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Augustinian Friends— Seeking God Together

ADICI

Co-Leaders' Message

Maureen Atkins & Ruth McGowan

Dear Friends,

In our groups we are focused on learning about spirituality from St. Augustine and also discerning how his teaching can guide us as we grapple with the issues in the 21st Century. The development of technology means that we have immediate and constant communication around the world and we are aware of major events in other countries. During recent weeks we have seen frequent reports about the tragedies in Burma and China.

Sometimes it seems almost impossible to comprehend the extent of the devastation and despair in these countries and to determine how we can make a response to the people in our world family. Donations can be given to agencies such as Caritas, who have the capacity to work with people in different countries and deploy resources where they are most needed, yet we experience deep grief and anguish when we learn about this suffering.

Perhaps our recent participation in the One World Week with Augustine offers us a way to become more intensely attuned to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Friends in Kyabram used the material organised by Mary McCormick and they eagerly embraced the model of reading, reflection and prayer. The Spirituality of Communion information, from Fr. Art Purcaro at the 2007 Melbourne Congress, resonated with our thinking when we read that "the spirituality of communion means to know *how to make room* for our brothers and sisters, *bearing each other's burdens.*" (Gal 6:2). Financially, we make contributions for people in need, but we are also conscious of **holding them in our hearts** as we pray and raise awareness of their situation.

During the middle of One World Week, the readings were interspersed with the 'contact a friend day' when we were encouraged to share something about our week and the readings with someone else. 21st Century technology makes it easy to contact people far away; the following message came from Paul Bethell, a member of the English group from Clare Priory, who attended the Congress in Rome in 2006. He wrote:

Let us continue to celebrate the gift of friendship we enjoy with our Augustinian Friends in Australia and around the world as we contemplate the meaning of true Christian friendship.

On Friendship

We begin our lives within our family, and these members become our first friends.

Throughout our lives we are continually coming into contact with new people day after day. In most instances many of these come in and out of our lives. Occasionally, there will be those who somehow resonate with us and in time become our friends.

If we live in the same area all of our lives maybe our friends will not be as large a group as those who, within their lifetimes move from place to place and are continually meeting new people.

Augustine was one who valued his friends and their friendship. A few he travelled throughout his life being close to – others he met on the way, such as Ambrose who had such an impact on his life.

Monica, his mother, was a true friend to Augustine, and prayed and supported him in her own way.

We ourselves, also meet and gather friends on our life's journey. True friends are not necessarily those we see often. Many friends only meet from time to time but are able to pick up the threads of that friendship as though it was just yesterday. This is true friendship – a meeting of minds maybe – but something deep within us is touched by 'the other'.

Augustinian Friends are indeed a fortunate group of people. Each time there is a gathering – a small meeting, a congress, an international congress; that indefinable 'something' of friendship is always present.

Our recent "One World Week" grew out of this friendship and has spread across the globe. So let us continue to value our families, our friendships and our Augustinian heritage as we make our journeys; *'Being of one heart and one mind on the way to God.'*

"If we are to be Augustine's disciples and friends then we must listen carefully to his instructions about how friends are to be loved:

In God, then, let your friends be loved; and draw to him along with you as many souls as you can. Say to them: He is the One we should love. He is the One. He has created the world, and He is not far from us. For when he created the world, he did not abandon it. All that exists comes from him and is in him".¹

¹ from 'Restless till we rest in You - St Augustine' compiled by Paul Thigpen.

Friends Meet

Kyabram

Contact: Maureen Caldwell

After meeting in the Parish Centre in 2007, it was with a great sense of Augustinian tradition that our first meeting for 2008 was held in the presbytery (formerly the priory). It was



here that much Augustinian friendship and spirituality had been shared for many years and we thank Fr Michael Morley for his offering us this venue. At our first meeting on 21st February (with two new members) Maureen and Ruth, who had attended the Liturgy & Luncheon to celebrate the golden jubilees of Frs. John Barry OSA, Gerry Dullard OSA and Pat Fahey OSA, were able to share reflections of the wonderful event.

The resource we used for our discussion topic was "Augustine's sayings and Easter" (an extract from "*Augustine the Bishop*" by F. Van Der Meer). This material and prayer resource was prepared by the Friends of South Yarra. It was a splendid resource for Augustinian Friends to reflect on and discuss before we attended our own Easter Ceremonies. The theme centred on "the light in the darkness".

"May God who caused light to shine in the darkness by his word, cause light to blaze forth in our hearts, so that we may be inwardly illuminated."

It was decided that our April meeting would be to travel to South Yarra on April 26th to attend the lecture given by Fr George Lawless OSA. Twelve Augustinian Friends from Kyabram attended and we thank the Friends of South Yarra for their invitation and wonderful hospitality. Fr George gave us many insights into the life and spirituality of the great Saint Augustine. We are hoping Fr Peter Jones OSA will be able to provide us with a condensed version of his address; however the quote I remember from the day is that of Pope John XXIII who said, "*The Church is yours Lord, I'm going to bed!*"

One World Week With Augustine (May 11-18). A series of reflections on "Friendship" prepared by MaryMcCormick. Copies of this resource were made available to all parishioners and at the end of the week, those who participated in the program, were to meet in the presbytery after Mass for morning tea and to share thoughts about the week.

Congratulations to Mary on a wonderful resource, which included material from four Augustinians — Fr Tony Banks OSA, Fr Art Purcaro OSA, Fr Ted Tack OSA and Fr Donald Burt OSA.

Dates from Kyabram:

June 19th: Friends meet at the presbytery [Discussion: Life with Augustine (Ed Maher)]

August 20th: As above

August 28th: Friends present at St Augustine's School celebrations

August 30th: Display Board in Church and morning tea shared with parishioners

October: Perhaps South Yarra Friends might be able to visit Kyabram, join in Mass and lunch with Kyabram Friends. (Yet to be formalised)

December: Augustinian Friends celebrate Christmas (Mass and dinner)

We would also like to thank Sarah-Jane Greenaway for her many years of dedication as Editor of *Amici* and we thank Celina Da Silva and Mary McCormick for being our new editorial team. *Amici* is a great resource and truly does reflect "*Augustinian Friends — Seeking God Together*".

Brisbane

Contact: Sylvia Phillips

Early in 2007 Father Brendan Quirke OSA was transferred from St. James Coorparoo to Manly Vale after many years as Parish Priest. Father Dave Austin OSA has been our leader and mentor since then and a great supporter, (like Father Brendan), of Friends. We have been blessed by having both of them to guide us.

Shortly after Fr. Dave's arrival, a group of us attended the National Congress in Melbourne. It set in motion for the Coorparoo group, a feeling of belonging more closely to the "extended" Augustinian Friends family. At our meetings, we frequently recall matters discussed at the Congress and the presentations made by the various speakers. It also gave us an opportunity to meet the Villanova College teachers for the first time and it is gratifying to know that they have now become a vibrant part of Coorparoo Friends. This is very positive progress especially when we consider that even though Villanova College is just around the corner from St James, they were not aware that Friends existed. The teachers are now very much a part of the team and directly involved in the preparations and planning for the next National Congress which will take place in Brisbane in 2010. Already there are a host of creative, stimulating and relevant ideas coming out of the College think tank. Thanks Diane, Mary Ann, Trish and Laurie.

The attendance at the presentation by Fr. George Lawless OSA on "St. Augustine and Pastoral Care" was very satisfactory. The animated question and answer session which followed, illustrated the high level of interest in Fr. George's address. We learned even more when he stayed on and mingled with us at supper afterwards.

Vince O'Rourke, one of our Friends and long time St. James parishioner, has recently published a book which details the journey he and his wife Margaret took with early onset of Alzheimer's disease. Margaret died from complications attendant upon the disease in 2006 and her funeral was held at St. James on 13th October that year. The book is entitled "*I Wish I Were a Leper*".² This is a story that grabs the reader's attention from the outset. It is a record of unconditional love, pain and suffering, hope and despair, anger and elation. The author's diary extracts also reveal a deeply personal conflict of faith, and belief in a God of love and compassion. It speaks clearly to all who care for those suffering long term diseases, especially those allied to dementia. After reading this book Fr. John Chalmers wrote: "Here is a story of faith and faithfulness where we catch a glimpse of enduring love. Be moved, challenged and graced by a love story that is poignantly, even lyrically narrated. ... you will never read the story of the ten lepers in the same way." (Source: St. James Parish Bulletin)

² Vince O'Rourke's book is on sale for \$25.00 from Vince directly vinceorourke@hotmail.com

Past leader Jim McDonald recently visited Nudgee Cemetery to check the condition of the graves of Augustinian priests buried there. Jim was pleased to report that the graves were well looked after. We are aware that Mareeba undertook a similar project a few years ago and that prompted us to do the same.

Guest speaker at our last meeting was special Friend Mary McCormick who chose as her subject: *Augustine - a real companion from a lay person's perspective*. It was a fascinating and personal insight into Mary's journey through life and how she found herself automatically drawing inspiration from St. Augustine's wisdom and influence at key moments. Once again we had an excellent attendance and Coorparoo Friends welcomed this opportunity to get to know Mary better both before and after the meeting. Thanks Mary.

Congratulations to Fr. Abel Van der Veer OSA who celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession (First Vows) on 20th May. Fr. Abel said Mass and afterwards was our guest at tea in the Priory. Thanks to all parishioners who prepared such wonderful treats for the reception.

Coorparoo Friends feel we are "travelling" quite well at present. We are happy with the good attendances at our meetings which is an encouraging sign for the future. We also realise there is more to be done.

Western Australia

Contact: Margaret Wilcox

Margaret Wilcox is a great one for keeping in touch as she continues to send best wishes to Augustinian Friends in the East. Recently she took up the challenge of One World Week With Augustine adapting the program prepared for Melbourne and Kyabram to a program based entirely on Friendship.

She had returned to the Bible Study group in Dunsborough after her moves to Lesmurdie and Broadwater in Western Australia. This group was receptive to the idea and were eager to bring along a friend or two for the actual day. Margaret chose the Second reading from Trinity Sunday, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 as the basis for their discussion. She reported that the day was enthusiastically supported and we are pleased to have such a good resource ready for some time in the future.

In Augustine's words

When we are weighed down by poverty and grief makes us sad, when bodily pain makes us restless and exile despondent, or when any grievance afflicts us; if there be good people at hand who understand the art of rejoicing with the joyful and weeping with the sorrowful, who know how to speak a cheerful word and uplift us with their conversation, then we shall nearly always find the rough made smoother, the burden lightened, and our troubles overcome.

Letter 130. 2, 4

Feast of St Augustine

Before the next edition of Amici, groups and parishes will have celebrated the feast day. This is the time when we, as Augustinian lay people, make contact with our International Friends so look forward to some news from around the world and from the wider Augustinian family. Be sure to tell us of your celebrations and send in some photos so readers may continue to enjoy the Augustinian atmosphere.



One World Week With Augustine May 11-18, 2008

With an air of excitement *Friends* from across Australia gathered to celebrate ONE WORLD WITH AUGUSTINE, remembering back to the time of the millennium when celebrations began here and as if in a ripple effect worked their way around the world through the various time zones.

Friends groups from North Harbour, Greystanes, Newcastle, Perth, Kyabram and South Yarra were all part of the Australian experience.

All groups explored the theme of Friendship. Some like Newcastle and Greystanes, chose to begin their program during the One World Week continuing it over a number of weeks. Others, like South Yarra and Kyabram, chose to work on a study program during the week with a celebration at the end, while another group in Sydney opted for an evening, the feast day of Alypius and Possidius, joining in the celebration of Mass with a homily given by Fr. Tony Banks OSA detailing the lives of both of Augustine's friends followed by some discussion and a report on the world wide celebration of One World Week. In Western Australia, Margaret Wilcox was able to encourage her Bible Study group in Dunsborough to bring along a friend and discuss and celebrate Friendship and to realize how this was basic to Christianity of all persuasions.

Well done *Friends!* Not only did we have a great time and gain valuable insights into Augustine's ideas about Friendship but linked to the thirty Augustinian groups from around the world all celebrating Augustinian spirituality in some way we felt a real sense of what it means to be Augustinian.

Our thanks goes to Kate Everitt and the Irish groups for instigating this initiative.



MELBOURNE *Friends*
enjoying One World Week With Augustine

Augustinians On-Line

www.augustinians.org.au

Stay in touch with the latest news from the Augustinian community through the Province's website. 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.

www.agnet.org

Agnet is a website containing a total of 1,800 pages about Augustine's life and work, and about history and activities of the Order of Saint Augustine. It contains pages on Augustinian Friends in Australia and England.

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Resources

Augustinian Friends is beginning to gather resources which could be of use to any lay person or to any lay group interested in Augustinian spirituality. We ask you to consider sharing with us any resource you have come across in the way of prayer, book, music, image, talk, or article. Could you send ideas to the Co-Leaders or send to Augustinian Friends, PO Box 679, Brookvale 2100.

Congress News

Already our National Leaders Maureen and Ruth have had discussions with Brisbane Leader Sylvia Phillips as to venue, accommodation and other ideas. They have been in contact with Fr. Michael Morahan OSA, Principal of Villanova College in Coorparoo, Brisbane with a view to holding the Congress there. At the moment the 4th National Lay Congress will be held in Brisbane in the June/July school holidays. Staff members from Villanova College are very eager to be a part of the planning and organising of the Congress.

WYD

Augustinian Friends are very aware of the excitement building towards World Youth Day and the Augustinian Youth Encounter to follow. We urge all Friends to keep the events, the organisers and the travelers in your prayers. God bless all who take part and may the blessings continue on in the hearts of all participants.

George Lawless OSA: Australian Circuit

During April 2008 *Friends* across Australia were privileged to be able to share with the priests of the Order the scholarship of Fr. George Lawless OSA as he traveled the country and gave a series of talks. Fr. George delighted in seeing Australia and in meeting with Australians during his time here.

Friends groups in Mareeba, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne (where the South Yarra group was joined by a contingent of *Friends* from Kyabram), all listened intently as Fr. George gave insights into Augustine's thinking on aspects of Pastoral Care. Fr. Peter Jones OSA is working on a synopsis of the talks and this will appear in a future edition of *Amici*. So, watch this space!



Melbourne



Mary, Judith, Fr. George, Maureen & Ruth



Sydney



Brisbane



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