

## Augustinian Spirituality

DAC First Friday  
Msgr. Zenz  
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### **Part One: Augustine's personal journey shaped his spirituality and theology: amidst constant change, a search for a safe "resting place"**

- A. Early life circumstances – Aurelius Augustine – born in Tagaste on the border of Algeria – Tunisia 354 of a Pagan father and fervent Christian mother
- At 16, fell into "sensuality": Manicheanism (dualistic) and debauchery
  - Studies in philosophy at Carthage and Rome
  - Teacher of rhetoric in Milan
  - A concubine and a son "Adeodatus" (apparently without much affection for his concubine of 15 years)
  - Influence of Ambrose's preaching and gentleness
  - 387 Lent "tolle lege" conversion experience and Baptism that Easter; desire to pursue monasticism at home in North Africa
- B. A baptism into a "blend" of "Neo Platonism" and Christianity; nonetheless, he held a deep belief in a personal God
- He never lost the Manichean struggle of good/evil and came to an "all-or-nothing" spirituality which was critical of "flesh"/world... The problem of evil; not a clear sense of personal responsibility for evil in the Manichean teaching
  - A mysticism of "purification of the soul"
- C. Priest 391, Bishop of Hippo four years later; a growing appreciation of the Church as necessary means for harmony/experiencing Christ
- D. Dealing with Pelagian heresy (Original Sin just bad example; we can overcome it by our own will power.)
- In answering Pelagius, Augustine came to see the centrality of grace/gift/divine charity which we can begin to experience already on earth
  - Struggle with concupiscence which remains in us after Baptism
  - Loving God for Himself and not for what He can give us ("enjoy" not "use")
- E. God's all-diffusive love...
- Understanding of Trinity by way of an interior and psychological model (Father as memory, Son as the mind, Spirit the will/love)
- F. Augustine's journey from a mysticism that was initially *speculative* to something *experiential* to "*mystical moralism*" (concern for Church)
- G. Death – 426 named his successor; died August 28, 430

Interlude: Augustine's writings tell us a great deal:  
Confessions; Retractions; numerous Scriptural commentaries; The City of God; various responses to heretics (against Pelagius, the Donatists, the Jews); The Rule(s) of St. Augustine (for Monasteries)

## Part Two: Themes and concerns of Augustine

- A. Finding the balance between the Divine/human
- God's will is absolute; He alone is truly "free." We have "free will" (and therefore responsibility) but in many ways our lives are "predetermined" by God
  - God's grace goes before any action, sustains us in our actions and follows after. Our "moment" is the choice to cooperate. Obedience is key.
- B. The struggle of concupiscence which remains even after the grace of Baptism
- We are "convalescing" all our life
  - Manicheism never left him
  - Attraction of the "platonic" and idealism
- C. His prayer Christus Totus (Church as His Body)
- Christ incorporates us into Himself
  - Just as our personality is composed of hundreds of relationships, Christ has a relationship with every human being
  - The Body of Christ is whole and complete in each person as well as in the community (I Corinthians 12:27)

## Part Three: Augustine's search for spiritual integration for himself and others

- A. Augustine's ministry as a Bishop
- Lived in great simplicity in a community. Wanted to resemble Acts 2 and 4
  - Rarely went any farther than Carthage
  - Search for spiritual "leisure" (otio) but burdened with "negotio" (activities)
- B. Becoming attentive to our deepest desires and attraction to beauty, truth
- C. Augustine on prayer – letter to Proba, a wealthy widow who sought spiritual direction from him
- D. Augustine and civil society – the common good (City of Man, City of God)

## Conclusion: Quotable Augustine

- *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."*
- *"To know thee, to know myself."*
- *"Love and do what you will."*
- *"Late have I loved thee, beauty ever ancient, ever new."*
- The ending of the City of God
- His dying words (quoted from Peter's Brown's biography, Augustine of Hippo, 1966)