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Augustinian Friends— Seeking God Together

AMICI

Co-Leaders' Message

Maureen Atkins & Ruth McGowan

We left the Third National Congress for the Laity, South Yarra, feeling euphoric, with a renewed reverence for our shared Augustinian tradition. Yet we were also challenged by the presentations by Fr Art Purcaro OSA to reflect upon our place in the global community and consider just what are our responsibilities to each other locally, nationally and internationally. This edition of the Prayer Guide and *Amici* demonstrates our inter-connections. We celebrate in particular the contribution made by Mary McCormick and Monica Meagher. Their dedication to Augustinian Friends, their desire for a successful event and their attention to detail ensured that the Australian Congress achieved the aim of presenting us with the story of Augustine and leading us to a vision for the future. We have been blessed by their leadership, and they have developed a sound basis for further achievements. Now we need to focus on how Friends can be a source of spiritual growth for our groups in the next three years. Congratulations to Mary and Monica for the way they shared their talents, developed relationships and urged the groups forward.



Ruth McGowan and Maureen Atkins at Third National Congress for the Laity, 2007.

Congress Remembered

Memories from the West

Margaret Wilcox Perth

It must have seemed puzzling to those who attended the Congress in Melbourne from the east coast of Australia to encounter me, the lone representative of Augustinian spirituality from the West. I can assure you that my singularity does not represent the level on interest in St Augustine in WA. Far from it! There are many people over here, from many religious backgrounds, who are familiar with and respect Augustine's deep

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spirituality and wisdom. Apart from one St Augustine school, there is no identifiable Augustinian presence.

Last year, the Vicar-General placed a full-page advertisement in *The Record*, calling parents to come together, to pray for children under siege in this largely wonton world. Highlighted in the article was the encouraging example of Monica's ceaseless and tearful prayers to God to save her son, and of her reward at Ostia when she experienced, with Augustine, a rapturous engagement with the Holy Spirit.

Surprisingly, over 40 people from every corner of the Perth metropolitan area turned out for the meeting! Their expectations were great; their mood of sadness palpable. In support of this unexpected event, I produced a booklet about Monica and Augustine. But without the backing of Augustinian spiritual direction, regrettably, most of this initial group saw no point in returning, and did not. However, *they were familiar with Augustine and Monica and had made the effort to come!* I read this as a raw expression of a deep and urgent need for hope through the power of prayer and intercession as exemplified by Monica and Augustine! They had come hoping that together they could have helped one another, but without guidance, they dispersed back into their sadness.

So this Third Congress for Augustinian Laity was for me a hugely moving experience. In wonder, I watched everyone from near and far appearing at St Joseph's, greeting each other with joy, behaving like one great happy Augustinian family; like pilgrims assembling to feast upon spiritual nourishment. I felt like a fish that had slipped in from the cold isolation of a glass bowl, tentatively swimming in an Augustinian lake of genuine care and warmth!

For the very start, it was obvious that Mary and Monica had prepared for every possible expectation, and seamless organization followed. The processional tribute to St Augustine in the opening liturgy united everyone's receptive expectations, preparing the way for Fr Art Purcaro OSA's keynote address.

For two days Fr Art held us in rapt attention. His eloquent presentation of Augustinian community and friendship through mind, heart and soul never lost empathy and impact. As further stimulation, several lay people addressed the meeting, adding their own point of view on a variety of subjects raised.

Sunday came, the last day, and everyone gathered in the church for the Eucharist. In this beautiful setting, new members were admitted, regional leaders acknowledged and the new co-leaders, Maureen Atkins and Ruth McGowan, were installed for the coming term. Altogether a truly moving conclusion to a memorable event.



Fr Paul Maloney OSA, Chaplain,
Congress Opening Ceremony.

I cannot conclude this short resume without saying something about the kindness shown to me by Isobel Cid, who, in response to a request from Mary for billets, took me into the warmth of her home at short notice. Thank you Isobel!

Congratulations to Mary and Monica. Best wishes to Maureen and Ruth. Hope to see you all again at the next Congress in Queensland.

Brisbane at The Congress

Sylvia Phillips, Coorparoo

The Brisbane delegation's impression of The Third National Congress for the Laity was very favourable.

1. The choices we were given in accommodation options were superb: wide range of prices; proximity to Congress venue; transport etc.
2. The warmth of the welcome from the organisers.
3. Congress topics.
4. Outstanding speakers.
5. Opportunities for friendship.
6. Venue ambience: layout; space; access to facilities.
7. Enjoyable meals despite long queues.
8. Well organised and very interesting outings.

There is no doubt this was a well-managed and efficiently organised Congress. The Brisbane delegates certainly gained a lot out from it and welcomed the opportunity to meet with and get to know the Villanova group, who have since become members of Augustinian Friends. We know they have a lot to offer us.

Our last Brisbane meeting in May concentrated on the recent National Congress and our visit to Fitzroy. This prompted one of our members Barbara Baker to send me the following uplifting story:

My grandmother and her sisters went to school at St. Ursula Frayne's Mercy School at Fitzroy. Her father was twice Mayor of Fitzroy and in fact founded the Fitzroy Football Club (now the Brisbane Lions). She sang in St. Patrick's choir and her father was very active in the parish of St. Patrick's. He came from

Maynooth in Ireland and was very friendly with Archbishop Mannix who knew his relations in Maynooth. He left his marvellous collection of seventy Australian history books to Newman College to form the nucleus of their Australian History collection. He achieved many great things for Fitzroy and had eight miles of trees planted by the unemployed instead of giving them welfare money; he didn't want to 'pauperise' them. He also obtained the Edinburgh Gardens for the people when the government wanted to build a housing estate there. (He was the author of five books on Australia.)

Barbara would have loved to have been with us on the Congress tour.

Echuca at The Congress

Peter Kotsiakos

It seems no time at all since we were planning the Congress which was then a couple of years into the future, and now it's well and truly in the past. But it's certainly not forgotten. These, then, are some of my thoughts about the Congress...

Living now in a parish without Augustinians, I was really excited to be able to catch up with some of the Augustinians we have known and grown to love over the years, either working here in the parish in Echuca or through Augustinian Friends. Excitement also came from being part of an enthusiastic group which shared Christian and specifically Augustinian values, especially those with whom we shared the Rome and San Gimignano experience last year. It was great for recharging the batteries.

The keynote speaker, Fr Art Purcaro OSA., was an inspiration. Having flown around the world (or so it seemed) to get to Melbourne, he managed not only to stay awake, but also to energize all of us. He spoke of how we could be Christians in an Augustinian way today, how we are Christians not for ourselves but for others, and how community (which is central to Augustinian spirituality) is sharing diversity and equality in unity.

Father Art offered us three Christian principles in the tradition of Augustine:

1. Honour God in one another.
2. Share all in common.
3. Have greater concern for the common good than our own.

He challenged us by suggesting that Christianity, poorly lived, may be partly responsible for the state of the world today.

Of course, as with any gathering, an aspect was the meals. We were extremely well fed. A highlight was the dinner on Saturday night at which we were entertained by Maria Forde, both by her wonderful (mostly) Irish songs and by stories about her life, especially of her time in Ireland. Maria read her audience well and gave them what they wanted. My mother would have loved it!

There were lots of great moments at the Congress, and hopefully they will be remembered in what others have to say. But none of these moments would have happened without the tireless and unrelenting hard work of Monica and Mary. Every last detail seemed to have been meticulously anticipated and attended to so that the whole Congress ran (seemingly) effortlessly. Mary and Monica deserve our congratulations and heartfelt thanks for providing us with a memorable experience. Brisbane has a hard act to follow!

St Clair at The Congress

Peter and Margaret Moriarty

Congratulations to the organising committee of the Third National Congress for the Laity held at Melbourne in April. It was a great occasion, well prepared and presented. Thank you also to South Yarra for the use of your wonderful facilities.

Nine Augustinian friends from St Clair made the pilgrimage to Melbourne including our moderator Fr Brian Fitzpatrick. All of us had a wonderful time and were moved by the Augustinian spirit of friendship and hospitality.

Some highlights of the Conference included the Congress dinner on Saturday night with entertainment by singer Maria Forde, the "Goold in Melbourne" Tour and most notably the keynote speaker Fr Art Purcaro OSA.

Fr Art spoke on the Spirituality of Communion which should be the guiding principle of faith education; this spirituality would lead us to:

1. Appreciate the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us and in the brothers and sisters around us.
2. Share in the joys and sufferings of our brothers and sisters, and offer deep and genuine friendship to those around us.
3. See what is positive in others.
4. Make room for others and resist the selfish temptation of distrust and jealousy.

As an Augustinian community we honour God in one another, recognising ourselves as temples of the Spirit. Fr Art's delivery was both entertaining and challenging.



Bishop James Aloysius Goold
St Patrick's Cathedral
Melbourne



Fr Art Purcaro OSA
Keynote Speaker

Goold in Melbourne Tour

Maureen Caldwell,
Kyabram

It was with enthusiasm that I accepted the invitation to be a leader of a group of Congress participants on a Goold Tour of Melbourne. On a sunny Melbourne day, I collected my bright pink tour-leader identification scarf, marked the roll, distributed "snazzy"

Goold Tour bags, and boarded the bus in busy Chapel Street with a group of excited Augustinian Friends. As we began our trip, we were welcomed by our friendly bus driver, who pointed out many Melbourne landmarks to those visiting the beautiful city of Melbourne.

The Goold in Melbourne tour enabled us to know something of the life and times of the first Augustinian priest to come to Australia. After ten years in the country, Goold was appointed Bishop of Melbourne and Melbourne remembers him in name, in history and in special places.

Our group's first step was Goold's cottage, now the Mercy Convent in Fitzroy. We all squeezed into his room in the little bluestone cottage and marvelled at its historical artefacts. An added bonus was our visit to the beautifully restored Frayne Memorial chapel in the Convent Grounds.

Keeping the stragglers moving, we boarded the bus for the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission, which offered us further insights into the story of Bishop Goold and allowed us to view many historical treasures.

Finally we walked to St. Patrick's Cathedral, where "Friends of the Cathedral" provided a guided tour. Here we reflected on the life of James Alypius Goold, as we remembered him in prayer at his burial place in this magnificent cathedral, undoubtedly the most striking monument to this controversial Augustinian priest.

Our bus was waiting, all Friends had been accounted for, the loud chatter of excitement and



Gifts of wine opened at the Congress Dinner

enthusiasm reflectin the planning of this wonderful event. I popped a barley sugar into my mouth (courtesy of the Goold-Goodie bag), heaved a sigh of relief (no-one lost) and enjoyed the company of Friends as we journeyed back to South Yarra. The bright-pink scarf (no longer needed) I folded and put away. My tour leader's role was over.

Augustinian Hospitality

Robert Huggins, Sth Yarra

South Yarra Friends and Parishioners were delighted to provide all manner of hospitality for the 2007 Congress. We were exceedingly proud of our recently renovated Parish Centre which became the home of the Congress. Interstate and overseas visitors were accommodated within walking distance of the Centre and along the way were able to enjoy the glamorous and worldly atmosphere of Chapel Street. Those who came into town on Thursday appreciated the welcome of the "At Home" and the opportunity to meet up with fellow participants for a meal that evening, sampling Chapel Street's delights firsthand.

Our caterers, The BBQ Bloke, thought we were a happy bunch and visitors not only enjoyed the fine food provided but also the friendly attitude which accompanied it. Although it was autumn in Melbourne, the sun did shine and participants were able to make the most of the new courtyard and landscaped garden during the various break times. Sustenance provided by the Bloke was enjoyed by all, no matter where they ate it!

Pauline Books of Camberwell were present with a fine book display giving people the opportunity to view and/or purchase recent publications on St Augustine in particular, and spirituality in general.

Newspapers were available each day but we doubt many had time to read them. The whole weekend was a busy time for the locals but we trust a memorable time for our visitors

The highlight of our hospitality was the Congress Dinner on the Saturday night of the Congress. The neutral tone of the daily meeting space was transformed by a bustle of volunteers who, within an hour, turned this space into an elegant dining room for 120 guests.

At 6:00 pm the first guests arrived to a ruby vista. The tablecloths Mary had commissioned did their job. The shimmer of the ruby red created perfect place settings for glass and silver. The walls and ceiling of the room continued the theme as they were bathed in luxurious ruby and white lighting wash provided by strategically placed theatrical floodlights pointing skyward. Guests were further welcomed by the ever so soft but appropriate strains of classical pianist, Roger Woodward. Piano favourites wafted around the room from the multi speaker sound system which had hosted the key note addresses during the day.

Midway through the dinner, Maria Ford, a Melbourne singer, took to the stage. Without a

word Maria's opening a capella interpretation of Amazing Grace cut through the last of the dinner hubbub. This brought a deserved hush to the room and the song's words very apt held us spellbound as we journeyed with Maria to her Irish roots with all the joy, laughter and Irish-ness that only a talented Irish singer can bring to the task.

The whole weekend was a busy time for the locals but we trust a memorable experience for our visitors.

Congress Dinner

Kathleen Smith, Newcastle

The Saturday evening of the Congress saw us celebrating as a community of friends at a wonderful dinner. St. Augustine talked about sharing with one another in love and friendship. The room where we had shared so many thoughts and received so much guidance from Fr Art Purcaro had been transformed by the organisers into a splendid dinner venue. At the pre-dinner drinks there was a feeling of warmth, excitement and anticipation as Friends gathered together to share lively conversation and enjoy a mouth-



Friends gather for Congress Dinner

watering three-course meal. During the dinner we were blessed by the beautiful voice of guitarist and singer Maria Forde as she entertained us with Irish songs and stories of her family in Ireland.

While the dinner was in progress the wonderful triptych was on display for all to see and appreciate. Painted by Simon Coates, this beautiful painting depicted some of the seminal moments in the life of Christ. We are all so grateful to Simon and to Kaye Coates for presenting it to the Congress and for organising its raffle. Jim Rush from Northarbour parish, Sydney was the very fortunate winner and a substantial donation (over \$3000) was later given to Fr Art for his work in Peru.

The climax of the evening was the pouring of the special bottles of wines brought by Group representatives from the different wine-growing regions of Australia and presented to each table so that glasses could be raised in a special toast to St Augustine. A memorable and very special evening was had by all.

Tree planting ceremony



Triptych

Kaye Coates, Nth Harbour

Peter and I left Sydney with our companion Tom Maher on April 16 to drive to Melbourne at a leisurely pace. We brought with us the triptych paintings I had asked our son Simon to paint for a raffle connected with the Congress. On our journey we caught up with relatives in Milton, and revisited Sale where we lived more than 30 years ago when Peter was in the Air Force. I had lunch with a friend made on a tour of London once when overseas while Peter and Tom visited the Air Force Museum at Point Cook. During this time I was very conscious of the paintings to be raffled wrapped in blankets on the back seat of our car. At night I certainly wouldn't leave them in the car and insisted they be in the motel with us.

When we reached our accommodation in South Yarra we discovered we had six flights of stairs to climb to reach our apartment. Needless to say we have learnt a lesson in booking accommodation from afar. I needed my Ventolin puffer before I could get the key into the door!

When I had asked Simon to paint something for me he said: "I suppose it's a Jesus, Mary and Joseph theme?"; to which I replied: "I think a religious theme would be appropriate". Peter asked me my goal and I said \$3,000. To which I was told: "In your dreams!". I distributed ticket books to all regional leaders and am delighted to say had a wonderful response. It's appropriate here to say "Thank You!" to all those who helped with the sale of tickets, not forgetting the lovely serving staff on the evening of the Congress Dinner, who insisted on helping out also. At that time we had made \$2690. Further sales on the night brought the eventual sum to \$3270.

The raffle was drawn by Fr. Tony Banks, who had bought tickets for his mother so I was watching him diligently. The winner was Jim Rush of Nth Harbour Parish. This gentleman had given me \$50 and his business card as we were short of tickets on the day. I posted the butts to his business address.

It was my great pleasure to present Fr Art with the proceeds. At Monica's suggestion, I got him to open the envelope so he could see the amount; he was delighted.

It was with a sense of loss that I handed the paintings over to Jim. We had lived with them on our mantelpiece for months and were fond of them. However, I was relieved too, as we weren't thrilled at the prospect of lugging the paintings back to the apartment and up all those stairs!

Once again a very sincere thank you to all who helped. Fr Art spoke to our hearts and we were able to respond and help him touch the hearts of others. In this we are blessed.

Friends Meeċ

Kyabram

Maureen Atkins

In June, Friends spoke at a Parish mass about the Melbourne Congress and about the news of the Friends Group in Kyabram. A collection of photos displayed significant features of the Congress and provided many talking points for the local community. One of the aims of the presentation was to develop an understanding of Augustinian spirituality within the life of the Church.

Augustine greatly valued relationships with others. The spirituality reflected in his writings is based on love of neighbour and on community. "Be of one mind and one heart towards God". In his spirituality, it is as important to relate to one another as it is to pray with them. When we work towards our relationships with others, we do this in a shared love for God.

At the Melbourne Congress, Fr Art Purcaro OSA challenged us about the Spirituality of Communion, our responsibility to be members of a global community that acknowledges our interdependence and realises that we are called to make a response and develop our relationships. We need to be people who show signs of hope and work for change. There was a strong emphasis on social justice at the Congress. In our families, we all learn about living in community and giving and receiving hospitality. We bring that experience and understanding into the other groups in our lives: sporting, community, business, school and parish. With our Augustinian Friends, we want to deepen our own spirituality in communion with our group and continue the Augustinian tradition. We affirm and celebrate the heritage of the Augustinians who have now left our parish, but we try to live their spirituality in Kyabram in 2007 with its emphasis on community and hospitality.

At a Friends meeting in Kyabram, the group decided that they wanted to offer their prayer support to our Parish community. A box was placed in the Church and the community was invited to ask the Friends to pray for their special intentions. These requests will be presented at each meeting and the intentions will be shared with the Friends. Friends provided morning tea for the Parish community

Mareeba

Jeanette Hartley, Kay Morrow

Three Augustinian Friends from Mareeba were thrilled to be able to attend the Augustinian Friends Congress for the Laity in Melbourne in April. Kay, Ralph and Jeanette were especially moved by the challenges, presented in such a charismatic way, by Fr Art Purcaro OSA. We were delighted to be part of the fundraising effort to support Fr Art's missionary work in Peru. A highlight, bringing to the fore Augustine's idea of friendship, was the Congress dinner where good food and considerable mingling of people occurred, wonderfully supported by Celtic entertainment. The Goold Tour deepened our understanding of and our appreciation for the wonderful pioneering work of the Augustinian Archbishop Goold. All in all, we came away from Melbourne strengthened, empowered and setting ourselves a task to fulfill the dreams of our Friends group.

Eight of the Mareeba Parish Augustinian Friends group, along with Augustinian priest Fr Rob Greenup OSA, took their annual trip to Cooktown in late May. The main reason for the trip was to ensure that the gravesites of the two Augustinian bishops and seven Sister of Mercy nuns buried at Cooktown cemetery remain in good order. Over the last three years the fence has been welded and painted, grave stones cleaned, weeds pulled out and gravel laid. This year was easier with just the gravel being raked, the leaves gathered up, and the fence and graves brushed down. Relaxation was then the order of the day with the ladies browsing in the shops, the men resting at the presbytery and Fr Rob walking up Grassy Hill. We celebrated Mass in the evening and returned to Mareeba the next day.

Amici

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