



The Augustinian



December 2021, No. 59

Publication of the Augustinian Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel—Australasia

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**We are all
in this together.
Leave no one behind.** *see story on page 8*

FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear Friends

As Christmas draws near each year, a significant ritual is the expression of some form of greeting either given in person or in some written form such as the Christmas Card. At one level the greeting can be expressed so easily. In a deeper way the words used are expressing profound sentiments of desire for the well-being of the other.



One such greeting is when we wish another person a Happy and Holy Christmas. From a faith perspective the explicit reference to Christmas anchors the greeting in that core Christian belief of the Incarnation – God drawing near to us in the person of Jesus Christ. The adjectives Happy and Holy are worth our deeper reflection.

We each desire happiness even if it at times happiness eludes us. What we wish for ourselves, in charity, we long for others to enjoy. A primary foundation for our happiness is the quality of our relationships. Difficulties in those relationships can unhinge us in our sense of wellness. In wishing one another happiness at Christmas, we endeavour to support one another in friendship, peace, forgiveness and love. This is true in our personal relationships as well as those more communal and societal relationships in which we are engaged.

To wish one another a Holy Christmas recognises that there is something greater than our own human efforts in all this. The presence of God, grace, transformation – again what we would desire for ourselves we desire for others.

Whether it is the Gospel narratives concerning the birth of Christ or the insights of Saint Augustine in linking God drawing near to us and our being drawn into the life of God or our own reflection of the year we have lived with the personal and communal joys and sufferings which we bring to the crib of Bethlehem – happiness and holiness is central to the experience of our celebration.

On behalf of the Augustinians of our Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, Australasia, I wish each of you, your families and all your loved ones a Happy and Holy Christmas. May the prayers of Mary, the mother who welcomed Christ in her very person, accompany all of us and our world in these days.

- Fr. Peter Jones OSA
Prior Provincial

Augustinian Education

Reflections On Leading An Augustinian School

In May 2014 I was appointed to the position of Principal of Villanova College, an Augustinian College on the southside of Brisbane. I had previously been principal of two co-educational schools. The appointment to Villanova College was a return to boys' education after an absence of twelve years. I was certainly very excited about leading an all-boys' school and re-engaging with young men.

An integral part of my preparation for commencing the role was being able to attend an Augustinian Values Institute (AVI) Conference held at Villanova College, Ontario. Mr John Holroyd, Dean of Identity and Mission, joined me from Australia. John had been at Villanova College, Coorparoo, for several years and was a great source of knowledge about the Augustinian Charism.

While in Canada and the United States, John and I took the opportunity to visit many Augustinian schools. We spoke with the school leaders and discovered the rich story of Augustinian education. When we entered the grounds of many of these schools, the Augustinian values of Veritas, Unitas and Caritas were clearly and tangibly displayed, within and around all classrooms and corridors.

The AVI Conference brought together Augustinian school leaders and educators from across North America. Presentations by the speakers focused on the three values of Veritas, Unitas and Caritas. Representatives from various schools shared their examples of how they lived out these values in their unique contexts. It was a wonderful experience to listen to and learn from fellow educators passionate about Augustinian education.

A highlight of the trip was visiting Villanova University. We were able to connect with Fr Gary McCloskey OSA and speak to him about Augustinian Spirituality. We visited Mendel Hall and stood beside the statue of St Augustine attentively listening to students, as well as the statue of St Thomas with children. Villanova University is a fine example of a place of learning striving to be an authentic Augustinian community, opening young hearts and minds to live a life of service through a restless search for Truth.

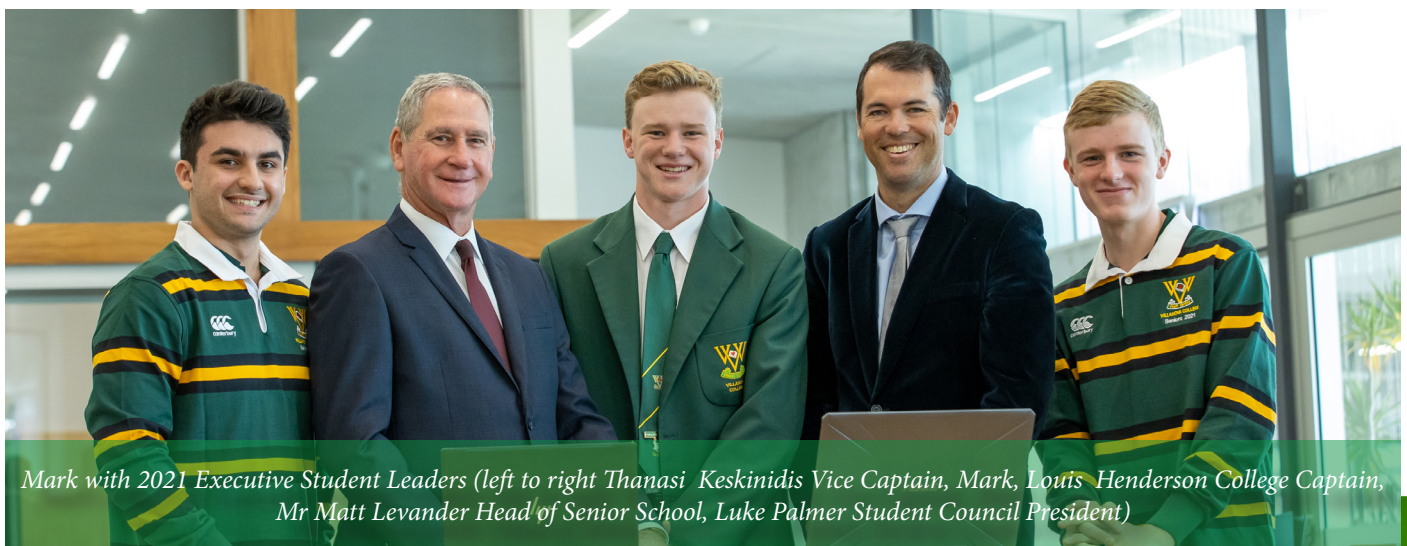
In my first year at Villanova College, I was fortunate to attend a number of staff workshops led by staff member Mr Graeme George. These workshops enabled me to further explore the Augustinian Charism and how it continues to be embedded in the fabric of daily school life. The writings of Augustine on education detail a distinct way of engaging with young people that still resonates today.

In 2016 I was fortunate to travel to Italy and walk in the footsteps of St. Augustine with colleagues from St Augustine's College, Sydney, and Villanova College, a pilgrimage led by Fr Peter Wieneke OSA. A significant experience within the pilgrimage was living with the Augustinian Fathers at the Augustinian Monastery at San Gimignano. Their hospitality was greatly appreciated and Fr Brian (rest in peace) repeatedly said, "Our home is your home." And we certainly did feel we were home.

Over the past seven years it has been an honour and a privilege to lead Villanova College. The Augustinian family has welcomed me, and the experience has helped shape me into a better person. I will endeavour to continue to live a life of service to others and continue to have a restlessness for seeking the Truth. Humility and gratitude, which are integral to a life of service, will I hope be constant companions as I journey along the path that now takes me to a new time in my life.

Blessed be the memory of all the travellers on the way. May they light the steps ahead, in love and company.

-Mark Stower
Outgoing Principal, Villanova College-Brisbane



Mark with 2021 Executive Student Leaders (left to right Thanasi Keskinidis Vice Captain, Mark, Louis Henderson College Captain, Mr Matt Levander Head of Senior School, Luke Palmer Student Council President)

Augustinian Spirituality

FRIENDSHIP in Augustinian Spirituality

Fr. Percival OSA from The Publications Team of the Province contacted me to write an article on a topic drawn from Augustinian spirituality – a reflection from my personal experience. After speaking with Fr. Percival, I settled on writing some thoughts on “Friendship” – a topic dear to the heart of St. Augustine.



To begin my journey with influences from St. Augustine’s spirituality, I recall, many years ago, before I came to the Augustinian Parish here in St. James, Coorparoo, Brisbane, I met a number

of Augustinian Priests up on Green Mountains in Lamington National Park in Queensland. They often visited our cousins Guesthouse for holidays. I remember fondly Frs. Dave Brimson, John Whelan, and other Augustinians. Their friendliness and good humour were infectious. This contributed to lots of happy times with the family and guests – of course, not to make mention of their pastoral care for us also. And so, when I came to St. James Parish Coorparoo, in the late 1970’s, this led to an opportunity for me to learn more about Augustinian spirituality and identity, by searching for God together, through living by the gospel teachings, prayer, community and friendship.

When the “Friends of St. Augustine” group was established in Coorparoo in the late 1990’s, the focus was on developing our spiritual lives and learning from St. Augustine’s teachings found in his writings,

among which is his book “The Confessions”. One of the memorable sayings on friendship from his Confessions 4.8. is: “We would teach and learn from each other, sadly missing any who were absent and blithely welcoming them when they returned. Such signs of friendship sprang from the hearts of friends who love and knew their love returned, signs to be read in smiles, words, glances and a thousand gracious gestures. So were sparks

kindled and our minds were fused inseparably, out of many becoming one.” What a beautiful expression by this great saint all those years ago in the fourth century. And, it is just as relevant today. In our parish life and community, we try to focus on these values by practising a spirit of welcome to all who come to the parish and to all we meet in our daily

lives. Great ways of “catching up” with one another and sharing friendship and laughter and developing new friendships happen when we join in our parish gatherings and share hospitality together. Sharing coffee together is another popular way to connect with friends and to share our burdens. My sister, Elizabeth, and I had the great privilege in 2009 to join a group of eleven pilgrims (five from Brisbane and six from Sydney) to visit Augustinian sites in Italy and North Africa. Our spiritual guides were Paul Maloney OSA and Peter Jones OSA. The whole experience of sharing friendships with spiritual guidance gave real meaning to what Augustine said, “to travel together on our way to God.”

Another very important aspect of friendship is our concern for others. Here, we take advice from St. Augustine, who says: “There is no better proof of friendship than to help our friends with their burdens.” We do this in everyday life as we all have problems; however, it became particularly evident in our parish when COVID-19 pandemic struck. People became fearful and isolated in their homes and this continues to affect many even today. Frs. Francis OSA and Tuan Anh OSA, of our parish, immediately sprang into action and organised contact with parishioners by sending the weekly Parish Bulletin by either email or post. Volunteers continue to do a weekly “letter drop” to those parishioners living nearby who require this contact, others are posted – parishioners have expressed gratitude for being remembered and for being kept in touch with the parish. Also, our concern for others is shown by visits to hospital or aged care facilities, or if preferred, to their homes. Phone calls, sending texts,

sharing photos have been a great way to network and connect, particularly when restrictions have been placed on facilities prohibiting visitors. The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent social isolation of people certainly played havoc with the mental health and well-being of many. Again we have to be aware and “look out” for our friends.



Finally, to sum up, I found this first verse of a prayer, written by Dave Austin OSA, in Mary McCormick’s recently published booklet on “Friends of St. Augustine – an appreciation” 2021, page 16:

“God of faithful love, You blessed Saint Augustine with the gift of friendship. Help us to recognise You in one another and be true friends in Christ.”

-Karleen O’Reilly
A Founding member of the Friends of St Augustine - Coorparoo

References:
 “The Confessions – Saint Augustine” translated by Maria Bolding, O.S.B.
 “Friends of St. Augustine – an appreciation” 2021 - Compiled by Mary McCormick.
 “Augustine Day by Day” compiled and edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A.

Beauty Ever Ancient, Ever New

Bro Hoang Huy Nguyen OSA
Solemnly Professed Vietnamese Augustinian

One of my favorite quotes of Augustine is “O Beauty ever ancient and ever new.” In this quote St Augustine sums up the concept of God in such a way that God is both real and mystical. God already exists in our lives whether each person realizes it or not, and at the same time God is always new or mystical, which motivates each one of us to search for Him. “No matter how discouraged, Augustine never gave up. And this was really what saved him. With the coming of faith, he was finally able to perceive that God was indeed very close to him. God had been within him all along, even before he discovered any personal relationship with him.” In the inward journey, Augustine encountered the truth, which speaks or even demands that he share that truth to others. This is clearly seen in the Confessions where Augustine used provocative language to talk about the inner voice: “You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness.” This means that the encounter with God from within compels one to move outward to others. Like Augustine, I am motivated to search for God and to share that with other people. The interior life does not create an oasis of peace but it is a process for experiencing the external world with meaning and in depth. The interior life is not a place to enter and stay, but to go out anew to the external world, to our relationships and commitments, with a new outlook and a new heart.” Pope Francis’s Letter to all Consecrated People reminds

me that “we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs for the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church.”



Province News

Solemn Profession Of Bro Hoang Huy Nguyen Osa

Congratulations to Bro Hoang Huy Nguyen OSA, who professed his solemn vows on 14th November 2021 in St Kieran’s Church, Manly Vale, NSW, Australia. Due to covid-19 travel restrictions, Augustinians from other states in Australia and the families and friends of Bro Huy in Vietnam participated in the celebration via Livestream.



AFA Picnic

The executive committee of the Augustinian Formation Association (AFA), headed by Adrianna Bowyer, had organized a Picnic Catch up with the members of the Augustinian Formation Community, Brookvale. The gathering was held at Manly Dam on 13th November 2021. Despite the brisk wind, everyone had a wonderful time just being together again after the many months of lockdowns. Indeed, cheers to many years of friendship-in-community.



Preparation for 2022 Provincial Chapter

The Province preparation for the 2022 Provincial Chapter has already commenced. Two zoom meetings have already occurred where a discernment on crucial issues affecting the immediate future of the province has started. We commend to your prayers the success and fruitfulness of the forthcoming Provincial Chapter of the Augustinians in late June 2022.



Justice & Peace

We Are All In This Together. Leave No One Behind.

On 14th November, we celebrated World Sunday of the Poor. In reflecting on what this day is about, I would sum it up in two sentences:

- This Sunday reminds us that poverty is core to our human reality.

- It is good to feel for the poor, but much more, we are to feel with the poor.

Let me explain. Poverty is not simply what others suffer, for we all know poverty, as we share in our broken and flawed humanity. Poverty serves as the great humanizer and leveler, reminding us of who we are, standing together poor and needy in human solidarity. The poor speak to us of this, for they tell us that no one is better than anyone else. Through our engaging with them, they give us the precious gift of knowing and appreciating better our humanity. They poignantly remind us that we have a responsibility to each other, no matter who the other may be. They tell us that this is so for reasons much deeper than economic or social alienation, for it is about who we are, connected by human bonds created by a loving God.

In my multi-tasked Bangkok, I engage others in ministry in many different spheres of influence, being continually offered the gift of sharing our poverty. The poor in my life here teach me so much.

Here, I share with you two of my teachers.

When I first came to Bangkok 16 years ago, I never saw anyone homeless on the street. By now, with the added forces of a pandemic, I see homelessness raising its ugly head all over the place. I see it every time I go to my local 7-11, for a man has established his home on the footpath directly in front. As I pass him, he always greets me and I greet him back - Sawasdee. He is a constant reminder of what social structures and systems can do to us. I did not cause his homelessness, but I am not without sin. So like others in my neighbourhood, I greet him, I pray for him, I leave him a little food. In return, he makes me reflect on the cruelty of humanity.

For 12 years, I have been reaching out to the urban refugee community in Bangkok. They

number 5,000, not a huge number, but purely overwhelming in their level of need, for they live forgotten in a society whose government denies their existence. The beauty is that their existence is not denied by people, Thai and foreign, in the same community. We all help, doing our best. Our help is about much more than money for it is about upholding human solidarity and

dignity, giving witness to the value of all people and telling the world very plainly - Leave no one behind.

One refugee family I have been helping for years nearly completely broke down due to the stresses of this pandemic. For the first time in my life, someone, whom I know and love, sat before me seeking help, while crying out loud that he wanted to end it all, but he couldn't as he would not leave his young son behind. Inside, I cried - We are all in this together. Leave no one behind.

-Fr John P Murray OSA



Photo taken by Fr John P Murray-OSA of the man living outside the 7 Eleven store in Bangkok- Thailand



Anna Jones at left meeting with the Coordinator and Aunty Rhonda Sandow and Volunteer Claire O'Donaghue

One Day's Service: Reflection of an Augustinian Volunteer during COVID-19

After many planning meetings and discussions, a visit out to Cherbourg community took place on Tuesday 9th-Wednesday 10th of November with our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Paul Wilson. Cherbourg is an Aboriginal Settlement established by Archibald Meston, Chief Protector of Aborigines, in the period 1900 to 1910. It is administered today by its own Council acting under State government mandate and is situated in the South Burnett an hour from the Coast north of Gympie. It was a valuable opportunity to finally be able to meet face-to-face with key health and wellbeing stakeholders within the community. At the time of our visit, Cherbourg had been working tirelessly on vaccinating as many people as possible, with the support of community health workers and the Mater Health teams, and they had been doing a great job, as vaccination rates were vastly increasing.

From discussions with Christine, who is from the Cherbourg Community Health Service, it was clear that this was their top health priority. As Cherbourg is already a vulnerable community, it was crucial that they safeguard their community against Covid-19 outbreaks as best as they could. As a result of this, Anna was able to go out with the community health workers and the Mater teams on Wednesday to

observe their process in team planning and be a part of the door-to-door home vaccination visits.

This was an eye-opening opportunity for me, to see how critical it was to work collaboratively within community. If it was not for the local health workers, who knew each person in their community and were able to knock on their door, the Mater health teams would not be able to provide homes vaccinations. This process of door-to-door vaccinations had been an extremely effective method, as prior to this, there were fewer people going to health clinics themselves, so going out to homes was far more effective.

After driving around to many homes and discovering many of them were still out of town or at work, we were welcomed into one home to provide an initial vaccination. It was really positive to see and hear that the vast majority of their community was willing and wanting to get vaccinated. Once Cherbourg community has achieved this vaccination process, hopefully they can focus more on implementation of community based and driven preventative mental health care. As Christine had mentioned that this was a top priority for their community.

As a volunteer, and a recently graduated health student, I highly appreciated how open and accepting the community health workers and stakeholders have been with me, and I truly hope I can continue to journey with their community in a supportive capacity.”

- Anna Jones
Brisbane Volunteer 2019 to 2021

ST JOSEPH'S OUTREACH SERVICES (SJOS) REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

St Joseph's Outreach Services (SJOS) is a not-for-profit charity that is managed by volunteers from the South Yarra Parish Community and surrounding areas. The Mission of SJOS is the provision of transitional housing and support services to people who are disadvantaged and marginalized.



To extend this Mission, a small group of volunteers, in 2018, commenced a Garden Club, with the aim of growing produce including vegetables, fruit and herbs, for distribution to those in need via the Food Store. Work by this committed group over the years has seen the development of seven garden beds of various sizes on the plot of land at the back of the Priory and along the back border of the adjacent land, which is leased to the Almost French Kindergarten.

In the 1990 and 2000, the initial garden was built and tended by several Augustinian Priests including Fr John Barry and Fr Gerald (Gerry) Dullard. In fact, Fr Gerry spent a great deal of his retirement life tending the shrubs and trees and building rockeries and garden beds.

Despite the setbacks with the COVID restrictions, the work in the garden continued with monthly working bees outside of strict lockdown periods. Several garden beds were restructured and revegetated. Also, individually, members attended the garden to either harvest, plant, water or weed on a weekly, and as needed, basis. Potatoes were harvested with the help of the Kindergarten children, who also wrote out French garden signs for many of the plants, which we now read and vocalise with ease. (The Kindergarten offers French immersion program taught by dynamic French teachers.)

The garden was sleepy throughout the winter periods, but in the last two months it has been flourishing due to the heavy rains and spring weather. We were pleased to report that over the year approximately 1100 bags of organic vegetables and herbs were delivered to the Foodstore for those in need.

Our work throughout the year was boosted by a donation of a 30 metre retractable hose from Hoselink which has enabled us to comfortably water all areas of the garden. Also, a Commonwealth grant has enabled us to revitalize many parts of the garden including the planting of a diverse collection of fruit trees and native plants to encourage more native birds and insects. Further, a worm farm was introduced to complement our compost/recycling work and to create a larger garden for production.

Recent news is that we may have a new recruit. Father John Sullivan OSA was seen raking up the needles from a huge pine tree which spreads its foliage to unwanted areas of the garden and paths. We wait in anticipation.

-Trish Dennis and Joan Donoghue
on behalf of all Garden Club Members including Carmel Bateman, Garrie Christie, Quentin Kynoch, Elizabeth Wilkinson and Sabet Cox.

Trish and Garrie with kids at Almost-French-Kindergarten, South Yarra



St James Parish Celebrates International Mass



When I arrived at St James Coorparoo over fifty years ago there were six Masses each Sunday and the congregation was made up of people who were of Anglo\Celtic origin. How different was the scene on 31st October when the community celebrated its Annual Multicultural Mass.

The Gathering Hymn welcomed a colorful procession of flag bearers, acolytes and ministers. We were here to celebrate the wonderful diversity of our parish community. There were brothers and sisters born in many different countries around the world. These countries included Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, United States, South Africa, United Kingdom, Ireland, Malaysia, Poland, Lebanon, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Italy, Spain and Vietnam. It reminded me of the feast of Pentecost when all those different national groups mentioned in Acts received the Holy Spirit and were able to hear the word in their own language.

The Church was almost to capacity and we rejoiced in the relaxation on restrictions on our collective gathering. It was Francis who led us in saying the Our Father in our native language and it was a moving experience. After the Eucharist we moved to the parish hall where a smorgasbord of foods was available to share including our traditional Roasted Pig. After we had enjoyed our meal together we were entertained by



the Filipino Choir, Sri Lanka dancers, an Australian quartet, a beautiful Irish love song and our own Pastor singing the beautiful ' You Raise me up.' A wonderful experience of a faith community sharing unity and fellowship in the universal church.

-Ray Mitchell
*Parishioner, St James Parish,
Coorparoo, Brisbane Qld*



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the Augustinians through the following ways:

AUGUSTINIAN VIETNAM MISSION FUND (not tax deductible)

Donations will be used to assist the new Augustinian Community in Saigon with their setup costs which include preparation to invite young Vietnamese to test their vocation in the Augustinian *Come and See Program*. You can make a donation by cash or direct deposit.

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Augustinian Vietnam Mission Fund
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Account Number: 7359 03067

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Website: www.augustinianvolunteersaustralia.org
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THE AUGUSTINIAN December 2021

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