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Augustinian Friends— Seeking God Together

AMICI

Co-Leaders' Message

Maureen Atkins & Ruth McGowan

Dear Friends,

As you read last time our editor of many years has relinquished her position to enable her to move on in other directions. Sarah-Jane has been our editor since its earliest days. We thank her for her dedication and passion over many years and for her marvellous contribution. Thank you Sarah-Jane and all the very best of wishes for your future directions. Our new editorial team is Celina Da Silva and Mary McCormick from South Yarra Parish. We have every confidence that they will carry on the wonderful work so ably carried out by Sarah-Jane.

In our times we have come to rely very much on communication as an essential part of our daily living. In Augustine's time he and others wrote letters to each other to communicate. We are so grateful and indebted that this was so. Patience was a necessary virtue as this correspondence took months and even years to reach its destination and for an answer to be returned. Even in our own lifetimes – Consider the enormous changes in communication, from our younger days to the present times when we have many forms of instant contacts. World news is almost instantaneous. We have indeed become a global village! Do we appreciate this? Or do we take it all for granted? Perhaps we should ponder this more deeply. We are also very conscious of the importance of Amici in communicating with all the Friends. As the readers, we are looking forward to your responses about how communication can be improved and the information that is important to you in your journey with Augustinian Friends in the 21st Century.

We have also been looking at what resources we have to learn more of our studies of Augustine. Groups could share the knowledge of what they have, and any suggestions for further study would be welcome. Perhaps we can develop a resource bank that can be shared across the different groups in Australia.

It is also time to be looking forward to 2010 and begin to think on themes etc for our next Congress in Brisbane. All suggestions would be welcomed about the focus and the development of Augustinian Friends.

May you all enjoy a time of rest and recreation during the Easter Season as you reflect on the significance of the Resurrection in our Christian story.

Australian Visit

Famous Augustinian scholar, **Fr. George Lawless OSA** is coming to us in April. Not only is he fulfilling a long held dream to visit our land but we will have the opportunity to hear him speak when he visits the different centres.

See inset for details.

Sarah-Jane

Leaders share high praise...

Sarah-Jane, as Editor of Amici you have been an inspiration! Thank you for sharing your own story and many gifts for the benefit of Amici readers. May you and your family be blessed as you continue to explore Augustine's family history and the history of the Rule and how it may speak to families today.

Monica Meagher

Sarah Jane, through three leadership teams and the birth of her children, has lifted the standard of the Amici publication to a new level in terms of content and presentation. Every quarter, and sometimes in difficult personal circumstances, Sarah-Jane has diligently co-ordinated contributions, edited and delivered the key communication to our members for nearly a decade. On a personal level, she has been a wonderful person to work with due to her energy, deep spirituality and strong commitment to the Augustinian lay movement. We thank Sarah-Jane for her great work and her family for their support and understanding. We will continue to enjoy her companionship amongst Friends and look forward to the sharing of her gifts in a new role within the Augustinian family. **Paul Griffiths**

Sarah Jane has been particularly generous with her time and skills for "Augustinian Friends" over many years. When she first began her editorship of "Amici" I was impressed with her enthusiasm as she commuted long distances to a legal office in Sydney for work and still found the time to attend meetings and gatherings in addition to her constant involvement with "Amici". We have often read in this publication of her joy at being a mother, an extremely busy one at that, her selfless effort continued despite the constant demands on her time and I feel sure all readers join me in expressing our sincere gratitude. Thank you Sarah-Jane, may God Bless you in all your endeavours. **Anne Hallway**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sarah-Jane for all the time and effort she has put into Amici for the last eight years. Good work Sarah-Jane.

Sue Mackey

And so says **Peter Moriarty**

WYD

My name is **Michael Dela Cruz** and I have been employed by the Order of St Augustine to not only prepare them for World Youth Day (WYD), but also to organise the International Augustinian Youth Encounter that will happen the week after World Youth Day.

Turning 25 years old this November, I have been heavily involved with the Augustinian community for over five years in which I helped start a thriving youth group in the Augustinian parish of St Clair. I still serve there as core youth leader, meeting with young people from the community every weekend either at our youth Masses and youth nights or at our connect groups.

In 2005, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Cologne, Germany and to experience WYD with a group of 21 young adults from the Australian Augustinian Community. Although we were regarded as one of the smaller communities at WYD, we understood the meaning of the Augustinian spirituality of community, through our close relationships with one another. Our journey to WYD also took us to other Augustinian communities in Korea, the Czech Republic, Germany and Italy.

Youth ministry has had an amazing impact on my life. I dedicated my spare time to being a volunteer leader while I studied for a Bachelor in Computer Science and then worked in the field as a web designer. I never thought that I would ever help other young people such as myself grow in their faith and in their relationship with God through these two upcoming events in Sydney during July 2008 – World Youth Day and the Augustinian International Youth Encounter. I pray that, with this opportunity, I can help produce a successful Augustinian event that unifies us as Christians and as Augustinians.

Friends Meet

Mareeba

Contact: *Jeanette Hartley*

The year 2007 has been a year like no other in Mareeba, as our parish priest, Fr. Rob Greenup OSA went on sabbatical for six months and the parish was taken care of by many Augustinian priests from the southern climes. Some found our heat trying in the extreme.

Each priest brought to us his own special talents and insights and we profited immensely from their wisdom. Many of

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them commented on the distances Fr. Rob travels in his weekly ministry, and the stamina it takes to sustain this. We as Augustinian Friends help where possible, even if it is only to provide company on journeys.

During the tenure of Fr. Peter Jones OSA and Fr. Paul Maloney OSA we were privileged to have two spiritual evenings, which were enjoyed thoroughly, and from which we learnt much about Augustine and his times.

In 2007 we made our pilgrimage to Cooktown in May, before Fr. Rob left for overseas, and we feel that our earlier hard work on the gravesites there have made the job so much easier now. As time passes however, some of the gravestones are beginning to lean, and will need investigation this year.

Our spiritual development this past year was enhanced, as previously stated, by Frs. Peter and Paul, but we look forward with great anticipation to the coming visit of Fr. George Lawless OSA in April, and also to the cataloguing of resources, especially Fr. Paul's radio talks, which will be a help to us in the coming months and years. We feel that our present resources are suffering a little in variety and depth.

The Friends met at St. Thomas' Priory on the 7th Feb, for the first meeting for the year, and also to welcome back Fr. Rob. The meeting was addressed by Gerry Simon, Principal of St. Stephen's Catholic College, to bring us up to date on the possibilities of moving the Tolga church to the grounds of the College. The church is the oldest on the Tableland, and was originally the parish church at Watsonville, near Herberton, constructed in the 1880s. It was, of course, Augustinian. It has been altered somewhat over the years, but retains its silky oak walls and bell. The Bishop of Cairns is happy to have it removed to the College, and now it remains to be seen if it is a viable proposition structurally. Gerry hopes that Augustinian Friends and the Augustinian community will have some role to play in its restoration, should it all go ahead.

This year the Friends plan to go to Cooktown towards the end of May for an overnight stay. This will be followed in August by an Augustinian Friends hosted sausage sizzle for the entire parish on the 31st August, to celebrate the feast of St. Augustine.

Meanwhile, we all look forward with anticipation to the visit of Fr. George Lawless OSA in April. In the quieter months of June and July, Mareeba Friends intend joining with our Kuranda members for spirituality and friendship.

One of our projects for this year will be the display of quotes from Augustine to be placed prominently in the three churches (Mareeba, Kuranda and Dimbulah) to remind parishioners of the wisdom and insightfulness of St Augustine.

North Harbour

Contact: *Sue Mackey*

On Sunday 18th November 2007 approximately 40 members attended the Friends Christmas/End of Year and Closing Mass celebrated by Fr Paul Maloney OSA and assisted by Fr Peter Tangey OSA. This was followed by lunch in the Parish Centre at Manly Vale. After much socialising and chatting, Fr Paul gave an informative overview of the Augustinian communities within the Asia-Pacific region. This was in the form of a DVD that had been presented at the General Chapter. All the members present appreciated having Fr Paul attend and giving his commentary on this presentation.

I came away from our Leaders weekend of November 2007 full of enthusiasm as the National Leaders have certainly put together an inspirational agenda for the coming few years. I look forward to this time and hope that we will continue to benefit from the vigour and enthusiasm of the Leadership team.

South Yarra

Judith Duncan (New Leader)

Friends provided Jubilee Cake when Pat Fahey OSA, John Barry OSA and Gerry Dullard OSA celebrated 50 years of priesthood.



In Search of the 'Augustinian' Parish!

A glance at the list of Australian parishes where Augustinians have served since 1838 will surprise you. As well as being pioneers in the Dioceses of Sandhurst and Cairns (originally the Vicariate of Cooktown), Augustinians have also worked in Sydney (now Broken Bay), Parramatta, Brisbane, Adelaide, and of course Melbourne where James Goold was the first Bishop.

Parish ministry and ongoing renewal remain a priority for the Province and so, in July this year, Frs Dave Austin from St James (Coorparoo, Qld), Peter Wieneke from North Harbour (Manly Vale/Balgowlah) and Brian Fitzpatrick from St Clair (Western Sydney) visited the USA to attend an Augustinian Parishes Conference in Chicago.

Our time away included contact with the Archdiocese of Chicago and their INSPIRE Program for Parish Renewal and Pastoral Leadership, with visits, meetings and contact with some excellent resource people. We also visited a few parishes, and attended a variety of Sunday liturgies.

While there are significant differences between parishes here and in the USA, in terms of size, staffing and resources, our experience was very affirming of many of the directions that already exist in Augustinian parishes here. There are many common trends in the Church, including the shortage of clergy. Efforts are being made to develop lay ecclesial ministry and many parishes follow a strong team approach.

For parish communities to develop and grow, they need a Pastoral Plan and clear Vision and Mission, a feature of parishes we visited in the USA. This is familiar ground for Augustinian parishes in Australia where communities continue to work on building community, faith formation, enriching liturgy, collaborative leadership, and social justice/outreach. The last mentioned is a significant work in many US parishes.

In a vibrant parish, people need to thrive in ministry. Good liturgy, music and preaching are essential to growth in spirituality and catechesis, as well as study of the Scriptures. We picked up lots of ideas which will help us review what's happening here in the Province.

Each parish is different and will do some things in ways that reflect the local situation. Parish renewal requires us to understand modern culture and its impact on the lives of families and people of various ages. Analysis of demographic trends, cultural changes



Articles by Dave Austin OSA

and results of the National Church Life Survey can assist planning and facilitate restructuring and ongoing renewal.

Our main reason for going to the US was to attend the Augustinian Parishes Conference in Chicago. What does it mean to be an Augustinian Parish? Twenty-four Augustinian Pastors from the Provinces of Villanova, Chicago, California and Australia sought answers to that question as they focused on how to '*Cultivate an Augustinian Identity within Parish Ministry*'.

From our Australian experience, we felt quite at home in addressing this issue. It was a valuable opportunity - to share our experiences as pastors; to 'name' the reality that we know as the 'Augustinian' Parish, its underlying values, and distinctive spirit; and to address the changing face of the Parish.

Augustinian community life is a model for ministry, and a community of priests in a parish creates a particular spirit and style. However, the distinctive values of an Augustinian Parish emerge from the relationship of all members of the Parish Community, lay and Augustinian. That has, and continues to be, a great strength of Augustinian ministry in Australia.

You will probably recognise some familiar values which were mentioned at the conference:

Hospitality and Friendship; Fostering Unity in Diversity; Reaching out to the poor and marginalized; Collaborative leadership at all levels of Parish Life; a Continual Search for God and Mission to identify and respond creatively to the presence of God in our midst; Discovery of God in Common Prayer; Parish Liturgies that celebrate God as the Source and Summit of our lives.

As you reflect on these, ask yourself the following questions: Do these values sound familiar? Do you like them? Where are we strong in these values? Where do we need to grow?

The interaction and fraternity among the Augustinians provided some answers, as did the experience of Augustinian hospitality – surely part of our Order charism! Our time away afforded us some opportunity to renew friendships with many with whom we had studied. In every Augustinian house and with the men themselves, we always knew that we were 'at home' - the unique Augustinian 'gift'!

Augustinian Lay Commission

As part of its ongoing work of renewal, the Province is giving special attention to the relationship between Augustinians and laity. The Augustinian Laity Commission is the group responsible and current membership is: Dave Austin OSA (Chair), Tony Banks OSA, Michael de la Cruz (WYD Officer), Greg Keogh, Paul Maloney OSA, Mary McCormick, Jim McDonald, Sylvia Phillips. The Commission's task is to develop and strengthen the bonds/relationships between Augustinians, our lay associates, co-workers and those whom we serve. These bonds have been very strong throughout the history of the Order in Australia and exist in a variety of groups such as Augustinian Friends, Augustinian Formation Association, Australian Filipino Augustinian Solidarity, Augustinian Affiliates, Young Adults, and many others linked to the Order through our parishes, schools and other ministries. At the recent General Chapter in Rome, this relationship received strong support.

The Laity Commission is conducting surveys of individuals and groups to ascertain strengths and needs, and responses so far have been very positive. There is a clear desire among laity to 'walk with the Augustinians' and a reciprocal desire on the part of Augustinians. Many expressed the need for a deeper understanding of the spirit of St Augustine and Augustinian Spirituality, as well as an awareness of their unique position in the Order's history. Augustinian support is crucial and the appointment of Pat Fahey OSA as Chaplain to the Affiliates was an important step.

Wherever they occur, the friendly, welcoming gatherings express and enrich our community ideal. Challenges are many and include ways of attracting younger members and keeping the spirit alive in isolated areas and places where Augustinians no longer minister. With the coming World Youth Day and Augustinian Youth Encounter in 2008, we are very keen to respond to the ongoing needs of young adults.

The Province is very blessed to have the resources and team at St John Stone Spirituality Centre at Greystanes. Over the years, the team has visited many ministries to conduct workshops and these, along with the Augustinian Friends' newsletter *Amici* and the Prayer Resource Guide, have been very helpful. The April 2007 Lay Congress in Melbourne reminded us how far we've come in building stronger relationships between laity and Augustinians.



News From Peru

Art Purcaro OSA

Chulucanas, where I am currently serving as pastor – a return engagement after 23 years in other parts of the diocese and a stint in Rome – is a desert town in the northern part of Peru. The people are mestizo, a handsome mix of the indigenous people and the Spanish conquerors. All in this area speak Spanish, while in other parts of Peru where the Inca empire had a stronger hold many speak quechua.

If Peru is still a poor country in Latin America, it is on its way to economic growth, but in a highly uneven fashion. The rich have gotten much richer in the past two decades and, while there are now a much greater number of social services than when I first arrived here in 1971, there is still a huge amount of the population living at a purely subsistence level.

While the national percentage of children under five who suffer from malnutrition is 25%, here in Chulucanas it is a horrifying 40%. Those first few years are so important for future growth and yet we sadly lag far behind in the concerted effort needed to reduce or eradicate hunger and malnutrition.

A much higher percentage of children are now attending school than just a decade ago, both primary and secondary, and the percentage who are able to attend state-run universities in the larger cities is higher than that in the USA, but the education is sadly inferior and prepares few for real life. There are many with law degrees, engineering degrees, even doctors, who find they are able to make more by driving their own taxi than by practicing their profession. Any professional over 40 will not find a job as it's much more cost efficient to hire two young university graduates for a much lower salary than to have to pay the social benefits of an experienced, but "aged" professional. For those young people who choose to remain in Chulucanas, education needs to be in the area of agriculture and husbandry, whereas most young people choose computer training and business administration.

The countryside is drained of young people; anyone with initiative would prefer to live in a hovel in a city or shantytown in the outskirts of the major cities than to stay in the rural areas where subsistence is the norm.

And yet the world impacts life even here: there are people with HIV/Aids, abortion is rampant (promoted by the government), TV gossip shows now are more attractive than participation in Church activities. Electricity as a 24 hour reality only started here in 1999.

The work we do here is to help create critical conscience, to help people become aware of how our faith can impact our life and how a Christian community can influence society. This is a long-range project, begun here a little over 30 years ago, right in this parish. It is now the pastoral program of 12 dioceses in Peru and is slowly, but steadily working toward returning a sense of dignity and self-worth to whole swathes of the population.

Currently, in this parish we have local teams in each of the parish zones (either rural villages or neighborhood in our town). These teams are trained and are able to direct Sunday liturgy without a priest (we are able to celebrate the Eucharist every six weeks in each village), are responsible for all pre-sacramental instruction as well as human promotion projects (health care and prevention, human rights training). We are also blessed with 240 CEBs or basic Christian communities where neighboring families meet regularly to reflect on the word of God and promote solid, concrete actions to implement their convictions.

With the funds generously provided by our Augustinian Friends in Australia last year (AUD 3,300 = Euros 1,970) we have been able to provide some basic and needed services. About half of that fund has gone to support the training of 9 family groups (65 families) in human and Christian values. The rest of their program was technical training for the transformation of mango (a local product) into dehydrated mango, mango jam and jelly, mango juice and wine. The organization of these families, promoted by our local Augustinian bishop, is providing a model for cooperative economic activity, promoting Christian family values, enabling husbands and older children to remain close to home (instead of migrating to search for work) and produce saleable products from local production. The parish is now opening up a Fair Trade store in order to promote the sale of these products (Fair Trade has several establishments in Peru – four stores in different cities – and we are hoping to place our product in those stores as well).

Another part of the fund, again almost half, has enabled us to provide microcredit to a carpenter. He is responsible for returning the initial amount on a monthly basis within two

years and will enable us to provide credit to others as well in the future.

On behalf of the people who are benefiting from the kindness and generosity of our Augustinian Friends, please accept my heartfelt and sincere gratitude. What you do for the least of my brothers and sisters...

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Fax (02) 9938 4465
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Friends Meet (cont)

Echuca

Contact: Peter Kotsiakos

Augustinian Friends has not yet been able to gear up for 2008. Over the last few years we have lost several members through death and some others either because they think continued membership shows disloyalty to our current diocesan priest or simply because they have lost interest. Other members who are interested in continuing have difficulty in finding a common free time for a meeting because of the many other demands on their time. We are still trying to organize a viable program for this year, and hopefully Echuca will be able to continue as a separate functioning unit.

Newcastle

Contact: Kathleen Smith

After the Christmas and New Year break we resumed our weekly meditation meetings and it was lovely to be with one another again to share in prayer and fellowship. On 18th February we had a wonderful day at Greystanes. It was great for us to be in that harmonious setting experiencing the warm hospitality of Father Paul and hearing the beautiful words of St. Augustine. The theme Father Paul chose was 'Feeding the Hungry: Augustine and the Liturgy of the Word'. Father Paul took paragraphs on the theme from St. Augustine's sermons which we read and talked about. We also thought about how the Word becomes alive for us in the course of the liturgy.

Contacts

Paul Maloney OSA (02) 9631 0340
paulmal@bigpond.com
Ruth McGowan (03) 5859 0359
mcgowan7@dodo.com.au
Maureen Atkins (03) 5852 2103
maureenatkins@staugkbm.sand.edu.au