

Lower down on the shield there is a star symbolising the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ and of the Church, alongside a stylised lily or spikenard used traditionally to represent St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church.



The motto of Pope Francis comes from a Homily by an eighth century monk known as the Venerable Bede who was commenting on a passage of Scripture where Jesus calls St. Matthew to be his disciple. "Jesus therefore *sees* the tax collector and since he sees *and chooses with mercy*, (*miserando atque eligendo*)" He says to him, "Follow me". [Homily 22] The insight contained in this passage is the look that Jesus gives to Matthew implying that there was a tug of love coming from the Master before the disciple even made a choice.

It is well documented that on the Feast of St. Matthew in 1953 the young Jorge Bergoglio experienced, at the age of 17, the loving presence of God in his life. Following confession, he felt his heart touched with a gaze of tender love calling him to the religious life which eventually led him to the doors of the Society of Jesus. The sense of being "Lowly but Chosen" never left him and has become the motto of his ministry to the Church in South America and now to the world.

Not so well documented is the preface Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio wrote as an introduction to a scholarly book (written in Italian) by the late Fr. Giacomo Tantardini entitled The Time of the Church according to Augustine. (Citta Nuova Press, 2009). When reading the commentary contributed by our now Pope it is touching to see that the themes he chooses to emphasise are very close to his own life experience and echo the motto he adopted for his ministry so many years ago. But more importantly it shows the delight he takes in the

words and wisdom of St. Augustine conveyed in the lectures given by Fr. Tantardini. "If Augustine is relevant, if he is our contemporary - as this book documents - he is so especially because he describes just how to become and remain Christian in this time of the Church. 'That short time' - Augustine repeats several times - 'which goes from the Lord's ascension into heaven in his true body to his glorious return'.

"The most striking image for me of how one becomes a Christian, as it emerges in this book, is the way in which Augustine recounts and comments on Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (pp. 279-281). Zacchaeus is small and wants to see the Lord pass, and so he climbs a sycamore. Augustine says: "Et vidit Dominus ipsum Zacchaeum .Visus est, et vidit/ And the Lord looked at Zacchaeus himself. Zacchaeus was seen, and therefore saw".

Pope Francis goes on to make the point: 'Some believe that faith and salvation come with our effort to look for, to seek the Lord. Whereas it's the opposite: you are saved when the Lord looks for you, when He looks at you and you let yourself be looked at and sought for. The Lord will look for you first. And when you find Him, you understand that he was waiting there looking at you - He was expecting you beforehand. That is salvation: He loves you *beforehand*. And you let yourself be loved. Salvation is precisely this meeting where He works first. If this meeting does not take place, we are not saved. . . . Whereas, when you look at the Lord and you realize with gratitude that you are looking at Him because He is looking at you, all intellectual prejudices go away'.



Jesus and Zacchaeus, fresco in the Basilica of San Angelo in Formis, Capua (Caserta)

In the dazzling few weeks since the Holy Spirit moved in our Church to call forth a new Bishop of Rome we have been refreshed in so many ways by the warmth and practicality of the man from Argentina. It was a joy to discover his links with St. Augustine and to see with new eyes what the call to evangelization, conversion and renewal might mean. What is evident in the Pope's own story and in his grasp of what Augustine has to tell us (in his typically vibrant way), can only be of help when it comes to discovering the task before us. What ultimately sustains the Church's holiness and mission is not good administration and policy only, as essential as these are, but the conversion of each of us who, like Zacchaeus, allows the Lord to 'love us into Love' so that our own hearts are transformed and we become the means of transforming others. May we make the Pope's motto our own, that we are 'Lowly but Chosen' long before we ever knew our God was gazing at us with love.

(Material gathered from *30 Days: in the Church and in the World*. Issue No. 12 2009)

SERMON 174.

“On the Reading from Luke’s Gospel about Zacchaeus: 19:1-10”

So acknowledge Christ, he is full of grace. He wants to pour out into you what he’s full of himself; this is what he’s saying to you: “Look for my gifts, forget your own merits, because if I went looking for your merits, you wouldn’t come to my gifts. Don’t exalt yourself; be little, be Zacchaeus.” [2].

. . . Now look at my friend Zacchaeus, look at him please, wanting to see Jesus in the crowd and not being able to. He was lowly, you see, the crowd was proud; and the crowd, as is the way with a crowd, was hindering itself from seeing the Lord well. He climbed away from the crowd and saw Jesus, without the crowd getting in his way. [3].

. . . And the Lord saw Zacchaeus too. He was seen, and he saw; but unless he had been seen, he wouldn’t have been able to see. . . . In order for us to see, we have been seen; in order for us to love, we have been loved. *My God, his mercy will go before me* (Ps. 59:10).[4].

So now then the Lord, who had already welcomed Zacchaeus in his heart, was ready to be welcomed *by* him into his house; and he said, *Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down; since I have to stay in your house* (Luke 19:5). He thought it was a marvellous piece of good luck to see Christ. While imagining it was a marvellous piece of luck, quite beyond words, to see him passing by, he was suddenly found worthy to have him in his house. Grace is poured forth, faith starts working through love.(Galatians 5:6) Christ who was *already* dwelling in his heart is welcomed into his house. Zacchaeus says to Christ, *Lord, half my goods I give to the poor; and if I have cheated anyone of anything, I am paying back four times over* (Luke 19:8). It’s as if he were saying, “The reason I’m keeping back half for myself, is not in order to have it, but to have something to pay people back from.” So there you are, that’s really what welcoming Jesus means, welcoming him into your heart. Christ, I mean, was already there, he was *in* Zacchaeus, and through him was saying for himself what he was hearing from his mouth. That, you see, is what the Apostle says: *For Christ to dwell by faith in your hearts* (Ephesians 3:17). [5].

So now, because it was Zacchaeus, because he was a head tax collector, because he was very much of a sinner, that crowd being, as it would seem, of sound mind and good health, (though it was preventing people from seeing Jesus), that crowd was astonished and expressed disapproval of Jesus entering the house of a sinner. This amounted to disapproving of the doctor entering the house of a sick person. So because Zacchaeus was scoffed at as a sinner, scoffed at though by those of unsound mind after being restored to sound health himself, the Lord answered the scoffers, *Today salvation came to this house*. Clearly, if the Savior hadn’t entered, salvation wouldn’t have happened in that house.

So why are you astonished, sick man? Call in Jesus as well, don’t regard yourself as being in good health. It’s with hope that a person is sick who welcomes the doctor, but desperately sick indeed is the one who in a frenzy beats the doctor. So what sort of frenzy must possess the person who kills the doctor? And on the other hand, what must the goodness and power of the doctor be, who from his own blood made a medicine for his crazy killer? After all, the one who had come to seek and to save what had got lost didn’t say in vain as he hung there, *Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing* (Lk 23:24). “They are in a frenzy, I’m the doctor; let them rave and rage, I bear it patiently; it’s when they’ve killed me that I will heal them”,

So let us be among those whom he heals. The word is human and worthy of total acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tim, 1:15); whether great or small, to save sinners. *The Son of man has come to seek and to save what had got lost* (Luke 19:10). [6].

[The Works of St. Augustine: Part III - Sermons: Vol. 5. pp.259 - 261.]