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Augustinian Friends— Seeking God Together

Amici

Co-Leader's Message

Anne Hallaway and
Peter Moriarty

What a great Congress Echuca turned out to be!

The Sydney committee extends sincere gratitude to all those in Echuca and Kyabram who helped make it such a success. The hospitality and assistance we experienced was remarkable and appreciated by organisers and delegates alike.

The generosity of those who travelled long distances including from North Queensland, Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, Belgium, Manila and the USA was testimony to the relevance and attraction of St Augustine's message for today. Keynote speaker Father Theodore Tack OSA from Okalahoma, helped us to appreciate this gift, his words reinforced by the experience of other excellent presentations from Sr Lorraine Testa OSA, Paul Griffiths, Pat Mullins and Margaret Wilcox. You will enjoy reading impressions from those who attended.

A true spirit of friendliness and unity was evident throughout the weekend as beautiful liturgies led by Fathers Paul, Laurie and John, blended with social gatherings including a river cruise, dinner and BBQ. We are sure that everyone who went to the Congress carried away great

memories; we encourage them to share and develop what they gained with their own communities.

We are grateful to those who have sent letters and for reports written for this publication and others. They truly express a celebration of Augustinian Spirituality.

Friends at Many Vale plan to gather in July to discuss ways of extending Augustinian spirituality and hospitality with the broader community. We invite members to keep in touch and share ideas as we work towards this goal as an association in our local areas.

Election of leader will take place in the coming months, in order to vote members must be financial. Some have not paid subscriptions, unfortunately we will be unable to send their Amici indefinitely due to the cost of printing and postage. Annual membership is \$20. If you have sent payment and not received a receipt, please contact the Secretary (address details on page 4).

The Congress was marvellous, let's not wait for the next one before we share our friendship and faith.



Echuca Lay Congress 2001 logo

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Augustinian OnLine

Stay in touch with the latest news from the Augustinian community through the Province's website: <<http://www.augustinians.org.au>>
Details of upcoming events in Augustinian spirituality and in parishes and schools around the country can be found on this easy to use site. Links to local lay Augustinian associations and the international community can also be found on this site.

Election of New Association National Leader

Anne Halloway

An important Association event is the election of a new National Leader of Augustinian Friends this spring. The term of office of the current National Association leaders and committee of Augustinian Friends (Anne Halloway, Peter Moriarty, Margaret Burke, Sue Mackey, Gerald Mackey) is coming to a close.

Election of leader of the Association will be conducted by postal vote through Amici. After the incoming National Leader is elected in December 2001, a new national Committee will be formed to take our wonderful Augustinian Friends movement forward for the next three years.

We now invite members of Augustinian Friends to nominate themselves or others for the position of National Leader. The leader's task is one of fostering the Christian and Augustinian vitality of the Association with the assistance of a National Committee and appointed chaplain, Paul Maloney OSA. Committee positions will be available at the end of this year.

A process of election of national leader is contained in our Association guidelines Spirituality, Membership and Leadership of the Association of 'Augustinian Friends' in the Australian Region of the Order of St Augustine. From the document that was tabled and endorsed at the recent Echuca National Congress:

- (26) Nomination of one's self or of others for the office of leader should be made in writing to the current National Committee. A person nominated by another(s) may accept or decline nomination. The Provincial Council will review and may veto nominations for the position of National Leader(s) before names are proposed to the membership for election.
- (27) Financial members of the Association are eligible to vote.

- (28) A profile and photo of approved candidates together with ballot papers will be distributed with the appropriate issue of Amici. Voters are to choose one name from among the candidates listed and return their marked ballot by mail to the National Committee by the required date.
- (29) That person is elected to office who receives the highest number of votes.

(The guidelines make provision for the sharing of the position of National Leader as has been the case with the founding Committee. Copies of the guidelines are available to members by request from the Secretary.)

To the Secretary Augustinian Friends I nominate myself, or
(cross out what does not apply) for the position of National Leader of Augustinian Friends.

Signed:.....
Address:.....

When we step out in faith God is there to strengthen and guide us. When accepting the role of co-leader three years ago, I saw it as a way of giving something in return for the many blessings I had received. In my experience of the Association, we received further blessings we would never have expected. With confidence in our Association, I urge members to consider themselves for the position of leader. I encourage those who can to take an active role in our Association which is still in its infancy. There is great scope to develop and add to our present large membership of almost 400. Those serving as members of Augustinian Friends are always assured of the support and assistance of the Order. The present Committee offer the new leaders our continuing help.

When considering the important issue of leadership and service in Augustinian Friends, I urge you also to contemplate some challenges made at the Congress. In his talk "The Christian Life", Father Ted Tack OSA implored us "to listen more attentively to what the Spirit may be saying to all of us in these new times in the Church."



Fr Ted Tack OSA

We are aware that great change is taking place and we recognise that the role of the lay person is crucial to our changing Church. We have the opportunity, the privilege and indeed the obligation to take an active role in developing and sharing our faith. This can be quite daunting! The emphasis of "Augustinian Friends" however is to support one another as we explore together the teachings of St Augustine that are so relevant in our lives today and ultimately draw us closer to God. We are meant to build community, though this is not about individual effort. When we work together we are truly strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Father Tack also highlighted that "every Christian is called to be a leader."

Sister Lorraine Testa OSA reminded us too about the need to be involved:

[B]eing Augustinian is not a spectator sport...By not committing yourself you

Koori dancers





Water, baptism, one with Christ

become a fringe dweller...It's about feeling the passion of being loved by a God who loves you like no other, and you, having no choice but to love back.

How does each of us apply these challenging words to our calling as Christians and Augustinian Friend? Please consider and pray for the needs of the Association.

Augustine on the Murray

The First Augustinian National Congress for the Laity

Warwick Jones

Splash!

In a life spanning the 4th and 5th centuries, Augustine cast the great rocks of his teaching, learning and wisdom in the pool of the Church. Even that great intellect could not envisage that some of the ripples would lap on the banks of the Murray in the first years of the 21st century — but they did, as we gathered in Echuca on Friday 27 April 2001 for the first Augustinian National Congress for the Laity.

I have lifted my soul to you, O Lord, as if I carried a jug to a fountain.

These beautiful words of Augustine's were used by Fr Paul Maloney OSA in the

welcoming liturgy as he blessed the jug and bowl used throughout the Congress to carry water as a sign of the symbolic incorporation of Christians into Christ through baptism.

The heart is at the centre of the Augustinian emblem and it was from the heart that our Congress speakers animated us. Our group discussions after each talk ensured that we were not idle bystanders. This article can reflect only a few brief impressions of an outstanding experience given to us by these speakers.

Following our welcoming liturgy, Sister Lorraine Testa OSA, of the Melbourne community of Augustinian nuns and a school principal, told of her journey from a faith-filled Maltese Australian family to the realisation that her home was within the walls of Augustinian spirituality. Lorraine grabbed our attention, enlivened us with her concept of the "city dwellers" — those active in the centre of Church life and the "fringe dwellers". "Being Augustinian is not a spectator sport!". We now realised that the Congress was up and running.

Pat Mullins from Brisbane grew up in an Augustinian parish, was educated in an Augustinian college, Villanova, and was, for a time, a student at the Augustinian Clayfield seminary. His Augustinian background is reflected in a lively sharing of a Christian family life with his Anglican wife and their children. Amid the demands of busy professional responsibilities (he a solicitor, his wife a Supreme Court judge), they have found time to serve the community as office holders in church, professional and other bodies.

Our first day ended with Margaret Wilcox from Western Australia, a painter and sculptor, presenting, with obvious dedication and enthusiasm; slides of her unique paintings and sculptures depicting Augustinian concepts.

On the second day, Paul Griffiths of Manly Vale Parish looked to the account of Augustine's struggles as an inspiration for the title of his talk, "Confessions of an Ordinary Australian". This was a frank and courageous account of the lows and highs of his journey to where he now finds

himself, an active committed Christian family man.

The other second day speaker travelled a mere 10,000 kms from Tulsa, Oklahoma for the sole purpose of attending the Congress. Fr Ted Tack OSA is a teacher, author and a past Prior General of the Augustinians. His talks, "Building Community and Searching for God, An Augustinian Approach" and "The Christian Life: An Augustinian Perspective" commanded our attention. He, like all good teachers, greatly helped us by supplying sheets containing quotations from Scripture, Augustine and other sources with which his talks were peppered.

On the first afternoon we were led towards

Christ be our light



the Murray. By a small lagoon, we witnessed a dance by young men, students of the local Catholic High School and representatives of a people already possessing an ancient spirituality by the time Augustine lived.

We then boarded a paddle-wheeler for a cruise with a purpose. In a brief ceremony, Fr Laurie Mooney OSA and others disembarked upstream to collect some Murray water. At the next morning's liturgy, led by Fr John McCall OSA, this water was poured from the jug into the bowl especially made for the Congress and mixed with waters from the various parishes and localities represented. Water, shells and sand from the Indian Ocean mingled with water from the Murray, thus symbolising the coming together into one community of the 134 participants in the Congress. All dipped their hands in the mingled waters.

Another mingling took place when we gathered at a local club on Saturday evening for the Congress dinner. An unexpected interruption was the arrival of the all singing and dancing "Brigidine Nuns", obviously following the Rule of St Whoopi Goldberg. The resemblance of the exuberant sisters to some of the sober local parishioners was remarkable.

Anyone who attended the Congress could not fail to appreciate the immense amount of work put in by the organising committee,

Blessing the water —
Fr John McCall OSA



under the leadership of Augustinian Friends Co-Leaders, Anne Halloway and Peter Moriarty of Manly Vale and St Clair parishes respectively, the Echuca committee and the many helpers and, of course, the Augustinians. Irresistible morning and afternoon teas and lunches made sure that material, as well as spiritual, needs were well satisfied. The organisers no doubt had their anxieties but, to the observer, the Congress, like the Murray, seemed to flow along. Our Master of Ceremonies, Kevin Hadley of Manly Vale parish made sure we adhered to the exacting timetable.

Like all good things, there had to come an end. On the Sunday, a business session, a reflective liturgy and discussion, a celebrated Mass to which the magnificent local choir added so much and our farewells at the lunchtime BBQ brought the Congress to an end.

What cannot be fully conveyed in words is the spirit which pervaded the Congress. All one can say to those who were not there is:

Try it next time!

Experiencing the Congress

Monica Meagher, Margaret Starrs,
Mary McCormack
for
Friends from Sth Yarra and
Prahran

Along with representatives from 10 Augustinian communities, we were pleased to present the parish banner at the opening ceremony of the Congress plus take part in the formation of a jigsaw creating the Congress logo. This ceremony saw Fr Paul Moloney OSA, Chaplain to Augustinian Friends, light a candle carrying the Congress logo and bless the Augustinian jug and bowl. ...

As we gathered from all parts of Australia, each person coming with their own sense of faith and spirituality, it was Sr Lorraine Testa OSA who set the scene for the weekend. She spoke to us of the ways our spirituality comes into being, of lay



Sharing in faith

spirituality and of the naming of this spirituality as Augustinian. She described this in these words:

There are no experts or learners, only people who meet each other at the heart level. Put another way, it's where the God in me meets the God in you.

As we listened to her, our own parish came to mind as she went on to speak of the thoughts of Hedley Baere a renowned Australian educationalist, noted for saying that buildings aptly symbolise the spirituality of an Institution. Think of your local church. What spirituality is it portraying? Is it an Augustinian one? Is it one that says: "All welcome"? Is it one that says: "Here is where you will find rest for your souls?" Is it one that encourages the study of Scripture? Contemplation? Friendship? Companionship amongst friends? Note, we said friends. We purposely haven't divided the Church into groups: priests, religious, ministers, welcoming group etc. We tend to believe that parishes need to break away from identifying groups by their responsibilities! What parishes should be about — especially Augustinian ones, is equality, about building up the body of Christ that has one heart and one soul. ...

A special moment was our time by the Murray River. As Echuca is the aboriginal word for the meeting of waters, it was significant that aboriginal students Koori River Dancers from St Joseph's College

welcomed us with a tribal dance. Next we journeyed along the river for a short distance collecting water, which became part of the blessing ceremony for the next day. The blessing ceremony was symbolic in that water from each locality was brought to the bowl by delegates from various communities and mixed with Murray River water. All were invited to come forward to stir water and bless themselves and light a candle from the Congress candle. ...

The keynote speaker, Fr Ted Tack OSA began his first presentation by saying:

I am not an Augustinian scholar. I am rather an amateur – and that’s a beautiful word, which means a “lover”! – and I am indeed a lover of Augustine’s thought, especially on the spiritual life. I am convinced that this man who lived sixteen centuries ago still has much to say to our generation and future generations because his approach to the gospels is unique. As an author and friend of mine put it in speaking about my first book: Fr Tack has popularised St. Augustine. I really like the way my friend put it, because my greatest desire has been to make Augustine accessible to people who perhaps never had a chance to know much about him, as well as to those who are interested in learning more, but are not into heavy research.

The theme of his first talk was “Building Community & Searching for God”. By way of conclusion to this talk he asked:

What would Augustine say to us about our search for God and building up the community?

One cannot live on bread alone!



Articles of faith

Simply put, Augustine would say:

Keep moving forward! Keep struggling! Keep up your good efforts!” Let your faith continue to guide you as you continue on your journey toward God through everyday trials and blessings. Your search for God will not go unrewarded, because whether we believe it or not, God wants to be found. And that is a marvellous truth, which requires our cooperation. God wants to be found, so a humble search in love will never be fruitless. Search and build, build and search, confident that your efforts will be rewarded, perhaps in ways you yourselves could never imagine. We are the house of God... Building this house involves hard work; its dedication, however, is an occasion for great rejoicing.

In speaking of “The Christian Life”, Fr Tack highlighted the key issues:

- What does it mean to be a Christian?
- Love is all-embracing.
- Our Neighbour is Christ Himself.
- The Joy of being a Christian.
- Never give up on God’s grace!
- The most difficult task of all: love your enemy.
- A key word: influence.
- The greatest example: Jesus Christ.

- A joyful struggle.
 - The mark of a genuine Christian.
- In concluding this talk, Fr Tack said:

I would like to conclude these thoughts with a magnificent statement from Augustine which sums up what our attitude should be as we continue our journey toward the Lord through the joys and struggles of this life. Though some of us may not be able to sing well, there is no one of us who cannot sing as Augustine describes, for the song he proposes is a song of the heart before it reaches our lips:

“Let us sing alleluia here on earth, while we still live in anxiety, so that we may sing it one day in heaven in full security...O the happiness of the heavenly alleluia, sung in security, without fear of adversity! We shall have no enemies in heaven, we shall never lose a friend...So then my brothers and sisters, let us sing now, not in order to enjoy a life of leisure, but in order to lighten our labours. You should sing as travellers do — sing, but continue on with your journey. Do not be lazy, but sing to make your journey more enjoyable. Sing, but keep going...Keep making progress.” [Sermon 256,3] ...

The Sunday Eucharist was a truly liturgical celebration of all that had evolved over the weekend.

Amici

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Eucharist

The extraordinary hospitality extended by the Echuca parishioners was very much appreciated by all. The Sydney committee and Echuca committees are to be congratulated for their efforts in making the First National Congress for the Laity a memorable experience.

In Their Own Words ...

Fr Ted Tack OSA

(excerpts from post-Congress letter)

The Congress was a huge success. I was very much impressed by the opening paraliturgies on Friday and Saturday. They were well thought out and very meaningful. And the testimony given by Pat Mullins and Paul Griffiths were very lively and touched ever so many Augustinian points. Sister Lorraine's enthusiasm and dynamic presentation — as well as her personality throughout the Congress — contributed much for all of us. And Margaret Wilcox's unique approach to the Confessions gave us all a better understanding of Augustine's insights....

I will ever be grateful to the committee for inviting me to be part of this extraordinary gathering. It was amazing to see so many people, travelling such long distances to celebrate the Augustinian spirit and how it can help us in our Christian life, and, well, just to be together [I loved that hymn we sang so often: Together!].

I have returned with a treasureful of gifts — some material, but most of them spiritual — including new insights into how Augustine's thought can truly help our laity in their struggle to be faithful Christians.

Paul Griffiths
(Congress speaker)

The end result was beautiful and the feeling in the closing Eucharistic celebration summed

Be Not Afraid

You say, "It's impossible".
God says: "All things are possible". (Luke 18:27)

You say, "I'm too tired."
God says: "I will give you rest". (Matt 11:28-20)

You say, "Nobody really loves me".
God says: "I love you". (John 3:16 -13:34)

You say, "I can't go on."
God says: "My grace is sufficient." (II Cor. 12:9 - Psalm 91:15)

You say, "I can't figure things out."
God says: "I will direct your steps." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

You say, "I can't do it."
God says: "You can do all things." (Phil 4:13)

You say, "It's not worth it."
God says: "It will be worth it." (Romans 8:28)

You say, "I can't forgive myself."
God says: "I forgive you." (I John 1:9; Romans 8:1)

You say, "I can't manage."
God says: "I will supply all your needs." (Phil 4:19)

You say, "I'm afraid."
God says: "I have not given you a spirit of fear." (II Tim 1:7)

You say, "I'm always worried and frustrated".
God says: "Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5:7)

You say, "I don't have enough faith."
God says: "I've given everyone a measure of faith." (Romans 12:3)

You say, "I'm not smart enough."
God says: "I give you wisdom." (I Cor 1:30)

You say, "I feel all alone."
God says: "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Heb 13:5)

up the whole conference — beautiful and full of the Holy Spirit. I don't think I ever heard a congregation participating so enthusiastically! It was a great privilege to be part of the Congress and watch the Spirit working so powerfully. It is really amazing to reflect on the growth of Friends over the last three years! My lasting impression will be of the warmth and hospitality of our hosts from Echuca and Kyabram. Their powerful witness of the Augustinian charisma of friendship and hospitality provided a tremendous foundation for the formal program.

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