

Augustinian Spirituality – part 1

St. Augustine (354-430) was born in Tagaste, which is located in modern day Algeria, Africa to Patricius and Monica. His father was a pagan while his mother was a Christian, and they belonged to an honorable upper class family. Augustine was sent to school when he was 11 years old where he learned Latin literature and gained knowledge about pagan beliefs and practices. He went to Carthage at the age of 17 to continue his education in rhetoric. Although his mother had raised him in the Christian faith, he was pulled towards the Manichaean religion. Augustine had a thirteen year affair with a young woman in Carthage who later bore him a son, named Adeodatus. The two never married because they were from different social classes. Instead, Augustine's parents arranged a marriage for him, which never materialized.



Following his education, Augustine took a teaching job at Tagaste where he taught grammar during 373-374. Later on he moved to Carthage to teach rhetoric, and held this position for nine years. In 383, he went to Rome to establish a school there, but was disappointed with the apathy of the Roman schools. He accepted the position of a professor of rhetoric at the imperial court at Milan in late 384. This was a very prestigious post that enabled the holders to easily enter a political career. It was here that Augustine met Saint Ambrose who deeply influenced his thinking and philosophy. By this time, Augustine was disillusioned with the Manichaean religion and was moving towards Christianity.

Augustine formally converted to Christianity in 386 and was baptized by Saint Ambrose in 387. He completed his Christian Apology, 'On the Holiness of the Catholic Church' in 388. He was ordained a priest in Hippo Regius in Algeria in 391, where he gained much respect and fame as a preacher. Several of his original sermons have been carefully preserved. In 395, he was appointed the coadjutor Bishop of Hippo and was soon promoted to the position of full Bishop, hence gaining the name 'Augustine of Hippo'. He held this position until his death in 430.

Augustine was such a prolific writer that I find it only appropriate to include some quotes:

If God seems slow in responding, it is because He is preparing a better gift. He will not deny us. God withholds what you are not yet ready for. He wants you to have a lively desire for His greatest gifts. All of which is to say, pray always and do not lose heart.

A Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps.

Take care of your body as if you were going to live forever; and take care of your soul as if you were going to die tomorrow.

Bad times, hard times, this is what people keep saying; but let us live well, and times shall be good. We are the times: Such as we are, such are the times.

Therefore once for all this short command is given to you. 'Love and do what you will.' If you keep silent, keep silent by love; if you speak, speak by love; if you correct, correct by love; if you pardon, pardon by love: let love be rooted in you, and from the root nothing but good can grow.

I heard your voice calling from on high, saying 'I am the food of full-grown men. Grow and you shall feed on me. But you shall not change me into your own substance, as you do with the food of your body. Instead you shall be changed into me.'

Prayer Exercise: Prying With the Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

“In Him we live and move and have our being” -Acts 17:28

“God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.” – Genesis 1:31

God is in all things: light, darkness, wind, fire, sound, silence, bodies, souls...Where do I find God? Are there places where I struggle to find God?

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

Is it easier for me to envision Jesus as fully divine or fully human? What are some words that describe my relationship with Jesus? What are some qualities that I desire in my relationship with Jesus?

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

How does Jesus’ death and resurrection shape my experience of being His disciple? What is my “way of the cross”?

What is my experience of cultural diversity? How has such diversity influenced my sensitivity to others? How does God’s love for all people in His endless kingdom lead me to deeper compassion?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

When in my life did I experience God’s presence? How have these experiences changed me? How have these experiences challenged me?

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Is there anyone who I see as not belonging to my church? In what ways do I try to compartmentalize God’s love?

How do I feel knowing that I am forgiven? Do I ever struggle to accept God’s forgiveness? Are there any concerns, fears, or regrets that I am more comfortable carrying myself?

Amen.

Reading Assignment: pgs. 287-297, Chapter 10