

Friends of St. Augustine - Prayer Resource Guide

September/October
2015

From our Chaplain

October 2nd, 2015

Dear Friends,

we are told that St. Augustine retired from being a Bishop at the age of 73 and spent the last three years of his life reviewing his whole library of letters and sermons thus allowing a much younger man to take over the task of running the diocese. I was reminded of this because I recently had a letter from the RTA demanding that if I want to keep my licence to drive I should get a health check from my doctor before turning 75 at my next birthday. It occurred to me that most parish priests would have followed Augustine's example long before I have!

With or without a licence St. Augustine tells us *"On earth we are always travelers, always on the go. Do not grow complacent with what you are. Where you have become pleased with yourself, there you get stuck. If you say "That's enough", you are finished. Always add something more. Keep on walking. Always forge ahead"*. (Sermon 169, 18) On another occasion he gave this encouragement: *"It is necessary that we be always new, without permitting the influence of the old to subvert us. Growing, progressing, renewing our interior being every day; we should not progress by growing old, rather, we should let newness grow within us"*. (Sermon on Ps. 131)

These kind of sentiments have been with me as I prepare to celebrate with Fr. Laurie Mooney, (at the end of this month), the 50th Anniversary of our Ordination to the priesthood. You would think we would be resting on our laurels after all that time, but in fact there is a sense that there is so much more we would like to achieve if only the years had not flown by so quickly.

"The time of our pilgrimage, our wandering in exile, is very short, while in our 'home country' time does not exist. After all, between eternity and time there is a considerable difference. Here you are required to show devotion; there you take rest". (Sermon 16A, 1)

As we look back on our lives the memories that surface need to be gathered and harvested with gentleness, thanksgiving, compassion, some sorrow, and always with forgiveness. Most of all there is a sense of wonder that God's love has surrounded us at every turn, made evident by the care of those who have accompanied us throughout our journey. In a special way, the years I have spent as your Chaplain have made of you not only 'Friends of St. Augustine' but my friend as well and for this I am truly grateful. May we continue to share this journey together on the way to our 'home country'

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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.

With much love,



THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON RACISM AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY.

As we continue our life-long task to better understand and promote the DIGNITY of each and every human being as the fundamental principle of Catholic Social Teaching, today it might be helpful to focus on the person of St. Augustine and his admonition from the Rule: 'Honor God in one another whose temples you have become'.

We can state with certainty that Augustine was African. We can fairly safely say that if Augustine were in the USA today, in our neighborhood now, he would be considered Black, although he was likely not black of skin but brown. This reality prompts certain questions in light of historical and recent events. Were Augustine alive today, in Staten Island, Baltimore, or many other communities, would his father or mother Monica have to instruct him on how to act so as to not draw the attention of the authorities? What other systemic and social realities would have been embedded in his experience were he alive in our country today?

We are invited and challenged to make the concerted effort to clearly understand and present Augustine as someone from a family background which he himself identifies as poor. We can genuinely present Augustine as an intellectually gifted but economically challenged African youth, one who fell in with a gang (the Wreckers), who rebelled against his parents' religion, who sought happiness in sports, lust and entertainment of varied sorts. Perhaps reflection on these realities might assist us in encouraging people to grasp the socially constructed nature of our own identity and our Christian responsibility to assess and respond to the needs of others, particularly those who have been marginalized.

This is one particular way in which reflection on and celebration of Augustine might invite us to ponder the dignity of human persons and alert us to the challenges to that human dignity today. This is one way, (among the many and varied ways in which we are already involved), in which we can truly celebrate Augustine's life and contribution to our world in each era: when he tells us that we are to honour God in one another - which is a principle we should continue to promote as fully and fairly as possible in our lives and ministry.

Fr. Art Purcaro, O.S.A.

