

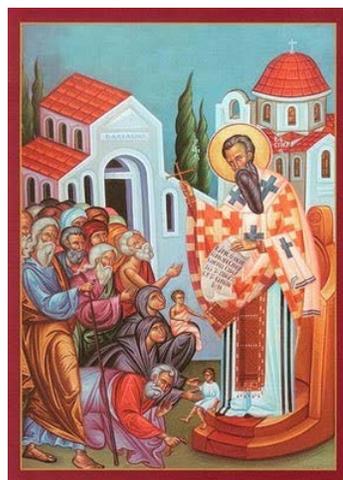
MY DEAR THEOPHILUS

VOLUME 4 / ISSUE 8 (AUGUST 2020)

NEWS FROM AROUND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Church of England assesses impact of Coronavirus lockdown on low-income families

Eight in 10 poor families report being in a worse financial position than before the pandemic, and half were much worse off because their income had fallen while costs have risen. The findings are in a new report – “Poverty in the pandemic: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children” – published this week by the Church of England and the British NGO Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG).



Dear Parish Family:

Last month we explored the relationship between the Church, Society and the State.

We saw that in the Acts of the Apostles, in the center of Jerusalem, in the presence of the Jewish and Roman authorities, the Apostles preach and baptize. The Early Church soon established the diaconate to care for the least and vulnerable among them, the widows. The early Christians, who were Jews and Gentiles, cared for each other in complete contravention to the surrounding culture. The early Christians set aside ethnic and cultural differences; they were brought together as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, and hence, sons and daughters of God, where the least and the lost, the widow and the orphan, were held on level ground within the entire community because God's infinite love extended equally to all, that being infinitely. It was the original melting pot.

In its activity in societies from the earliest of days, the Church proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only through its preaching and its liturgy, but also

through practical means by establishing hospitals for the sick, feeding the poor, clothing the naked, caring for orphans, educating children, and establishing the university system, which was created to study theology and to educate the clergy), while simultaneously ministering to all segments of society, all to the greater glory and honor of God because Jesus is Lord.

One such example of this is St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who was born in 330 A.D. Basil is one of the “Desert Fathers.” After Christianity became the official religion of the Empire under Constantine, aesthetic monks would go out into the wilderness, the Egyptian desert, forsaking all comfort and security, to so that they could follow God instead of the world. This region, Cappadocia, became one of the premier sites of Christian education and theology. Basil was part of that.

A famine broke out in the middle of the fourth century. Basil, then a priest, immediately started to feed those suffering from hunger, and he did this by having those who had the means to open their food supplies and share with the hungry.

The winter of 367 was quite devastating. Basil understood that he needed to create an organization that would serve the sick, the disabled, the lepers, orphans and others in need. So the hospital system was born. It did not happen without opposition though. Basil became the Archbishop of Caesarea and continued the work he began. But there was resistance; the Emperor himself was against his idea. It seemed like a dead end, but the Holy Spirit’s flame would not be extinguished.

In 372, the famous complex was finally built, and became known as “The Basileiad.” Basil persuaded those with means to invest in this undertaking, and he convinced the poor to participate in the realization of the concept. At the center of the hospital complex there was a church, emblematic of being God-centered, and around the church there were guest houses, schools, an orphanage, homes for the poor, and the hospital itself. Basil personally supervised the work, and he himself physically worked to build it.

Basil was not only the Archbishop, he was also a trained doctor. He decided that he would run the quarantine department for lepers, who were rejected by society, and left to live in pain until death. Basil bandaged and washed the wounds of his patients; he spent time with them, embraced them, recognizing that everyone was made in the image of God.

Basil was 49 years old when he died. After the funeral, St. Gregory, said these words to the people of Basileiad Hospital:

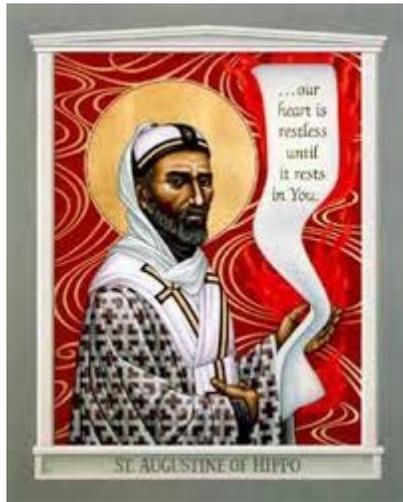
Come out, O Brothers, from your city, and behold this new city, where piety reigns, where the money of the rich citizens, at the request of Basil, is turned over to where it will not be stolen by anyone, and where time has no power of it. Here, they look at diseases philosophically, here, unhappiness turns to happiness.

If we compare the hospital of Basil with the richest cities, such as Thebes of Boeotia, Babylon, the Pyramids of Egypt and ancient temples, we see that nothing was left of all their former greatness. Even the very people themselves are no more.

But in the Basileiad hospital, we see people whom everyone rejected and hated because of their illness. And Basil managed to convince us that if we consider ourselves humans, we cannot neglect our own kind, for with our heartlessness and wickedness, we offend Christ Himself, who is the head of all.

Basil was the shepherd, the archbishop, of a community of faith where there was a recognition that all people were made in the image of God, that Christ is the Word Incarnate who died on the cross for rich and poor, for the well and the ill, for people from every walk of life. Basil and his Archdiocese of Caesarea took the Acts of the Apostles to heart, and preached the Good News of Jesus in word and deed.

Your servant in Christ,
The Rev. Chester J. Makowski, Rector



***FEATURED HOLY PERSON OF
THE MONTH
AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO
August 28
By James Kiefer***

Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus) was one of the greatest theologians of Western Christianity. (In his day the Mediterranean world consisted of an Eastern, Greek-speaking half and a Western, Latin-speaking half, with different ways of looking at things, and different habits of thought.) He was born 13 November 354 in North Africa, about 45 miles south of the Mediterranean, in the town of Tagaste in Numidia (now Souk-Ahras in Algeria), near ancient Carthage (modern Tunis). His mother, Monnica, was a Christian (see 4 May), and his father for many years a pagan (although he became a Christian before his death). His mother undertook to bring him up as a Christian, and on one level he always found something attractive about Christ, but in the short run he was more interested in the attractions of sex, fame, and pride in his own cleverness. After a moderate amount of running around as a teen-ager, he took a mistress, who bore him a son when he was about eighteen. Theirs was a long-term relationship, apparently with faithfulness on both sides, and the modern reader is left wondering why he did not simply marry the girl. He never tells us this (and in fact never tells us her name), so that we can only guess. It seems likely that she was a freedwoman, and the laws forbade marriage between a free-born Roman citizen and a slave, or an ex-slave.

When He was 19 and a student at Carthage, he read a treatise by Cicero that opened his eyes to the delights of philosophy. He was from the beginning a brilliant student, with an eager intellectual curiosity, but he never mastered Greek -- he tells us that his

first Greek teacher was a brutal man who constantly beat his students, and Augustine rebelled and vowed never to learn Greek. By the time he realized that he really needed to know Greek, it was too late; and although he acquired a smattering of the language, he was never really at home in it. However, his mastery of Latin was another matter. He became an expert both in the eloquent use of the language and in the use of clever arguments to make his points. He became a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage, but was dissatisfied. It was the custom for students to pay their fees to the professor on the last day of the term, and many students attended faithfully all term, and then did not pay. In his late twenties, Augustine decided to leave Africa and seek his fortune in Rome.

For a long time Augustine was attracted by the teachings of Manicheism, named for Mani, a Persian who had preached kind of synthesis of Christianity with Zoroastrianism, the dominant religion of Persia. Zoroaster had taught the existence of a power of light, God, the supreme Creator, and of a dark and evil power that opposed him. On the Zoroastrian (Parsi) view, the dark power was a rebel against his creator, and doomed to ultimate defeat. Mani, on the other hand, was a thoroughgoing dualist, who taught



Augustine teaching in Rome, by Gozzoli

that there are two gods of equal power and eternity, and that the universe is the scene of an unending battle between light and darkness, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, soul and body, etc. The Manichees as they moved west into the Roman Empire adopted many traits of what is generically called Gnosticism. In particular, they advertised themselves as being not an alternative to Christianity but as the advanced version of Christianity, as the faith for the spiritually mature, the intellectually gifted. They claimed that their beliefs were based on reason rather than authority, and that they had answers for everything, at least as soon as the learner was sufficiently advanced to comprehend them. They differed from the classical Gnostics by not contrasting spirit with matter. On their view, everything was composed of material particles, but these were either light or dark. Since the mind was composed of light particles, imprisoned in the body, a cage made of dark particles, something like the

Gnostic contrast between spirit and matter was there. Members were divided into an inner circle, the “elect,” who were expected to be celibate and vegetarian, so as to avoid all those dark particles, and the “learners,” of whom considerably less was expected. Augustine signed up as a learner. He was at first completely captivated, but then met with a series of disappointments. The rank and file of the movement did not seem to be very clear thinkers. He met the leaders, who were advertised as the Towering Intellectuals of the Ages, and was not impressed.

Augustine prospered in Rome, and was eventually appointed chief professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan, at that time the capital city of the Empire in the West. It should be noted that this was an extremely prestigious appointment. In classical times, when laws were often made and issues voted on by huge public assemblies, when even juries typically had several hundred members, and when a man’s public influence, or even on occasion his life, depended on his ability to sway large audiences, rhetoric -- the art of manipulating an audience -- was a skill that few men thought they could afford to neglect. (Socrates was one of the few, and we know what happened to him!) The art, at first intensely practical, had by Augustine’s day become a display form admired for its own sake. However, the admiration was there. Every lawyer, arguing a case, was expected to give an eloquent speech, full of classical allusions and standard rhetorical flourishes. And Augustine was at the top of the field.

In Milan Augustine met the bishop Ambrose, and was startled to find in him a reasonableness of mind and belief, a keenness of thought, and an integrity of character far in excess of what he had found elsewhere. For the first time, Augustine saw Christianity as a religion fit for a philosopher.



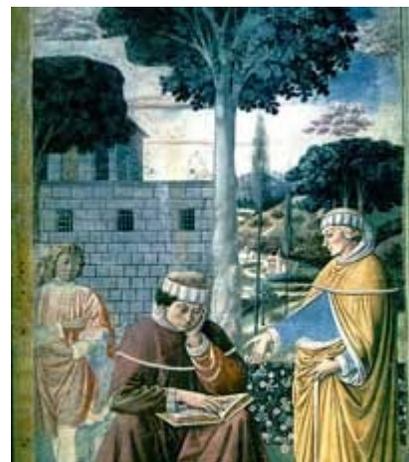
St. Augustine entering Milan, by Gozzoli

Soon after his arrival in Milan, Augustine was plunged into two crises. First, his mother arrived from Africa, and persuaded him that he ought to give up his mistress and get married. He agreed to a betrothal to a suitable young lady; but his betrothed was too young for immediate marriage, and so the actual wedding was postponed for two years. Meanwhile the mistress had been sent back to Africa. Augustine, not ready for two years of sexual abstinence, lapsed back into promiscuity.

The second crisis was that Augustine became a neo-Platonist. Plato, as interpreted by his later spokesmen, in particular by Plotinus, taught that only God is fully real, and that all other things are degenerations in varying degrees from the One--things are progressively less good, less spiritual, and less real as one goes rung by rung down the cosmic ladder. By contemplating spiritual realities, directing one's attention first to one's own mind and then moving up the ladder rung by one to the contemplation of God, one acquires true wisdom, true self-fulfillment, true spirituality, and union with God, or the One. Augustine undertook this approach, and believed that he had in fact had an experience of the presence of God, but found that this only made him more aware of the gulf between what he was and what he realized that he ought to be.

Meanwhile, he continued to hear Bishop Ambrose. And finally, partly because Ambrose had answers for his questions, partly because he admired Ambrose personally, and chiefly (or so he believed) because God touched his heart, he was converted to Christianity in 386 and was baptized by Ambrose at Easter of 387. About 12 years later he wrote an account of his life up to a time shortly after his conversion, a book called the *Confessions*, a highly readable work available in English. Ostensibly an autobiography, it is more an outpouring of penitence and thanksgiving.

In a well-known chapter, Augustine describes his conversion. His intellectual objections had lost their force, and he was at a point where the difficulty was that he seemed unable to make a commitment to living chastely, or unable to make a commitment, period. He heard of a group of young men, Christians, one of whom decided to become a desert hermit, whereupon the others, one at a time, made the same commitment, encouraged and inspired by the examples of those in the group who had already done so. (In many circles at that



"Take and Read", by Gozzoli

time, becoming a desert hermit had the same overtones as joining the Peace Corps did for many young persons in the 1960's, or joining the armed forces for many in the weeks immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor.) Augustine went aside to ponder the question, "How is it that these young men can make so drastic a commitment, and I cannot take even the first step of declaring myself a Christian?" He heard what seemed to be a child's voice

coming from next door, saying over and over, “Tolle, lege; tolle, lege,” or, “Pick up and read; pick up and read.” Since he could not think of any reason why a child would be saying that, he took it as an omen, and picked up a copy of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. As he opened it, his eye fell on the end of the thirteenth chapter:

The night is far gone, the day is at hand.
Let us then cast off the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light;
let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day,
not in reveling and drunkenness,
not in debauchery and licentiousness,
not in quarreling and jealousy.
But put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the flesh,
to gratify its desires.

As he read, he experienced this as God speaking directly to him, convicting him of his past sins, and offering him forgiveness; calling him to amend his life, and promising him the grace and power to do it. He burst into tears, and surrendered. Later, he wrote:

Late have I loved Thee, O Lord; and behold,
Thou wast within and I without, and there I sought Thee.
Thou was with me when I was not with Thee.
Thou didst call, and cry, and burst my deafness.
Thou didst gleam, and glow, and dispel my blindness.
Thou didst touch me, and I burned for Thy peace.
For Thyself Thou hast made us,
and restless our hearts until in Thee they find their ease.
Late have I loved Thee, Thou Beauty ever old and ever new.
Thou hast burst my bonds asunder;
unto Thee will I offer up an offering of praise.

Although written as an account of his life, the *Confessions* keeps digressing into speculations about the nature of time, the nature of causality, the nature of free will, the motives of human action, *etc.*

Louis deWohl has written a novel about Augustine, based mostly on the Confessions, called *The Restless Flame*. It is an excellent introduction to the man.

After his conversion, Augustine went back to his native Africa in 387, where he was ordained a priest in 391 and consecrated bishop of Hippo in 396. It was not his intention to become a priest. He was visiting the town of Hippo (or Hippo Regius, now Annaba, 36:55 N 7:47 E), was in church hearing a sermon, and the bishop, without warning, said, "This congregation is in need of more priests, and I believe that the ordination of Augustine would be to the glory of God." Willing hands dragged Augustine forward, and the bishop together with his council of priests laid hands on Augustine and ordained him to the priesthood. (The experience may have colored Augustine's perception of such questions as, "Does a man come to God because he has chosen to do so, or because God has chosen him, and drawn him to Himself?") A few years later, when the Bishop of Hippo died, Augustine was chosen to succeed him.

He was a diligent shepherd of his flock, but he also found time to write extensively. He was an admirer of Jerome, and wrote him a letter hoping to establish a friendship, but the letter went astray. (In those days there was no public post office, and if you wanted to send a letter to a friend in Athens, you entrusted it to someone you knew who was travelling to Athens, or at least in that general direction, with instructions to deliver it or pass it on to someone else who would oblige.) Jerome did not get the letter, and the contents became public knowledge before he heard of it. Augustine, in addition to saying how much he admired Jerome, had offered some criticisms of something Jerome had written. Jerome was furious, and came close to writing Augustine off altogether. However, Augustine wrote him a second letter, apologizing and explaining what had happened, and Jerome was mollified. They had a long and intellectually substantial correspondence.

Augustine's written output was vast, and largely responsible for the fact that the entry for him in the index of the Encyclopedia Britannica is more than a column long. His surviving works (and it is assumed that the majority did not survive) include 113 books and treatises, over 200 letters, and over 500 sermons. His work greatly influenced Luther and Calvin, to the point where for a while Roman Catholic speakers and writers were wary of quoting him lest they be suspected of Protestant tendencies.

We have already mentioned his *Confessions*. A second great work of his is the book, *De Civitate Dei (The City of God)*. This was written after Rome had been sacked by invaders led by Alaric the Visigoth. It is a reply to those who said that the Roman Empire was falling apart because the Christians had taken over; he discusses the work of God in history, and the relation between the Christian as citizen of an earthly commonwealth and the Christian as citizen of Heaven.

His third great work is his *De Trinitate (On the Trinity)*. Here, he discusses the doctrine of the Trinity by undertaking to compare the mind of man with the mind of God, since man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Augustine begins by pointing out a Trinitarian structure in the act of knowing something. He continues by pointing out a Trinitarian structure in the act of self-awareness. He concludes by pointing out a Trinitarian structure in the act of religious contemplation by which man sees himself as made in the image of God.

AUGUSTINE AND THE DONATISTS

Almost a century before Augustine was born, the Church in Africa had been torn apart by the Donatist controversy. For a brief account of this controversy (and the Pelagian and other controversies of the day), but a longer one than I am prepared to give here, I refer the reader to the relevant section of the book, *Sketches of Church History*, by Canon Robertson.

During the persecution of the Church by the Emperor Decius, some Christian clergymen in Africa, or so it was alleged, had stood firm against threat of torture, imprisonment and death more consistently and nobly than others. The Donatists maintained that their clergy derived their ordinations from clergy with very good records of constancy under persecution, and that they were the Church of the Martyrs, as opposed to the Church of the Sell-outs, which was everybody else. They further held that sacraments received at the hands of unworthy ministers were of no value. Or at least it seems that they held this. Augustine had a long correspondence and controversy with them, and at one point they apparently replied that they did not hold this, to which Augustine replied, "In that case, will you kindly tell me what the controversy is all about, and what you and I have been debating for the last eighteen months, and what your bishops and ours have been out of fellowship

with each other about for the last century?” The controversy dragged on, with part of the dispute historical (whether Bishop so-and-so, now seventy years dead, had really done what he was accused of doing), and part theological. It seems clear that the Donatists, at least most of the time, argued that the holiness of the Church depended on the holiness of its members, especially its clergy. Against them, Augustine maintained that the holiness of the Church is not derived from the average level of virtue of its individual members, but is derived from the Holiness of its Head, who is Christ.

AUGUSTINE AND THE PELAGIANS

In Augustine’s day, a man from Britain named Morgan, or in Latin Pelagius (means “islander” -- consider the words “pelagic” and “archipelago”), began to preach, denouncing what he saw as a slackening of moral standards. He saw professed Christians living less than exemplary lives, and offering human frailty as an excuse. His reply was: “Nonsense. God has given you free will. You can choose to follow the example of Adam, or you can choose to follow the example of Christ. God has given everyone the grace he needs to be good. If you are not good, you simply need to try harder.” Augustine asked him about original sin, and he replied that there is no such thing. Augustine asked him why, in that case, it was the universal custom to baptize infants, and he had no answer. Augustine saw the teaching of Pelagius as totally undermining the doctrine that God is the ultimate source of all good, and encouraging the virtuous and well-behaved Christian to feel that he had earned God’s approval by his own efforts. Pelagius was condemned by Pope Innocent I, and then re-instated by Pope Zosimus. Augustine refused to accept the judgement of Zosimus, and ultimately won the day.

Near the end of his life, the Vandals, a barbarian people with a reputation for wanton destructiveness (hence our modern term “vandal”), who had earlier invaded Spain from the north and settled down there (hence the province of Spain called “Andalusia”), became involved in a civil war in Northern Africa, and their troops invaded Africa in huge numbers. The leader of the losing side took refuge in the town of Hippo, and the Vandals were besieging the town (which they ultimately captured) when Augustine, bishop of Hippo, died 28 August 430, aged 75.

Let us pray: Lord God, the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the hearts that serve you: Help us, following the example of your servant, Augustine of Hippo, so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



PLEASE LET US KNOW IF SOMEONE NEEDS A HOME VISIT

If you know of anyone who needs a home visit because they cannot get to Church, please call the Parish Office, or let Fr. Makowski know. Either Fr. Makowski or one of our Lay Eucharistic Visitors will call on them. If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Fr. Makowski at 713.299.7675.

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER

Praying is something that we all can do, young and old, rich and poor, tall and short. Please pray for everyone on our Prayer List.



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***PLEASE BRING PORK & BEANS FOR
MANNAFEST!***

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