

**21st S. in OT, Yr B.**

**26-8-18.**

**St. Augustine's Day.**

Today, as Augustinians and as a Parish Community, we celebrate the feast of Sts Monica and Augustine, a mother and son, who graced the Church some 1600 years ago. We celebrate it, on the one hand, because our Parish is served by the spiritual offspring of St. Augustine, the Augustinians – and, on the other, because the story and examples of Sts. Monica and Augustine are reflected again in our world and in our culture today.

We live in turbulent times, where a new order of things is making considerable inroads in society and in the values we treasure. The same was happening in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century of our Christian era, where a burgeoning Christianity had to contend with the remnants of Roman paganism and, more worrying, the emerging heresies that warped a true understanding of the Good News as taught by Jesus and the Apostles.

In that situation St. Augustine was born in 354 of a Catholic mother and a still pagan father. As was customary, Monica had her son named and presented to the community just as we do here with newly-born's, but she delayed having him baptised so he could take that step himself at a more mature age. It was a mistake, but, in later life, also a blessing.

In his late teens Augustine became involved with one of the emerging heresies, - Manicheism, which held some Christian beliefs, but twisted others, much to Monica's hurt. She spent the next 15 years praying and pleading with God for him, while Augustine developed his career as an orator, and continued his wayward course. It is the pain experienced by many parents today, as they see their children take a different path from the hopes they had for them.

But as happens with most young people, time changes their perspective, and Augustine became disillusioned with Manicheism, but still kept searching for deeper meaning without finding it in conventional Christianity until he came under the influence of St. Ambrose in Milan who helped him to understand the Scriptures in a richer and more pastoral way than he had experienced. That led to his Baptism in 387, and in following years to him first becoming a monk, then a priest, and finally a Bishop, whose influence is still reverberating through the Church, not only through the

religious and priests who live by the Rule he wrote, but, more importantly, through the writings, sermons, and correspondence he left behind. He was a prolific writer, and you can hardly find a Church document written in the last 500 years that does not quote him somewhere.

Best known of these writings are the Confessions of St. Augustine,, in which he describes his spiritual journey towards faith, his book on the blessed Trinity, and the City of God, where he holds up the benefits of a Christian life over that experienced in a pagan or secular society.

For us St. Augustine is our inspiration, in that he found his greatest joy in living in like-minded community with his friends, an ideal he described in the very first words of his Rule: "Before all else, brothers, live together in harmony, being of one mind and one heart on the way to God."

That's the ideal which we, as Augustinians, attempt to live, and try to share with the people we minister to. How well we do that is something you may judge, but we try, each with our own strengths and our own demons, as best we can.

What we do need, in that regard, is your support, both in your prayers for our growth spiritually as well as in number, and financially, so we can carry on the work that's been committed to us.

I think you are aware that over the past 12-15 years we have brought young men from Vietnam to Australia to introduce them to our Augustinian way of life and prepare them for the Priesthood, so they can return to Vietnam to begin the Order's work there. The first attempt in that direction will be made sometime next year when we hope to send a more experienced Augustinian together with two of the recently ordained Vietnamese to begin the first community there. It goes without saying that we need your support there as well, prayer-wise and financially, for they can't live on good wishes.

So today we make an appeal to your generosity with a collection for our seminary, where we still have a number of Vietnamese in training, and on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, when we will have a fun night to raise some funds for the new Augustinian mission in Vietnam.