

Thy Kingdom Come

Searching for God

with

**Saint
Augustine,**

and passionate for the Church

*Give me the strength
to seek you
Oh, you who allowed me
to find you,
and who gave me the hope
of finding you more and more.*

Saint Augustine: The Trinity (XV, 28, 51)

“ You made us
for yourself, Lord,
and our hearts are restless
until they rest in You! ”

Confessions I,1,1

Saint Augustine, a tireless searcher for God

This small book seeks to share with you the treasure of a tireless searcher for God, Saint Augustine. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest saints of the Occident who has numerous disciples throughout the world. Many religious families, in particular those of the Assumption, claim him for themselves. Committed laity are also inspired by him and his posterity is not without merit.

In his day, crowds from Hippo and Carthage flocked to listen to him. The search for God is one of the major aspirations of modern man. This is a personal search towards living an authentic way of life. His progressive discovery of the Church makes it possible for us to overcome our uncertainties. With him we share a desire for unity that goes beyond denominational differences. Because he was a committed Pastor, Saint Augustine gives us a concrete understanding of charity. The love of God is integrally linked with the love of neighbour.

In the IV century, Saint Augustine let himself be embraced by the mercy of God. The conversion and change of course that followed became the starting point of a new and unequalled spiritual adventure which he lived with his friends and disciples. God placed solid guides in his path: Ambrose and Simplicien, and, especially, his mother, Monica. He also had the wisdom to continually visit the best sources, in particular John the Evangelist and Paul the Apostle. This extraordinary journey reveals to us all the love with which God loved him!

Father Jean-François Petit, Assumptionist

How grace works within someone

The best way to discover Augustine is to read his writings. To read the account of his life in his own words is better than any erudite introduction. "The Doctor of grace", "Spiritual Master", "Witness of charity", "A genius of the faith"... are just a few of the titles given to him! Although he is praised for giving us many riches, he has also been challenged over a number of delicate positions: the condemnation of children who die without baptism, predestination, original sin ... positions that were not truly his. Admittedly, in an era animated with religious questions, Augustine could not avoid the polemic. How, then, can one establish a more authentic portrait? In fact, his books swarm with biographical details. Sometimes they are rigorously ordered, other times, they lack coherence. His abundant correspondence and his many sermons provide invaluable information. But it is most especially his *Confessions* (Augustine constantly re-read this book with emotion) that provide us with the clearest picture. One generally distinguishes three periods in Augustine's life: before his conversion in 386, Community life until his ordination as a priest in 391, and his life as a "Pastor of souls" up to his death in 430. So now let us enter into a brief account of this extraordinary journey whose sole purpose is to evoke our praise of God.

Significant dates in the life of Saint Augustine

The tumultuous youth of a gifted student

- 354: 13 November. Born in Tagaste and named Augustinus Aurelius.
- 365-369: After his primary studies at Tagaste, Augustine continued his studies at Madaurus.
- 370-372: A student at Carthage, he lived with a concubine who bore him a son, Adeodatus. Read *Hortensius* of Cicero. Disappointing initiation into the Bible.

A disappointing spiritual search for an ambitious professor

- 373: As a Professor at Tagaste, Augustine joins the Manichaeans
- 374-383: As a Professor in Carthage, a disappointing meeting with the Manichaean Bishop, Faustus.
- 383-384: Teaching in Rome and Milan. He begins to frequent Bishop Ambrose and listen to his preaching.
- 385: Sends his concubine away.

A radical conversion in a garden in Milan

- 386: Reads the books of the Platonists, the epistles of St Paul. August: a scene in a garden in Milan. November: a retreat at Cassiciacum. Publishes his *Dialogues* and *Soliloquies*.
- 387: Baptism of Augustine, Alypius and Adéodatus on Easter night. Ecstasy at Ostia. Death of Monica. A second stay in Rome. Leaves for Africa.
- 388-391: Community life at Tagaste.

Nominated Bishop of Hippo

- 391: Ordained a priest at Hippo. Founded a monastery in the garden.
- 395: Coadjutor Bishop of Hippo.
- 396: Titular Bishop of Hippo.
- 397: Began writing the *Confession*. Participated in the Councils at Carthage.
- 399: Closure of the pagan temples.
- 410: Fall of Rome.
- 411: Conference in Carthage between Catholic and Donatist Bishops.
- 413: Began writing *The City of God*. Fight against Pelagius.
- 416: Council at Mileve against the Pelagians.
- 426: Writes *Retractions*.
- 429: The Vandals arrive in Africa.
- 430: August 28. Augustine dies in Hippo besieged by the Vandals.

A turbulent youth

Augustine was born in Tagaste (Souk Ahras, in Algeria) on 13 November 354. Africa was one of the "breadbaskets" of the Roman Empire. Augustine came from the modest background of a small landowner. Patricius, his father, was a pagan, while his mother, Monica, was a Christian. As a child, he became a catechumen and lived happily with his brother and sister. In 361, he left home to study in Madaurus then went on to Carthage, thanks to the help of a rich patron, Romanianus. But he did very little work: he was attracted to the theatre, the shows, and he "loved to love". Simply put, he wasted his time. At 17, he had a son, Adeodatus, (meaning "God given").

An endowed student, equipped with an acute sense of observation, he became a teacher, initially in Tagaste (374), then in Carthage (376). He (was an expert in the letters of Antiquity: he could compose speeches quoting the great writers. This led him to read *Hortensius* by Cicero which had a major impact on him. How was he to reconcile his search for wisdom with the passions of a young man? First he turned to the Bible, but he rejected it because of its style. He then turned to the Manichaeans. Their founder, Mani (216-277) preached a universal religion, very missionary and more or less complete. Its basic truths were simple: Good and Evil opposed each other endlessly. The kingdom of Light was opposed to the kingdom of Darkness. Manichaeans recognized the New Testament but rejected the Old Testament and removed everything from it that they believed was contrary to reason. Despite being dissatisfied with them Augustine still joined them.

A long and fruitless spiritual

Augustine remained nine years as an auditor of the Manichaeans, during which time he made some solid and lasting friends. They

helped him choose a career. In the summer of 383, disgusted by his troublesome "disorderly" students, he left Carthage for Rome. His mother, opposed to this project, ended up joining him. The ambitious Augustine gained an important position of rhetoric in Milan at the imperial court. He was responsible for writing the official speeches. While there, perhaps because of his reputation as a speaker, Augustine listened to the sermons of Bishop Ambrose. Without knowing it, Ambrose provided a solution to his personal difficulties: the Old Testament can provide spiritual insight. Thanks to reading the Platonists, he no longer conceived of God as a purely material being. An interior pathway opened itself to him. The knowledge of God was not only a work of intelligence but also a love affair. By this time, Augustine had left the Manichaeans but he was still not completely a Christian. However, the priest Simplicien made him read the Prologue of Saint John: the Word was made flesh.... Christ is at the same time the Logos and the Word made flesh. His final objection to the person of Christ collapsed. So many discoveries in so little time! But Augustine still had to make one more step on the way to conversion: to conform his life with the Truth that he had just discovered.

A radical conversion

After reading Saint Paul and the Gospels, Augustine more readily criticised the Platonist books. Any spiritual search in their wake risks quickly becoming "*an overblown science*". They do not reveal the essence: the humility of Christ, essential in accommodating the revelation of God (Conf. VIII, 9). Christ incarnate is the only way to reconfigure the heart of one weighed down by sin. It is essential to move towards a serious mediation of Christ.

His conversion to Christ in August 386 happened in the famous scene in a garden in Milan. Augustine was struggling with problems he was

unable to solve. Suddenly he heard a voice which cried "*Take and read! Take, and read!*" Seizing the letters of Saint Paul, he opened them at random and read the invitation to be "*clothed with Christ*" (Rm 13: 13-14). At once, he burst into tears which exhausted him until he could cry no more. The light of uncertainty grew blurred. He also heard the invitation to accommodate "*that which is weak in faith*", namely his friend Alypius, present at this time. Monica cried with joy: her son had finally found his rest in the faith. An account of the conversion of Marius Victorinus, a famous rhetorician and translator of Plato and Aristotle, had impressed Augustine. An African official, Ponticianus, had told him how two of his companions had completely changed their way of life after reading of the Life of *St Anthony*, a celebrated monk of the desert. All these events helped Augustine consider taking the decisive step forward, but he still hesitated. To separate himself from his carnal desires, his "old friends", was no easy matter. After this experience, however, it was a done deal: Augustine became a free man, completely available to God.

Moving towards baptism

This time, Augustine no longer felt ashamed at wanting to follow Christ. He sent his concubine away. He resigned his official responsibility as rhetorician under the pretext of a bad stomach. He completely gave up all human ambition and he no longer had any desire for "idle chatter!"

Augustine, his mother and his friends then chose to withdraw for a time. The academic year was over. They had time for "saintly leisure", thus joining once again the ancient tradition of a communal search for wisdom. With this intention, a rich friend lent them his villa in the country at Cassiacum, south of Lake Como. There, they discussed many philosophical issues. They took up meditation and prayed. Above all, they read together the books of Scripture to prepare themselves for baptism.

In March 387, Augustine and his friends returned to Milan. They registered as candidates for baptism. The catechesis of Ambrose strengthened their faith. They received from him the Apostles Creed which they learnt by heart and restored it to its proper place in their lives.

Finally, the long awaited day arrived. On Easter night of 24 / 25 April 387, Augustine, his son Adeodatus and his friend Alypius, slowly advanced up the cathedral after having fasted and prayed. They were plunged into the baptismal pool to wash away their sins. The Bishop washed their feet. Strengthened by the anointing with holy oil and clothed in their white tunics, they received communion for the first time. Augustine summarises these events soberly: *"we were baptized and far from us fled the discontent of our past life"*.

(Conf. IX: 6)

*"Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new,
late have I loved you!*

*You were within me, and I was outside,
and it was there that I sought you,
in my unattractiveness*

*I plunged into the lovely things which you created,
You were with me and I was not with you;
created things kept me far from you,
yet if they had not been in you,
they would not have existed at all.*

You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.

You flashed, you shone and you dispelled my blindness.

You breathed your fragrance on me;

I drew in breath and now I pant for you.

I have tasted and now I hunger and thirst for more.

You touched me, and I burned for your peace... "

The search for “Sainly leisure”

In the autumn of 387, Augustine and his friends set out once again for Africa. Just as they were about to embark from Ostia, he and his mother shared an extraordinary experience of mystical communion with God. *"While we were speaking about this Wisdom and how we longed for it, we brushed against her with the whole effort of our hearts"* (Conf. IX, 10). Unfortunately, shortly after this time of shared ecstasy, Monica fell sick and died. In a family house in Tagaste, Augustine and his friends adopted the life of the *"servants of God"*. They shared everything. Fasting, praying and doing good works to help strengthen the community. Augustine quickly becomes the leader of the group. By word and writing, he stimulated his company in their common search for God. New companions joined them. In January 391, Augustine visited Hippo, a three day walk from Tagaste. He wanted to meet one of his friends there and invite him to come and live with him. Hippo was the second largest town in Africa and an important port. Its Bishop, Valerius, had grown old. The faithful recognised Augustine during a celebration and asked that he be made a priest at once. *"I was seized, made a priest, and was finally led to the episcopate"*. Augustine was to remain thirty-five years in Hippo. Augustine was given a period of probation to prepare for his new office. Valerius authorised him and his friends, to move to a house at the end of the garden close to the church. This allowed them to continue their life of poverty and sharing in some way. But to this saintly leisure - *otium* - it was now necessary to add *negotium*. This was the beginning of a period of intense pastoral activity: preaching, catechesis, visits, correspondence... Augustine did not stop!!

Resolute pastoral activity

The value of Augustine was quickly recognised. Valerius made him his coadjutor in 395. On his death, one year later, Augustine became

the titular Bishop. This was to be a heavy load to bear. His former friends in the monastery, like Alypius, also became bishops and asked for his support. The Church was affected by the Donatist schism. The Donatists believed they were the "pure" rigorous adherents of the tradition and its authentic interpreters. In 411, they were unreservedly condemned by the Council of Carthage and excommunicated. Augustine never ceased calling for the unity of the Church and reconciliation. He opened his doors to separatist clergy. His move, alas, did not completely meet with success. While this was happening, an Irish monk, Pelagius was sowing disorder. He believed that man is always free, able to choose good and fulfil all the precepts of God. For Augustine, human freedom is unable to reach perfection on its own. Grace is also necessary. One cannot overcome the obstacle of sin alone. Man must humbly accept the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, Saviour.

Augustine did not easily free himself of this controversy. Pelagius was finally condemned but the debate reappeared with Julian of Eclanum. This sharp young man brought to the attention of the now elderly Bishop of Hippo certain contradictions in his writings. He no longer had the strength to argue. On 24 August 410, Rome fell to the troops of Alaric the Visigoth. The city was plundered; the exodus even touched Africa. The pagans accused the God of the Christians of not protecting them. Augustine invited them to distinguish clearly between the city of God, founded on the imperishable Christ and city of men, which, like all civilizations, is mortal. Eternal life has to be built now.

“A Bishop for you, a Christian with you!”

He was exhausted when he died on 28 August 430. Too poor to make a will, he had given everything: his time, his energy, his kindness as well as his knowledge. For him Christian life was primarily about sharing in what God proposed. All are invited to the table of the

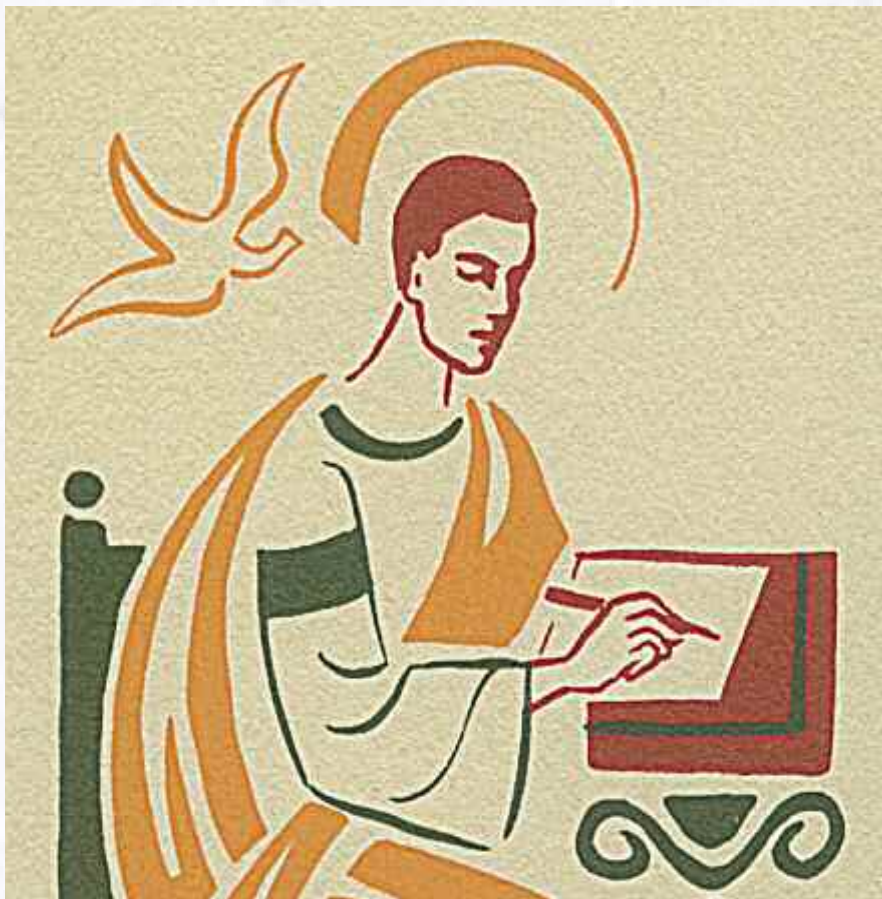
Father to nourish themselves with his bread and his Word. Augustine had listened to this Word attentively. He studied it assiduously, and carefully commented on it in his sermons and in his books. All his writings sought to respond to some pastoral concern to help his listeners grow in their love of Christ.

"A Bishop for you, a Christian with you!" Augustine had the habit of saying. He lived an intense life of prayer. He continually deepened his understanding of Scriptures. His strength came from his participation in the community. His solicitude for everyone is legendary: catechumens on the road to baptism, his correspondence with the morally disoriented, discouraged catechists, priests doctrinally adrift... For him, Christians should form one body in Christ. What is Christian life other than incorporation into Christ, a rebirth in God and spiritual growth until we meet face to face? Augustine had learned how to understand the presence of the Lord from his life. We can also recognize him through his life so freely given. As the Superior Generals of the Augustinian Congregations during the XVI centenary said, the conversion of Saint Augustine is a festival for everyone. Whenever anyone tells the story of this life, the celebration spreads!

Some of Augustine's works


Augustine is the author of an immense number of works. The *Retractions* allows us to create a rough chronology of his principal writings.

- 383 Treatise on the Beautiful Life (lost)
- 386 Dialogues of Cassiciacum; the Soliloquies
- 387-388 On the immortality of the soul; Morels of the Catholic Church & Morels of the Manicheans; Free will
- 391 On Genesis against the Manicheans; Music; On the Teacher; True religion; Usefulness of belief



- 393 Sermons on the faith and the symbol (given during the Council of Hippo)
- 394 The Psalm against the Donatists
- 397 On Christian Doctrine; The Confessions
- 408 On Catechising Beginners; On the Trinity
- 410 On the Work of Monks; On the Good of Marriage; On Virginity
- 411 On the Spirit and the Letter; On Faith and Works
- 413 The City of God (beginning)
- 416 On the “Acts” of Pelagius
- 417 On Nature and Grace
- 426 Against two letters of the Pelagians; Against Julian
- 427 The Retractions

To these books, it is necessary to add a wealth of correspondence. Moreover, Augustine wrote down all his conferences, sermons, in particular his *Homilies on the Gospel of John* and a lengthy commentary on the psalms.



*The distinguishing feature
of human action
is the charity in which they are
rooted.*

*Many actions can appear to be good
but do not have charity at their root.*

Thorns also have flowers:

*There are actions
that appear harsh even cruel
but they seek to correct and are
inspired by charity.*

Once and for all, then,

I give you this short precept:

LOVE AND DO WHAT YOU WILL!

*If you keep silent, keep silent out of
love,*

*if you correct, correct out of love,
if you forgive, forgive out of love,
May love be found embedded at the
bottom of your heart!*

*From this root
nothing but good can issue forth.*

Commentary on the first letter of Saint John 7: 8

Major themes of Augustinian spirituality

Is it possible for Saint Augustine to be a friend, a guide, or an example? Admittedly his life is captivating. But there is more. For many centuries, he was the major influence in the Occident, sometimes politically, sometimes doctrinally. And if there is a field where he remains unrivalled, it is his spirituality. Not only did Augustine create a way of living, but he is also the source of a very fertile spirituality. Father Goulven Madec, an Assumptionist and great specialist on the subject, said he has nourished myriads of Christians down through the ages. After his conversion, he chose two essential directions: to deepen both his interior spirituality and stress the importance of Community.

Admittedly, says Father Marcel Neusch, another Assumptionist expert on the question, Augustine did not intend to codify his spirituality. It was only afterwards and in comparison with other themes that we are able to discern these two essential themes. Following the direction of his thinking on human existence and his discovery of God, Augustine continually returns to these themes.

Let us stop now and take a look at how this thirst for God was born. He continues to nourish the laity, the religious in community, married and single people. All want to live close to the fountain and be able to exclaim *"Together let us live in love, burn with the same thirst, run to the source"*. (In PS. 41)

Interiority, a spiritual way of life

Return to your heart and from there go to God. The way will be short if you begin by returning to your heart... You let yourself be troubled by what happens outside and you are lost." (Sermon 311:13). The whole movement of the search for God can be summarized in

these few lines. In a world marked by great turmoil and deafening noise, the Augustinian way invites us to begin by creating an inner silence: not the silence of a refuge or a silence filled with anxiety, but a full and inhabited silence, sensitive to the gentle breeze, the breath that links our existences.

Often, like Augustine, we ask ourselves *"Where can we find God?"* We search outside ourselves when we should be searching within. The first steps can be difficult. Like the ambitious young man of Carthage, we move from one escape to another, misusing others and inattentive to ourselves. True life does not lie in the pleasure of goods or people. It is an interior voice that says to us *"Do not stay on the surface; go down within yourself, penetrate your heart. Carefully search within the depth of your heart"* (Sermon 53:15). The waiting can be lengthy. It can even last for a major part of one's existence. Wisdom does not let herself be found easily.

It was necessary for Augustine to spend a singular apprenticeship of listening. Until there resounded within him a call to be re-oriented towards God: *"Love spiritual riches and you will be filled. You will discover the source easily if you open your heart. Do not fear to take the narrow path: your treasure is your God and as soon as he enters a heart, he expands it"* (Sermon 177: 3).

The immutable light within

From now on firmly oriented towards God, we will be more available to God. The interior light can enlighten us completely *"I entered and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, saw above the eye of my soul and above my mind the immutable light... It was not above my mind, like oil above water, nor like heaven above earth; but it was higher, because it created me, and I was below it, because I was created by it"* (Conf. VII: X, 16).

Understanding our place in the universe in this respect proves essential. Being neither angel nor demon, man must humbly accept his condition in order to grasp the origin of this true light: God. To perceive the world and oneself with the clarity of the one who made us is absolutely necessary for any spiritual advancement according to Saint Augustine. The return to oneself only makes sense in a movement that goes beyond oneself towards God. Man discovers himself in God i.e. is illuminated by his light. *"Where then did I find you so as to be able to learn of you - save in yourself beyond me"* (Conf. X, XXVI, 37). The Latin formula is more precise: *"Interior intimo meo et superior summo meo"*, which Father Goulven Madec translates as *"You are deeper than the deepest part of me and higher than highest part of me"*.

Once this insatiable desire is acknowledged, is not the rest of our lives marked by a search for this interior light?

“With one heart and one mind intent on God”

With his friends at Cassiacum, Augustine wanted to establish a religious community. Why, one may ask? *"In order that we may inquire together into God and our own souls"*, he replies in the *Soliloquies* (I:12,20). The ideal of community life centred on the search for wisdom historically preceded Christianity. But Augustine was open to the way in which the Apostles lived. *"The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common."* (Acts 4: 32)

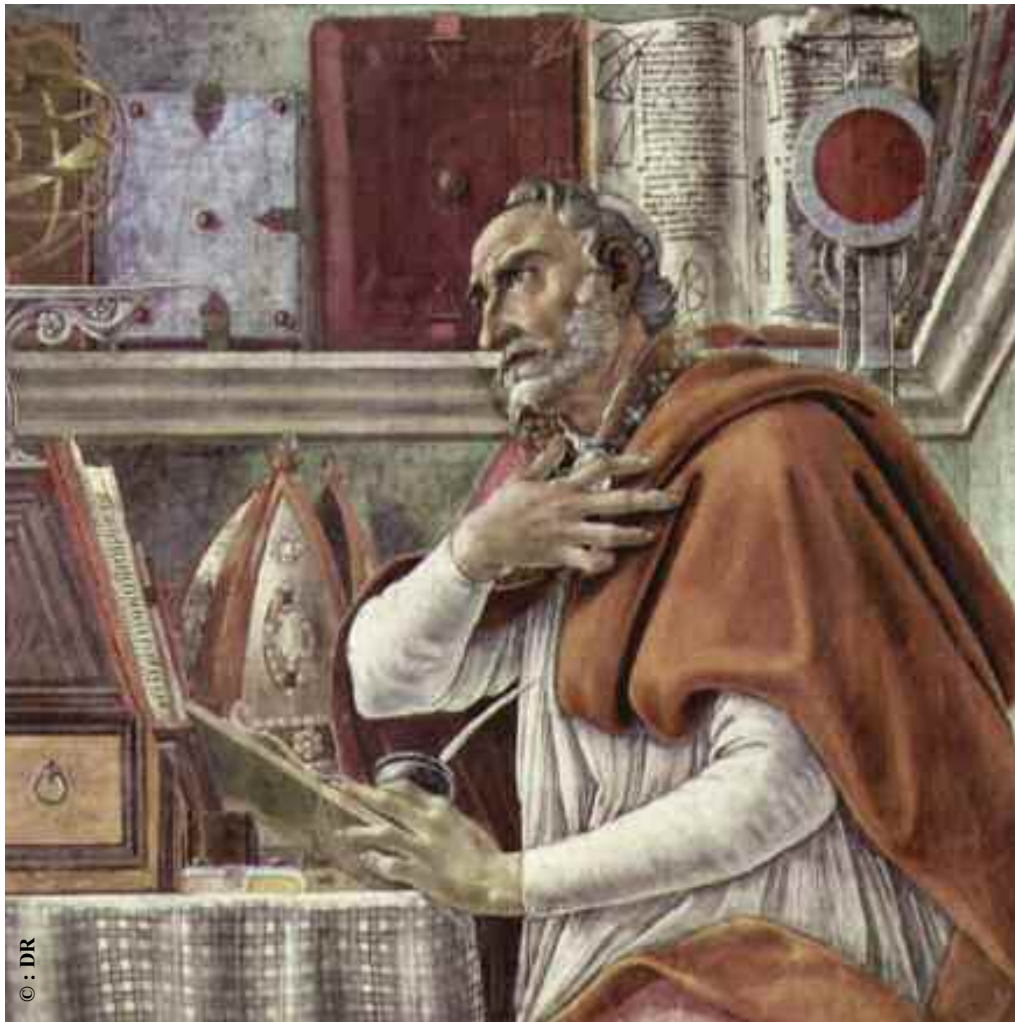
The essential condition of becoming a disciple of Christ was this relinquishing of one's personal goods. Augustine always placed great emphasis on this requirement. It is said that he only had the clothing he was wearing when he founded his monastery at Hippo. He had sold the rest for the poor, always regretful that the Church could not do more.

Why such an insistence? For Augustine, having ones goods in common is the necessary condition of any spiritual progress: *"You will know that you will have made good spiritual progress when you give more care to the things in common than to your personal interests"* (Sermon 355, 2). In reality only one thing is common: God. This renunciation of personal goods in Community life is before all else an invitation to true generous love. It also maintains the ideal of living in harmony so necessary for any Community life.

"To each according to his needs"

To live community life well, it is necessary to seek harmony for everyone. Thus, *"it is right, it is fitting for brothers to live together"* as it says in psalm 132. But to maintain harmony, attention paid to others must be redoubled. It is not a question of creating an egalitarianism or to yield to the imagination of the moment *"May your superior distribute food and clothing to each one of you: not in the same way to all, because your strengths are not equal, but to each one according to his need"* is what Augustine wrote to the religious in the grip of discord (Letter 211,5).

To each according to his needs and peace for everyone. Charity is essential for the formation of true friendship. Each one seeks, discovers and loves in the other the presence of God. Then peace is achieved more easily. Each member is responsible for the fraternity in the community. Genuine sharing is the condition. Obedience takes the form of mutual submission in response to the will of God. Thus, authority is exercised as a service. Then, each one can really carry the *"burden of the other"* (Ga 6,2) without too much sorrow. This common commitment requires an equal measure of support. It renews personal dynamism, in particular in community prayer, *"where the voice expresses what is in the heart"* (L. 211,7). Then the community becomes, according to Jean Vanier, a place of forgiveness and the celebration.



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“Your life does not belong to you any more,
it belongs to all your brothers
just as theirs belongs to you, or rather,
their lives with yours
no longer form many lives -
they form a single life: that of Christ!”

At the service of the Church

The community was not an end in itself for Augustine. Its purpose was to promote the search for God and apostolic life. The Augustinian community has a profoundly ecclesial vocation. As Father André Brombart has said, being an Assumptionist is not an external vocation or something added on. Whatever the "work" in which he finds himself, his main aim is to create and animate a wide reaching "*Community spirit*". This is why community harmony is the best witness for proclaiming the Good News. "*If you love one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples*" (Jn 13:35).

Personally, Augustine would have preferred to live a life away from the world, devoted to the search for God. But he could not walk away from the needs of the Church: "*the cleric accepts two things, he embraces holiness and the priestly state: interior holiness is essential because it is for the sake of his people that God has made him a cleric...*" (Sermon 355: 6). He wanted to communicate his passion for God and for man.

We must also stop and look at our world in order to separate the wheat from the chaff. It is still more important for us to discover Christ there. "*See the Lord, see he who is your head and the model of your life*" (Sermon 296, 6). Fasten yourself to him, by supporting one another, with eyes fixed on heaven, then we will more likely help everyone taste the "times of mercy". To share fully in the future life, concentrate on the present life. Have no other desire than to communicate the happiness of life as reconciled brothers. Have we not known the source of all beauty? Then let us share it in the Church with everyone!

“ Called by Christ,
source of our unity,
we choose to live together
according to the Rule
and the spirit of Saint Augustine
in view of the Kingdom! ”

Rule of life of the Assumptionists, 6

Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, a follower of Saint Augustine

“ It does not take long when reading the writings of Father d'Alzon to breathe the scent of Augustinian fragrance in page after page. Often the pen, with free abandon, transcribes thoughts drawn from the books of Saint Augustine and includes long Latin quotations, without any other precision than that of certain knowledge, a little like the Bible...

Right from his youth, Emmanuel d'Alzon was keen to read the works of Augustine. He had developed a strong desire to steep himself in the writings of the Fathers of the Church in which the Bishop of Hippo was, in the Occident, recognised as the greatest... Our founder always wanted his families of the Assumption to celebrate its Augustinian roots. He lacked neither significant Augustinian texts from the beginning, nor Augustinian inspired initiatives throughout the history of the Assumption...

For this man, a founder at 35, impassioned with a desire for truth and unity, the Augustinian way was the royal way, because it defines the central axis of any life, Charity. But more especially, it provides the means of carrying out and incarnating the passion of Love thanks to the choice of a common life set out by the Rule. It focuses on the love of the Church in its "obsession" with the apostolate that continues to be developed daily."

Father Jean-Paul PERIER-MUZET, archivist of the Congregation.
Extracts from *Routes Augustiniennes*, 7 January 1992, pp. 25-31

Thy Kingdom Come **21**

“Augustinians” of the Assumption, a title of convenience?

“*In the XIX century, any new born congregation adopted one of the great rules from the past. Many founders, to obtain the right to launch their brand of religious life, chose the Rule of Saint Augustine, as a title of convenience, nothing more. But, for our founder, Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, it was quite the opposite. If he had not been his only Master, very quickly, he would have been the most loved, the most followed, and the only one that he frequented towards the end of his life. So for us Assumptionists in 1981, will Augustine just be a flag of convenience?*

Let us be clear: Augustine is not our Father, he is our patriarch, according to the will of Father d'Alzon or, as we sing, the "Grandfather". Magne Pater Augustine!

Already through our founder's spirit and great texts, the Augustinian sap nourishes the tree of the Assumption. For example, we give centre stage to Christ and the theological virtues, the sense of the Church, the love of unity, and the trilogy (unity, truth, charity) all so dear to Father Pernet, a disciple of the Father d'Alzon and founder of the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

Can't we all do more to exploit this Augustinian treasure, to which some of us are so totally devoted?"

Extract of the letter n° 25 of the Father Herve STEPHAN,
Superior General, of the Assumptionists. Rome, October 22, 1981

The Odyssey of the Institute, Augustinian Studies

“*In France, to spread the knowledge of Augustine, a place was set up that is impossible not to mention: the Institute of Augustinian Studies (IAS). It is located in the splendid Abbey Palace, in Abbey Street,*

close to Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris. Few know that the Assumptionists founded this centre. Father Emmanuel d'Alzon had wished to found a University, but never realised his project. In the 1930s, there was a sudden revival of patristics. The publisher Desclée de Brouwer entrusted to Father Cayré, an Assumptionist, the organization of a collection of French-Latin works, with critical notes, of the whole of the writings of Augustine! To date, the ancient Augustinian Library valiantly continues its work. In pocketbook form, the New Augustinian Library makes certain texts more accessible. In 1943, the Superior General, Father Gervais Quénard launched the Centre of Augustinian Studies. He entrusted the responsibility of it to Father Cayré, who gathered together collaborators of value: Fathers François-Joseph Thonnard, Albert de Veer, George Folliet, Jesuits and several laity. The Centre was extremely active. Several periodicals were started: *The Review of Augustinian Studies*, *Augustinian Research*. Any deserving work was published in *Augustinian Studies*. An invaluable instrument among all these was the *Augustinian Bulletin*, edited for many years by Father Goulven Madec, which continued to critique all the publications on the subject. Today, the Catholic Institute of Paris, where the Assumptionists founded a Chair in Patristics, has taken over in the management of the I.A.S. Opportunities for collaboration are still numerous and the work is no less intense.

Who is Augustine for you?

A contemporary

In ten years as chaplain to a prison, I was struck by a resonance between the road of conversion outlined by Saint Augustine in his "Confessions", and that found among the prisoners able to read him. Saint Augustine is a contemporary of theirs!

Philippe Guihard, a lay friend of the Assumption, Orsay

A seeker of friendship

What strikes me in the life of Saint Augustine, is his search for friendship with others in community, his acceptance to place himself unreservedly at the service of the Church, the humility at the end of his life and also, of course, his conversion.

Fr Thierry Cocquerez, Assumptionist,
in a parish in Montpellier



A spiritual exercise

As a religious I live the Rule of Saint Augustine. I cannot say for definite if his thought bears the characteristics of African sensitivity? But his word is alive and full of gestures. And this is African!

Father Oswald Lusenge, Congolese
Assumptionist,
Doctor of Philosophy

A fellow traveller

I discovered Augustine when I was 18, thanks to the “Confessions”, and since then it has never ceased to be my fellow traveller in my spiritual life. I love Augustine for the human and spiritual resonance which it wakes up in us each time he speaks about his experience of God. By frequenting him, I never cease to be astonished by the beauty of the sense of Scripture that he reveals to us. Besides being a Pastor of the heart and the theologian of grace, Augustine remains for me a brother who introduces me to my interior Master, the true Source.

Sister Marie-Paulette Alaux,
Oblate of the Assumption, journalist

Each follows his own spiritual path

Augustine very often helps me in my ministry as a preacher, because in his school, he invites each one to examine his own spiritual path. Augustine learned as a layman that it was not necessary for him to deny his past in order to place all his gifts at the service of the Lord and his brothers. With him, I want to say to young people: *“Don’t place your own peace over the needs of the Church!”*

Father Marie Gerard Hirn, Assumptionist, Strasbourg

A Prayer with Saint Augustine

*O blessed Saint Augustine
the Lord chose you to be a Pastor of his Church
and he filled you with his Spirit of Wisdom
and understanding.*

*You were also chosen to be the father
and protector of our house*

*All your life,
you searched for God with all the ardour of
your heart.*

*In faith, confidence, love and perseverance
since you are our Father, we ask you:
through the graces that we desire,
strengthen our faith, hope and love
in our way of life,
make us like you, thirsty for God
the source of true wisdom
and let us not rest until we rest only in Him,
who is the author of eternal love.*

*Prayer for the preparatory novena for the jubilee
of the Minor Seminary of Saint Augustine de Koupèla (Burkina Faso)*

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- A Programme for Volunteers
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- A Christian Youth Hostel in Paris
- Pilgrimages

Creative Quotes from St Augustine

**"He who created us without our help will not save us
without our consent."**

**"Seek not to understand that you may believe,
but believe that you may understand!"**

**"He that is kind is free, though he is a slave;
he that is evil is a slave, though he be a king!"**

**What does love look like?
It has the hands to help others.
It has feet to hasten to the poor and needy.
It has eyes to see misery and want.
It has the ears to hear the sighs & sorrows of men.
This is what love looks like.**

For more information: Assumption Priory, Victoria Park Square, London E2 9 PB

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A review

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*“Before all else,
live in a household
of perfect harmony,
having but one mind and one heart
intent on God.*

*Is this not the whole reason
for your coming together?”*

Rule of Saint Augustine