

THE AUGUSTINIAN



Special Edition

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MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN
AUGUSTINIANS

750th ANNIVERSARY: GRAND UNION THE ORIGINS OF THE ORDER OF ST AUGUSTINE

ST AUGUSTINE

Father not founder

Rule of St Augustine

In the *Life of Augustine* as written by St Augustine's friend and contemporary, St Possidius, monasteries exist in North Africa following St Augustine's *Rule*. St Possidius wrote that communities based on Augustine's example existed a few years after Augustine's death "not only in Africa but also in lands across the sea." Yet historians agree that any line of community or religious order continuing unbroken from Augustine in the year 400 to Europe in 1240 is not probable. Even so, it is certain that communities living the *Rule* existed during most of those 840 years in one or more nations.

400-1200 AD

Sources indicate there were at least 35 monasteries of males and 10 of females in North Africa by the year 500.

Augustinian community life was brought from North Africa to Europe on different occasions. Between the years 430 and 570 this tradition was carried to Europe by communities fleeing from the Vandals. About the year 440 Quodvultdeus of Carthage brought it to Italy near Naples. In 502 St Fulgentius of Ruspe arrived in Sardinia and pursued common life with members of communities who had fled with him from North Africa.

St Fulgentius founded a monastery (convent) outside of the town of Cagliari. Donatus and 70 Christians brought Augustinian community life to the city of Toledo in Spain about 570. At that time, other communities may have been established in France.

For more than three centuries the influence of the *Rule* of St Augustine was overshadowed by other Rules, especially the *Rule* of St Benedict.

In 1000 the *Rule* of Augustine was certainly still in use. His *Rule* appears in the 10th and 11th centuries as a basis for the reform of cathedral chapters. These chapters lived and supported the local bishops. The early *Victorine Canons* embraced the *Rule* in 1113. In 1120, St Norbert chose the *Rule* of St Augustine for his *Premonstratensian* regular canons.

In 1198 St John Matha adopted it for his *Trinitarian* Order, as did the *Dominicans* in 1216 when their order received papal recognition.

The Order of Saint Augustine is thus not the oldest Order using Augustine's *Rule*.



St Augustine hands over his Rule of Life

The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.

Rule of St Augustine, 2

Inside this issue:

Following the Augustinian Rule	1
1244: The Minor Union	2
1256: The Grand Union	3
South Yarra - new facilities	4
August 2006 - Youth Festival in Pavia	4
Mareeba - Sto Nino celebrations	4
Stop press - Innisfail assistance	4

Special points of interest:

- Our exempt status
- A mendicant (begging) order
- Contemplatives in action

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THE PRIVILEGES OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Augustinians strive for *balance* among these diverse elements

- mind and heart,
- person and community,
- God and humans,
- grace and freedom,
- action and contemplation.



Our charism requires us never to separate or pull apart the elements of interiority, communion of life and service to the Church.

Papal concern that the new Order be protected was demonstrated by a rapid succession of papal favours. In 1244 the pope gave the Augustinians the faculty to preach and administer the Sacrament of reconciliation. By another papal bull given to all new orders, the Order had an exempt status in church law.

No bishop nor any other person could

- bring to trial any of these religious
- enter their houses
- interfere in the free election of their superiors
- require any payment for the consecration of churches or altars, or for holy oils or any other sacrament of the church.

By the same papal bull, the Order was empowered to retain property without the payment of church taxes; to receive into the Order all who requested admission, whether clerics or lay persons; to absolve those persons of any censures they may have incurred; to prevent the founding of oratories or chapels within the confines of their parishes "without your consent and that of the diocesan bishop"; and to grant burial in their churches to those faithful who had requested it in their will. The granting of these privileges showed that the hermits of Tuscany were held in high regard by the Pope.

FROM 1244 to the GRAND UNION OF 1256

The Augustinians were given an exempt status as a Religious Order within the Church.

Today we

- hold property
- vote for our leaders
 - Prior General
 - Prior Provincial
- pay only a reduced tax on priory income to the local Bishop
- retain faculties

The Augustinians began to exercise pastoral care of the people in their vicinity, but still maintained their contemplative character. In 1250 they accepted charge of the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, and their General Chapter was celebrated there each year. The new Order had 61 houses, of which only 15 were hermitages; nevertheless their other communities, although living in houses located in towns and cities, were still called hermitages at that time.

With their papal privileges and the excellent leadership of their early Priors General, the Order of St Augustine spread rapidly "like fire through straw" and within half a century was to exceed in number the Augustinian Canons who had by then existed for over two centuries previously.

The Hermits of the Order

of Saint Augustine were one of four distinct religious congregations that took part in the expansion that was the Grand Union of the Order in the year 1256; this was the second - and major - step in the foundation of the Order of Saint Augustine that exists today.

By 1256 the Order of Saint Augustine had about 77 communities, many of which no doubt were quite small. Though originating in Tuscany the term "Tuscany" was a larger region than today. By 1250 these groups, although concentrated around Lucca and Siena, in 61 houses, some were as far away as the Italian regions of Liguria, Umbria and Romagna. They expanded to Rome by 1250, to France and England before 1255, and to Germany and Spain before 1256.

The Order was expanded further by Alexander IV in

1256 (in what was called the Grand Union) by the bull *Cum quaedam salubria*. The hermits had requested this union. The Grand Union included houses in Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Bohemia and England.

Popes and bishops helped the Order to expand further. Civil rulers also assisted. Albertus Magnus brought the Order to Regensburg, Germany in 1262. Rudolph of Hapsburg, Louis of Bavaria, Charles IV, Philip the Fair (France), and the kings of Hungary welcomed Augustinians into their kingdoms. In Spain, Ferdinand III, Alfonso el Sabio, Ferdinand IV, and the rulers in Leon and Castille facilitated the Augustinians' arrival. The new Order was thriving!

The Minor Union 1244

In Tuscany there were various groups of hermits (living a life of prayer and penance at a distance from towns and villages). Hermits followed a widespread religious fervour with lives of strict poverty, simple prayer and itinerant preaching of the Gospel.

An example is found in the life of John the Good, who died in 1249. John was a wandering entertainer who, after a deep religious conversion, withdrew into a place of solitude. Although he

could neither read nor write, his preaching of the Gospel and harsh life attracted many followers. In time, communities of his plain cloth hermits spread northwards in Italy and then beyond the Alps. By 1238 they were united as an order and were known as the Hermits of John the Good. (They would come into the Augustinian Order at Grand Union of 1256).

The Holy See had at the 4th Lateran Council of 1215, given order and direction to the hermit movement that had begun within the Church at the end of the 11th century. The Church wanted to put an end to the groups of penitents and popular

preachers who went about independently of church authority, and sometimes in opposition to it. The Church wanted to end any confusion about religious life, to promote the reform of religious life, and to improve pastoral ministry. The 4th Lateran Council sought to organise these groups of religious people by requiring them to live in community, to hold elective chapters, to be under obedience to a major superior and to adopt one of the Rules of community life that were approved by the Church.

Earlier in the 13th century, Francis of Assisi travelled to Rome on his own initiative to seek such an official approval of his movement, and in 1243 the hermits of Tuscany did likewise.

The Tuscan friars needed to go to Lyons in France for their papal audience. Pope Innocent IV had recently fled there. Four hermit leaders requested the union of their hermit groupings in Tuscany under a common Rule and a single Prior General, in the way that already had been done for the Franciscan and Dominican Orders.

Pope Innocent IV judged that the proposal made to him in 1243 was in accord with the desires of the broader Church. On 16th December 1243 he issued two papal bulls, *Incumbit vobis* and *Praesentium vobis*. These documents called upon several eremitical communities in Tuscany to unite into a single religious order under the Rule of St Augustine.

The hermits of Tuscany were instructed by *Incumbit vobis* to elect for themselves a single Prior General and to codify their traditions into a set of Constitutions. This they did at their founding Chapter held somewhere (now unknown) in Rome during March 1244, and from then on were known as the Hermits of the Order of St Augustine. This bull, established the Augustinian Order.

The bull, *Praesentium vobis*, gave the procedures whereby the combination of these hermit groups would happen. There is no evidence that any of these communities was living the *Rule of Augustine* prior to this Little Union of 1244. The presiding Cardinal assigned the *Rule*



Early Augustinian hermitage in Tuscany.

This initiative of the hermit leaders and the "Little Union" of 1244 and the Grand Union of 1256, led to the establishment of the Order of Saint Augustine.

MENDICANT ORDERS

- A movement that sought to respond to the needs of the Church within the context of major change in the social and cultural reality of the 13th century.
- There was a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and a new and progressive process of secularization was born: in effect, the 13th century witnessed many of the same problems that challenge the Gospel of the Kingdom today.
- In response to this new social climate, the Church was capable of listening to the signs of the times, and looked for the best way to carry out – as we say today – a new evangelization.

These characteristics or basic elements of the mendicant spirituality coincide with, and mutually enrich, the fundamental traits of the experience and teaching of St. Augustine on religious life:

interiority,
communion of life,
service to the Church.





St Augustine's Priory, Incheon

KOREA

The Order of Saint Augustine has now served in Korea for just over twenty years. By coincidence, the number of Augustinians there is now twenty. Five of these are Koreans in solemn vows (two lay brothers and two ordained brothers, and one brother studying theology at the *Augustinianum* in Rome).

SOUTH YARRA

When St. Joseph's Primary School closed at the end of 2002, few would have envisioned the great changes which have now happened. One of the original school buildings has already been converted into ten emergency housing apartments. These have enjoyed 100% occupancy since their opening (four in 2002 and a further six in 2004).

Now a new project is on the go. The remaining school building is undergoing a major renovation, involving gutting virtually the entire building. The second storey will be fitted out as administrative offices, meeting rooms, a small reference library and Internet facilities as the new 'St. Joseph's Parish Centre'. Downstairs, part of the walls will be knocked out to make way for a commercial pass-through freezer. This will house the 'frozen bread' which the Parish makes available to those in need on a 24 hour basis. The food bank which currently feeds between 800-900 people per year on a regular basis will also find a new home downstairs, with increased security for its many volunteers.

The twelve community groups who meet regularly in the Parish Rooms will enjoy updated facilities such as storage lockers and access to tea and coffee making equipment. It is hoped that the new centre will attract groups wishing to run conferences or small group training. The project is expected to take approx 6-9 months and has been financed through the sale of a derelict tennis court which abutted the Parish Convent.

MAREEBA

The annual festival of Santo Nino of the Philippines was celebrated on Sunday 15 January at the 10am Mass in St Thomas's. In preparation for the festival a novena of rosaries and other prayers was held from 6-14 January.

Following the festival Mass there was a procession in the school grounds, followed by refreshments. People from throughout Cairns Diocese travelled to Mareeba to share in this celebration



For details on any of these programs please see our website below or contact:

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Innisfail

The province has forwarded \$10,000 to Fr Frank Gordon PP of Innisfail. Innisfail was in our care for many years.

PAVIA 2006

International Youth Encounter, Pavia, Italy 1-7 August 2006.

Australia has always been represented at these encounters, even though all of them have taken place in Europe. The encounter will take place at the outdoor summer conference facilities in the grounds of the fourteenth-century Visconti Castle at Pavia in northern Italy. The building is now managed by the City of Pavia, which uses it as a museum and as a conference venue.

Pavia is the city in which the tomb of Saint Augustine is located. The tomb is located in an ancient Augustinian Church dedicated to Saint Peter.



Pocholo Javier, an Augustinian Youth pilgrim, with the bones of St Augustine in Pavia, after World Youth Day 2005

International Youth Encounter Pavia, Italy 1-7 August 2006.

18-30 year olds are welcome to join this experience