

Volume 5

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Augustinian Friends— Seeking God Together

AMICI

Leader's Message

Paul Griffiths

I write to you this Easter with blessings for peace in our hearts and in our world.

Augustinian spirituality in practice

The beginning of 2003 has seen tremendous support committed by the Augustinian Provincial Council to assisting formation and development of lay Augustinian spirituality. Firstly, many of you will have had the opportunity to meet with Fr Paul Maloney OSA, our chaplain, on his trip around the country visiting all of our Friends groups. We are already seeing the fruits of this sharing in new activity in the Friends network. Actually, Fr Paul has been traveling nearly non-stop for the last two months and has just returned from an Augustinian meeting in Rome which looked at ways in which the Order can support lay spirituality at an international level. Paul will provide a detailed report on this trip and the initiatives discussed in the June edition of *Amici*.

In addition to this work, the Provincial Council, following the Chapter last year with lay input, has established a committee to support formation of lay Augustinian spirituality in parishes, schools and various other forms of ministry, including our own Friends group. This has been given a high priority and is a wonderful initiative.

Further, the Augustinian Centre for Spirituality, Greystanes, NSW has published its list of events for 2003 (see calendar in this edition of *Amici*), which includes a number of new courses on Augustine and Augustinian spirituality.

I'm sure these initiatives will bear considerable fruit.

Congress 2004

I have been asked by a number of people about the next Congress here in Australia. It will be held in the second half of 2004 to create a link to the Augustinian Province Chapter scheduled for July. By doing this we hope to build on the wonderful connection made between the Augustinians and lay collaborators highlighted at the Chapter in Brisbane last year. The request to link the two events came from the Provincial Council late last year and was warmly welcomed by the Friends National Committee. The proposed venue is Sydney as feedback from delegates from across the country at the Echuca Congress suggested this was the central point for transport from all other points.

We will be forming a Congress Steering Committee in coming months and would welcome nominees from our membership. If you are interested, please e-mail me (contact details are on the back page) with some background on skills and experience relevant to the event. Ideas are also welcome. The Steering Committee will focus on establishing the Congress themes, daily programmes, finalising dates and venue bookings, and contacting potential speakers. In early 2004, we will establish a Logistics Committee to manage event details. We should be able to announce dates and venue in the June edition of *Amici*.

Provincial's Easter Message

Fr Pat Fahey OSA

My dear Augustinian Friends, we are approaching Holy Week and Easter in which the Church celebrates solemnly the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. With this in mind, we have an opportunity to put our Augustinian friendship into perspective.

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Augustinians 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.

It is a friendship based on Christian love by which each of us is called to recognise, respect and respond to the Christ-presence in each other, following the example of Augustine who made this the hall-mark of his spirituality. Following the example of Jesus, Augustine based his life on the single factor of relationships - relationship between God and us, and between us and each other. The relationship between God and us in Christ Jesus became his model for our relationship with each other.

In his *Letter to the Philippians*, Paul delineates that relationship in his famous Christological hymn:

His state was divine,
yet he did not cling to his equality with God
but emptied himself to assume the condition
of a slave,
and became as we humans are;
and being as all humans are, he was
humbler yet,
even to accepting death, death on a cross.

All this was for love of us. He "emptied himself" for us and took on our human nature out of love for us. In this way, he set the **example** of how we should act towards each

Wisdom for our times, from Augustine

Those warriors are indeed great and worthy of singular honour, not only for their consummate bravery, but also (which is a higher praise) for their eminent fidelity, by whose labours and dangers, along with the blessings of divine protection and aid, enemies previously un-subdued are conquered, and peace obtained for the State, and the provinces reduced to subjection. But it is a higher glory still to stop war itself with a word, than to slay men with the sword, and to procure or maintain peace by peace, not by war. For those who fight, if they are good men, doubtless seek peace; nevertheless it is through blood. Your mission, however, is to prevent the shedding of blood. Yours, therefore, is the privilege of averting that calamity which others are under the necessity of producing.

Letter 229, to Darius, 429 CE

other in true Christian friendship. That to which Christian friendship calls us is the practice of "self-emptying love" (*kenosis*) for each other, after the example of the Lord Jesus.

Is it easy? No, it is not. But this is the wonderful thing about the word *icon* or "example" as we find it in the New Testament. The "example" given by Christ does not stand outside us. It is within us, actually giving us the power to do that to which the example calls us. We empty ourselves for the good of each other because the example of Christ within us impels us to do so.

May Easter which celebrates that self-emptying love stimulate our friendship towards each other after the example of Augustine who loved Christ so much. May we act to bring about reconciliation in our society and peace in our torn world.

Friends Meet Coorparoo (Qld)

St James parish, Coorparoo, is a parish with a strong Augustinian legacy. While a number of St James parishioners held membership in the Friends movement, the group's meetings have lapsed for some time. However, Fr Paul Maloney visited St James early in February 2003 and was urged by Fr Brendan Quirke (St James' parish priest) to convene a meeting of current Friends and others who might be interested in such a group. About 30 people shared a meal in the Priory, after which Father Paul spoke of his hopes for the future of the Friends movement in Australia. The group decided to reactivate the Augustinian Friends as one of the parish groups and to hold its first session on Monday, 10 March.

The St James Friends holds sessions lasting about two hours. The first hour is a shared mealtime (Fr Brendan is particularly pleased about this as it solves his meal worries for the night!). The second hour is devoted to spirituality. The group decided to meet on the second Monday of every second month. Thus, the schedule for 2003 is: 12 May, 14 July, 8 September and 10 November 2003. Meetings commence at 6:30pm with a shared meal in the Priory. The group will trial this programme over the remainder of the year.

The spiritual session of the first meeting was led by Jim McDonald and was based on the English Friends' discussion sheet "Augustine for Today: The Desert". About 20 Friends, including a couple from our neighbouring parish, were involved in an evening of

discussion and sharing that all founds both informative and worthwhile from a personal spiritual point of view. Members were so keen to share their feelings that Jim had to rule by the clock on several occasions. The 12 May meeting will be led by Karleen O'Reilly and is a session all are really looking forward to. The discussion will be based on a video of the life of Augustine.

The Convener of the St James group is Jim McDonald. Like many of our parishioners, Jim does not live within the parish boundaries. But, again like many of these "outsiders", Jim has a long association with the Augustinians having been born in Innisfail and spent most of his boyhood in Mareeba and Cairns. Jim can be contacted by email at jandlmc@powerup.com.au.

If you cannot join us at our parish in person, then you can visit it via the Net. When Fr Brendan set about having a website built for the parish, he had a definite mission for the site. As well as just acting as a channel of parish information, the site is to be an avenue for prayer and it is a reflection of the parish's Augustinian tradition. The address is: <<http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~stjames/index.htm>>. The site's builder, parishioner Jim McDonald, came up with the following structure for the site, reflecting these goals: a welcoming page that contains parish information such as rosters and quick-flick buttons to other information; and a section called "The Parish", which shares information on all parish groups.

With regard to prayer, the site has two sections. The first is called "The Sacraments". This contains Fr Brendan's thoughts on preparations for the sacraments of baptism and marriage. The second is simply "Prayer". This section is probably the most important in the whole website and is constantly evolving. At present, it features Augustine on prayer as well as formal prayers with which we are familiar, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross and the readings for the coming Sunday. As this is going to press, the members of the parish are looking at ways in which Pope John Paul's wish that members of the laity use the Liturgy of the Hours can be fulfilled.

The last section is called "The Augustinians". It has information on Augustine and on Augustinian saints, as well as a section devoted to Augustinians in Australia (not that these good men could not also merit a place in the preceding section!). It is a section where people can go to find out wherever Fr So-and-So got to. All pages of the web feature the Augustinian logo.

The site is updated weekly, including the inclusion of photos (naturally, what happens in the parish will determine the number of photos that are carried by the site), as well as material relevant to the liturgical season. For example, at present, there is prominent notice of the Easter timetable. There is also a section on the Archdiocese's synod. At present, it is simple a link to the Archdiocese's own website but, while the parish consultation phase was being conducted, this page held very much more. During the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Province, the site carried a series of large photo reports of the celebrations.

All of the work on the site is done outside the Priory but of course, Fr Brendan retains control of the site and the responsibility for its contents. While updating is generally done as a matter of course, any new development is done by Jim, after Fr Brendan has given his editorial okay. This just means that the two of them have to get their heads together from time-to-time.

Who visits the site? All sorts of people, from teenagers to those in their eighties; people in the parish; to some in Ireland; to overseas-based children of parishioners who will ring home to say: "Mum. I saw you on the website!"

Melbourne Friends

On 25 February, the Melbourne Friends gathered in the Priory dining room for their first meeting of 2003. The meeting started a potluck summer tea, followed by business and a presentation on the Rule of St Augustine.

The business involved the group accepting a draft plan for the year and discussing aspects of that plan. The plan for the year settled upon is, as follows:

- No meeting was set for March–April as there will be a Lenten series in the parish.
- The May meeting will focus on St Monica and thoughts on prayer as set out in the Rule.
- In June, it is hoped that our new members be officially received and given their badges at a Saturday evening Eucharist, with Fr Paul Maloney present.
- The July meeting is set-aside to discuss and reflect upon conflict, forgiveness and relationships as they are written of in the Rule.
- In August, Melbourne Friends hope to join with Kyabram and Echuca for a celebration of the feast of St Augustine, possibly to be held in Kyabram.

- For October, there was interest in taking a historical tour, "Seeking Goold in Melbourne", visiting the various places connected with Archbishop James Goold OSA, where he lived, or that he had built, or which contain items relating to him.
- In late November, over a common meal, the group will take an evening to consider Augustine and Advent.

During the presentation on the Rule of St Augustine, four questions were explored:

- Why are we looking at the Rule?
- How, why, where and when the Rule came to be?
- What does the Rule say and what are its treasures?
- How has the Rule been made use of over the years?

St Clair (NSW)

Two gatherings are planned for the St Clair Friends this year, one gathering in May or June and another to celebrate St Augustine's Feast day.

The St Clair Friends were saddened by the passing away of Nancy Wheatley over the Christmas period. An Augustinian Friend and long standing parishioner of Holy Spirit St Clair, Nancy is missed.

The war with Iraq is quickly coming to a close and we hope that the Iraqi people will embrace their chance at liberty and democracy.

The parish is busy at the moment with the refurbishment of our parish centre. Fr Peter Wieneke has spent a great deal of time in planning and setting up the changes and it is hoped that they will be completed before he leaves in June. A Parish dinner dance will be held on 31 May. All Augustinian Friends are welcome to attend. The dinner dance is a celebration of the refurbishments and also a fund raising opportunity. It is hoped that over 400 will attend the evening.

Fr Andrew Batayola OSA joined us from the Philippines. We hope he settles in and feels welcome in St Clair.

After Lent and when the sombre mood of war is over, we wish all Friends the joy and hope of Easter.

From a Friend

ED's note: My Mum sent me this prayer on a day I was feeling blue. It struck a chord with me, so I thought I'd share it with you.

I asked God to take away my habit.

God said, No.

It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole.

God said, No.

His spirit is whole, his body is only temporary

I asked God to grant me patience.

God said, No.

Patience is a by-product of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is learned.

I asked God to give me happiness.

God said, No.

I give you blessings; Happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain.

God said, No.

Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow.

God said, No.

You must grow on your own!, but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life.

God said, No.

I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things.

I ask God to help me LOVE others, as much as He loves me.

God said...Ahhhh, finally you have the idea.

THIS DAY IS YOURS DON'T THROW IT AWAY

In Augustine's Words

Have faith, and the Christ you cannot see is with you...If you want to have life, do what the disciples travelling to Emmaus did. They showed him hospitality.

The Lord, you see, was like someone who still had a long way to go, but they held him back. When they reached the place they were making for they said, *Stay with us now, the day has faded towards evening.*

Constrain the stranger if you want to recognise the Saviour. What had been lost through infidelity was restored through hospitality.

Sermon 234, 4.

Amici

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Augustinian Centre for Spirituality, Greystanes Programme 2003

A small oasis of quiet and hospitality in suburban Sydney, the Augustinian Centre at Greystanes seeks to assist persons and groups of all faith backgrounds in their spiritual journey. The Augustinian community offers spiritual direction, reflection days, courses in prayer, meditation and personal development, and individual residential directed retreats. Concessions available for all events.

To book, contact:

Laurence Mooney OSA

2 Hewitt Avenue

Greystanes NSW 2145

(02) 9896 6794

ljmooney@ozemail.com.au

www.augustinians.org.au

Evening courses

Evening classes run 7.30–9.00pm

UNDERSTANDING JESUS

growing in knowledge of Jesus as a person; seeing one's life touched by God through Jesus. Discovering a mature Catholic approach to the Gospels. Relating everyday pain and hope to Jesus and finding friendship with him.

Tuesday evenings, 6 May–3 June; \$75

AFFIRMING WHO I AM

adult personal and spiritual development for men and women. Re-experiencing personal strengths. Learning new appreciation of one's person and life journey. Insights from psychology and spirituality into the healing presence of God in one's own self.

Tuesday evenings, 29 Jul–2 Sept; \$75

LIFE WITH ST AUGUSTINE

a programme for those seeking awareness of God at work in their lives. St Augustine has appealed to the imagination of many generations. He gives contemporary persons entry to their own spirituality too. Knowing more about this very human saint gives a deeper understanding and appreciation of one's own journey.

Tuesday evenings, 21 Oct–18 Nov; \$75

Prayer days

Prayer days run 9.45–3.00;

Bring own lunch; refreshments provided

FOCUS ON FEELINGS IN PRAYER

to consider prayer without feelings is to limit our soul and reduce prayer to something very arid. Yet our feelings are our great spiritual resource. They enable us to glimpse the God around us whom we have yet to come to love. A day focussed on prayer through feelings.

Thursday, 22 May; \$15

OUR HEARTS ARE RESTLESS

St Augustine experienced conversion to God as restoration of his own self. His prayer "*I find no safe dwelling for my soul except in You. Only in You are all my scattered desires brought into unity; from You no part of me ever strays*" will be the focus for this day. Experience guidance in inner stillness and rest with God.

Tuesday, 16 September; \$15

LIFE AND HEALING

each of us needs peace and assurance in the face of stresses, tensions and conflicts. Yet prayer heals us gradually of all fears. "*Give our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you.*" This day will offer support in prayer and in seeing the signs of healing in our lives and relationships.

Thursday, 13 November; \$15