



# The Augustinian

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUGUSTINIAN PROVINCE OF  
OUR MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL - AUSTRALASIA



AUGUST 2025

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## FROM THE PROVINCIAL

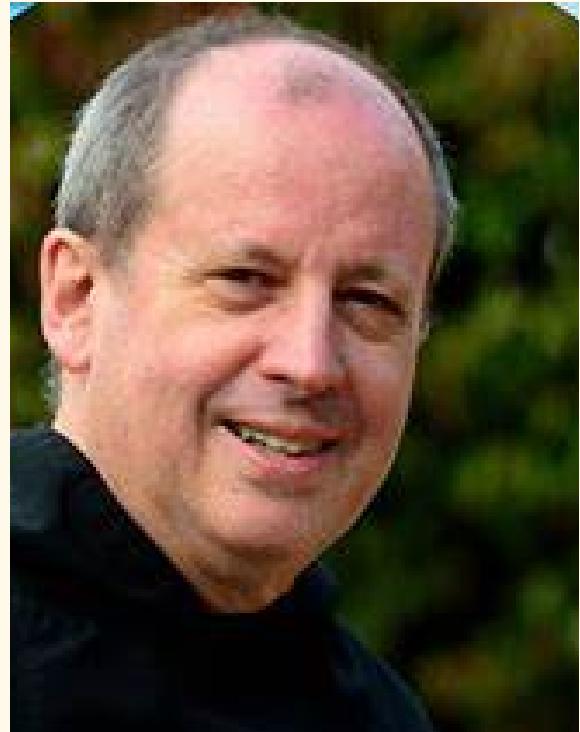
Dear Friends,

These past months, the Augustinian family throughout the world has shared a common joy. The election of our confrere Robert Prevost OSA as Pope Leo XIV has had a significant impact on so many. This happiness stems from more than the reality of an Augustinian being elected as Pope. Many have had personal experience of the warmth, faith and integrity of the now Pope over the preceding years, during his various visits to Augustinian communities and ministries when he served as Prior General. It is this sense of immediate connection with the new Pope's goodness that has heightened the delight at his election.

As the celebrations of the feasts of Saint Monica and Saint Augustine draw near, the spirituality we identify as Augustinian is receiving a greater focus. It is opportune to briefly consider how the key themes of that spirituality call us to renewal.

Pope Leo calls humanity to deeper friendship, dialogue, and communion. What is the state of my relationships? Am I genuine in my love and respect for others? How committed am I to undertaking my small part in fostering peace and understanding? Does the reality of the church as a community walking with and carrying each other have much meaning for me?

Pope Leo places emphasis on depth, on the interior dimension of Christian faith. In his words, we need to be open to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Am I consciously attentive to the enduring presence of Jesus within my own person and what happens around me? Is space for prayer, reflection, discernment, and the humble search for truth important for me? Do I sense God's infinite love for me and for us as revealed to us by Christ?



Mission motivated by love. Is a sense of mission, of which Christ is the focus, important to me? Is my service of others an act of authentic love for others?

Pope Leo's ministry is universal to the Church and the world. The Gospel is core, and Augustinian spirituality is a particular perspective of the Gospel. Our concerns also need to be ecclesial and global, even while our immediate responsibilities can be very localised. The Pope consistently draws our attention to the situations of profound suffering in our world in his pleas for peace, respect and dialogue.

I thank each of you who read this for the various ways in which you support the Order. Your friendship with us means much to us. On behalf of my brothers, I wish each of you, your families, friends and communities blessed celebrations of the Feast of Saint Monica and the Solemnity of Saint Augustine

God Bless,  
**Fr Peter Jones, OSA**  
**Prior Provincial**



## **"Come away to a quiet place with me and rest for a while" - Mark 6:31**

Each year priests and religious are required to follow Jesus' invitation to "Come away with him", to go on a 'retreat' as we commonly say.

Why did Jesus suggest that? Mark tells us it was because "there was so much coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat." Yes, we all need to 'retreat' some time from our busyness. And St. Augustine would add that the 'retreat' is not only into a quiet place but into our inner selves, where he says we can find our God who dwells there.

Every two years or so, we Augustinians make this retreat, not on our own, but in community - a community retreat. So, there were 26 of us and we retreated to the quiet of the Carmelite Monastery at Varroville, south-west of Sydney, at one time beautiful dairy country with still some cows in the adjacent paddocks.

A community retreat usually has a Retreat Master who leads us in that journey inwards. Our Retreat Master was Fr. Alan Fitzgerald O.S.A., who, at age 84, made the long trip from the USA to be with us.

Alan has dedicated his whole life to the study of St Augustine as discovered in his many writings. With us, Alan concentrated mainly on Augustine's 'Rule of Life' for Religious. It's quite a short Rule of only some 8 chapters - certainly short when you consider that the Rule of St Benedict for his monks runs to 73 chapters.

Among our 26 taking part, we had some 7 nationalities represented, with men mainly aged below 50 or over 70 with not so many aged in between. Fr Alan directed us to look at how we are living (or not living) our community life of prayer and work together, "one in heart and mind on our journey towards God" as St Augustine directs us to do in the very first chapter of his Rule. After each talk, Fr. Alan would invite us to listen to each other in small groups of 6 as we shared our journeys with each other.

**Fr John Sullivan, OSA**





## A GRATEFUL LIFE

My childhood was spent on a farm on the southern outskirts of Brisbane with my mother and father and two brothers and three sisters. Mum had a deep Catholic faith. Dad was a Christmas and Easter Anglican who knelt by his bed every night to say his prayers. He also drove us to Mass every Sunday until my eldest brother was old enough to get his driver's licence. While we were at Mass Dad waited for us in the car reading the Sunday paper. As a child, it always seemed to me that Dad got the better deal. Many years later, shortly after my joining the Augustinians, Dad became a Catholic. "Now we will all be the same," he told me.

It was in my last year at secondary school that the thought of priesthood emerged with some clarity. My mother was pleased with the idea and she must have mentioned my thoughts to Dad. Sometime later, while we were out in the car together, Dad said to me, "Your mother tells me that you are thinking of going to the seminary next year." "Yes," I replied. Dad just said, "Well, I think you are very young to be making a decision like that." He was a wise man.

Image: The Greenup family on the farm: Robert and his father (back), Robert's eldest brother and three sisters (front).

It was not just because of what my father said but the following year a job became available. And in the years after that there was full-time work, more study, quite a bit of travel, conscription into the army, volunteering overseas and various employment in the finance sector in Australia and New Zealand. These were interesting and fulfilling years but the idea of priesthood never left me.

Somewhere along the way, a reading of St Augustine's *Confessions* made a deep impression on me and eventually, in 1986 (now 36 years old), I contacted the Augustinians and met with Michael Endicott who was then living in Clayfield. The Augustinians seemed

right to me and later that year they accepted me into the Order and my Augustinian formation began, firstly in Sydney, then a novitiate in Dublin followed by four years of study in Rome.

Formation was a positive time for me, especially the years spent in Rome where the living in a large multi-cultural community, the friendship with fellow students and the time to explore the wonders of that city were all enjoyable and affirming experiences. Of course, there were also some trials. The study itself was demanding enough and there were occasional tensions within the community.

My ordination to the priesthood took place in St James, Coorparoo in 1993. After that there was a year in Echuca Parish before coming north to Mareeba, which was then to be my home for the next 30 years. For most of that time, my primary role was with the parish, but many years were also spent working alongside Deacon Ralph Madigan with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the Diocese of Cairns.

All my years of Augustinian priesthood have been fulfilling for me. And the few trials and disappointments that have come my way have been more than outweighed by the privilege and the reward of being trustfully accepted into the everyday lives of so many good people, of being there, making long-standing friendships, and being deeply involved in the great human venture of life and faith. And, in that experience, it has become clear to me that everything that is most genuinely human within us is most genuinely of God.

Now in retirement, or semi-retirement, I have embraced something of a 'hermit' life, living simply and frugally in a cottage in Yungaburra made available to me by the former Bishop of Cairns, James Foley. My daily routine is to celebrate a morning Mass in the little church next door, followed by a regular program of prayer, walking, reading and sleeping. On the weekends, I make myself available to supply Masses anywhere in the Diocese where there may be a need.

I am truly grateful for the life, the Catholic faith and the Augustinian vocation that have been given to me.

**Fr Robert Greenup, OSA**





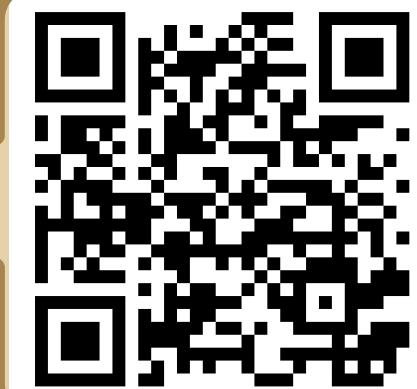
## **AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY AT THE CENTRE OF ST AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE LIFE**

Augustinian spirituality comes alive in so many ways at St Augustine's College, Sydney. Two recent events are wonderful examples of this. Firstly, our deep connection with Lifeline. This very worthwhile connection develops a strong sense of community by assisting those in our society who depend on the love and concern of others and promotes humility by ensuring that we think of others and that all people deserve dignity. As a College, each fortnight we regularly help out at the Lifeline Brookvale and Manly depot as part of our Year 9 AWE program, and by our student volunteering and school resource provision at two Lifeline bookfairs each year. We hosted the first Lifeline bookfair in the recent school holidays. We are proud to help Lifeline with their essential social service and are equally proud to nurture our special Augustinian values.

The second example of promoting Augustinian spirituality is through our student exchange program with Malvern Prep in Philadelphia. Malvern Prep is a beautiful secondary school located in the hills of Pennsylvania and run by the Augustinians. Our College hosted three students from Malvern in the final two weeks of Term 2 and three of our boys will be travelling to Malvern and staying with Malvern families in the Term 3 break. I would like to thank our three families for hosting our American friends. This experience teaches us that we are part of worldwide Augustinian community and that despite our cultural differences we are connected by common Augustinian values and beliefs. I cannot think of a more Augustinian action than to open one's family door to host another in the spirit of hospitality and friendship.

**Mr Peter Nolan**  
**Deputy Principal - Mission and Wellbeing**  
**St Augustine's College**

SCAN ME



Students volunteering for the Lifeline Book Fair at the College.

Scan to learn more about the Lifeline Book Fairs at SAC and other Northern Beaches locations.



Malvern Prep and SAC students visit the Blue Mountains.



Malvern staff member Teresa Lohse with Fr Senan Ward, OSA.



## **WALKING TOWARDS SYNODALITY IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR AUGUSTINIAN CHARISM**

*"We want to be a synodal Church, A Church that walks, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close especially to those who suffer."*  
-Pope Leo XIV.

With the historic election of Augustinian Pope Leo XIV, the Church enters a new chapter of renewal. This momentous occasion invites Villanova College to reaffirm its commitment to the Augustinian charism and the values that continue to shape our mission and identity.

At the heart of this recommitment lies the spirit of synodality – the act of walking together, listening with the heart, and engaging in genuine dialogue that honours and elevates every voice. As Pope Leo XIV poignantly reminds us, this journey is especially vital for those experiencing suffering or marginalisation.

Recently, Villanova College staff participated in a Spirituality Day titled *Walking Towards Synodality through the Restless Search for Truth*. Through moving reflections from keynote speakers Fr Peter Jones OSA, Augustinian Prior Provincial, and Fr Peter Wieneke OSA, the day provided rich opportunities for staff to engage deeply with themes of faith, truth, and the shared pilgrimage, both past and future.

Villanova College old boys attested to the profound impact of the Augustinian charism on their personal formation, identity, and faith journey. Meanwhile, a campus-based reflective pilgrimage invited staff to uncover Villanova's Augustinian legacy – revealing narratives of faith, community, and tradition that have been woven into the foundation of the College.

"A core aspect of journeying together as a synodal Church involves enlarging the space of our tent – opening our hearts and communities more widely. Steph Jorna, Synod Coordinator and Project Officer for Inclusion at Archdiocesan Ministries, guided staff in exploring how Villanova's social justice initiatives and mission programs influence our understanding and living experience of Church, faith, and human encounter.

This spirit of synodality was also manifested at the formation event *Walking with Pope Leo XIV: Augustinian Insights from Villanova & Australasia*, where over 50 educators from more than 20 schools across the Archdiocese of Brisbane gathered to engage with a live-streamed keynote webinar featuring Fr Peter Jones OSA and Br Mark O'Connor FMS. Attendees then participated in dialogue with Villanova's own Augustinian friars and heard reflections from members of the community – including stories of time spent with then-Cardinal Robert Prevost OSA before his election to the papacy.

Villanova College staff and students, together with the Augustinian community, joined Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge for a thanksgiving Mass celebrating the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV. In his homily, Archbishop Coleridge reflected on the enduring mission of the papacy – to be the Church's first public witness to the Resurrection – anchoring Christian identity and faith. This moment of shared prayer powerfully affirmed Villanova's synodal journey with the wider Church, walking in unity and renewal under the guidance of a new Pope.

The hallmark of Augustinian spirituality at Villanova College remains deeply rooted in the wisdom of St Augustine and inspired anew by the leadership of Pope Leo XIV. It is reflected in our shared commitment to walk together with open hearts, creating a Church that listens, responds, and journeys forward in love and shared purpose – a path embraced not only by staff, but one that continues to shape the experiences of our students as they grow within this vibrant community of faith.

**Ms Eleni Greenaway**  
**Dean of Mission and Identity**  
**Villanova College**





## PROVINCE MARKS NEW CHAPTER WITH OFFICE BLESSING

The Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, Australasia marked a significant moment with the blessing of the newly-renovated Provincial Offices on Sunday, 29 June.

The Brookvale office building has been the centre of activity for the Province since 2002, and in 2024 renovations began to revitalise the space.

With the design expertise of architects Marc and Bernadette Maayo, parishioners at Holy Spirit Parish, St Clair and owners of ARQ&CO Design Works, the office renovations began to take shape. Work was carried out by The Good Crew and completed early this year.

The building now features a welcoming entry foyer with a private meeting space, dedicated offices for Province Staff, a bright and spacious upstairs gathering space with ample natural light, a meeting room, and a purpose-built, accessible library. It effectively brings together functionality, community, and the Order's mission.

The June blessing saw the culmination of the hard work and dedication of Province members, the architects and builders. Led by Assistant General Fr Tony Banks, OSA, the blessing was well-attended by Augustinians, Province staff, Affiliates, friends and associates. It was a great opportunity to celebrate, to look to the future, and to thank those who had helped the renovations plans come to fruition.

May the Provincial Offices be a place where Province members, staff and visitors feel welcome, and may it continue to serve the Order well now and into the future.





Image: Celebrations during the blessing of Our Mother of Good Counsel House in Brookvale.

## THE AUGUSTINIAN GENERAL CHAPTER

The 2025 General Chapter of the Order of Saint Augustine will have about 80 delegates participating from the various circumscriptions (Provinces and Vicariates).

Each circumscription is afforded one vote with Provinces allowed one elected delegate automatically and then an extra delegate for every 50 members (at 75, 125, 175 members and so on).

The key task of all of our Chapters is to create a program for the following six years and then to elect a team that will carry out the work of the Chapter.

The Chapter will begin with Mass at St Augustine's Church and prayers at the tomb of St Monica. The next day, Fr Alejandro Moral Anton will relinquish his office to the Vicar General and voting for a new Prior General begins, taking up to six ballots.

Depending on the number of ballots required this can take up to ten days.

In the meantime, the Instrument Laboris will be refined, and issues resolved by the workings of the Chapter, both in plenary sessions and in small groups.

Factors and issues to be considered include the demographic changes in the Order and new plans for regional co-operation, the roles of mission and evangelisation in the life of the Order, the rise in individualism at the expense of community life and matters of formation for new members.

Voting on the issues generally takes place towards the end of the Chapter but indicative votes are used throughout to help the Chapter see its way through to good conclusions, hopefully influenced by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pray with us in preparation for the Chapter and throughout the Chapter, scheduled for September 1 - 18 in Rome.

**Fr Tony Banks, OSA**  
**Assistant General**



UNTIL WE  
MEET AGAIN

## UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

I was first introduced to the Augustinians when, in March 2024, I applied for a role as the Media and Communications Coordinator for the parish of North Harbour. From my first interactions with Fr Michael Belonio OSA, parish priest, I felt a warmth and kindness that I have since recognised as core features of Augustinian spirituality.

In late 2024, Fr Michael told me that the Province was seeking a new Administration Secretary, with a focus on Media and Communications. At the time, I was doing a few different things, but the role sounded interesting and I thought I would apply – long story short, I ended up commencing work with the Province early this year.

From the first moment I stepped through the door at 44 Alfred Road, Brookvale, I felt welcome. I got to meet the wonderful Kay Stenner and learn from her experience. I enjoyed coming to work and interacting with kind, thoughtful colleagues. And I loved being able to design and create materials that told the Augustinian story.

A highlight of these months was certainly the election of Pope Leo XIV. I felt privileged to be able to contribute in a small way to the Order's official celebrations and communications – whether it be a special edition of *The Augustinian*, sourcing photos to send to media outlets, or crafting graphics featuring our new Pope.

In recent months, my life circumstances changed, and I had to make the very difficult decision to leave my roles at the parish and the Province. It is not easy to leave places where you feel you belong. I am so grateful to Prior Provincial, Fr Peter Jones, OSA, and Fr Michael, for giving me the opportunity to participate in the broader Augustinian mission. I'm also grateful for the many relationships and connections I've made along the way – they are treasured.

*"May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand."*

**Sophie Taylor**



As the Augustinian family mourns the death of Jacky Worthington, former Leader of Friends of St Augustine, we share words she offered when invited to write for the History of Friends of St Augustine in 2021.

*Friends were an integral part of St Augustine's life and as the name suggests the Friends of St Augustine is based on the notions of friendship so dear to Augustine - "We would teach and learn from each other, sadly missing any who were absent and blithely welcoming them when they returned". [Confessions Bk IV]*

*For the past 20 years Friends has sought to bring together those who desire to learn about Augustinian spirituality and more importantly explore ways to live as authentic Christians in a secular society. The Church faces many challenges at this time and there is an acknowledgement within the Church (although maybe not universally) that the laity has much to contribute to the formation of a modern and relevant Church.*

*With influence comes responsibility and it is our responsibility to attend to our faith and seek formation so we can contribute in a meaningful way. Augustine's writings endure in their relevance and continue to provide guidance regarding so many of the issues we currently face in the world.*

*One of the many enjoyable experiences I have had as National Leader was to attend the International Congress of Lay Augustinians in Rome in 2019 and I would like to share with you the thoughts of one of the guest speakers, Paola Bignardi, that resonated with me. Her blueprint for an effective laity is one that is:*

- Well-formed and in touch with their internal life
- Takes risks without fear
- Has a vision for the future
- Is not afraid to speak up
- Dares to dream

*Dare to dream!  
With love  
Jacky Worthington*

## **Judith Duncan from South Yarra remembers Jacky**

I first heard of Jacky Worthington when she was spoken of as a promising prospect for a new National Leader of Friends of St Augustine, following Sylvia Phillips into that role. I had the pleasure of meeting her in person after she had been confirmed in that role. The occasion was the annual meeting of leaders of individual groups of Friends at St. Kieran's in Manly Vale.

Having flown up from Melbourne and travelled out to Manly Vale it was wonderful to be greeted by Jacky and Father Paul, our Chaplain, then introduced to the other leaders gathering there as they arrived. Jacky was so warm and welcoming, putting everyone at ease. The Augustinian value of hospitality was shown in abundance throughout all the weekend's activities, from shared mealtimes and in-between refreshments to the working sessions where Jacky led discussions ably, clarified differing points of view and fostered discernment. Our weekends were ably organised, ran smoothly and had tangible results in establishing a path forward for the year to come.

She embodied the best kind of leadership, taking all with her on the journey as a Friend of St. Augustine, with her Leader's Letter in issues of Amici along with the highlights of two National Lay Congresses sustaining members of Friends even during the years of the pandemic. Rest in Peace, Jacky.

## **Mary McCormick applauds Jacky's role in Two National Lay Congresses**

In 2019 members of Friends of St Augustine all appreciated a Travelling Congress as Jacky arranged for the keynote speaker to visit most local groups with the theme Joy in Believing - Sharing the Joy of the Gospel. In 2023 Jacky prepared another Congress with the theme Walking Together! embracing technology to enable local groups to Zoom in for the event. Thank you, Jacky.

## **Gina Rossbach from Cairns appreciated Jacky in her role as Leader and friend**

Although I only knew Jacky in recent times, after Covid, I always found her friendly, accommodating and very dedicated and devoted to her role with Friends of St Augustine. She leaves behind a wonderful legacy of friendship which will be difficult to fill and surely missed.

To Jacky's family our sincere condolences.

**Judith Duncan, Mary McCormick, and Gina Rossbach**

Images: Cairns friends, Olivia Ambrose, Isiah Quemado, Fr Paul Maloney OSA, Jacky Worthington, Gina Rossbach, Lyn Oswell, Sally, Jeanette Hartley, (Mareeba,), Br. Peter Van Pepper, Josefina Canada (previous page); Jacky Worthington (right).

# AFA MATTERS

Dear AFA Members & Friends,

I hope this edition of *The Augustinian* finds you all well and still enjoying and celebrating the excitement of our newly-elected Pope Leo XIV, the first Augustinian Pope. Over the past few months, the number of family and friends who have contacted me regarding the election of Pope Leo XIV and shown their excitement and well-wishes has been amazing.

As an Augustinian community, may we remember the main message behind Pope Leo XIV's first speech, a call for peace, inclusion and the future of the Catholic Church, while emphasising the importance of God's unconditional love and the need for humanity to build bridges.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances not in our control, the AFA Christmas in July Dinner had to be cancelled. We will now look forward and put all our energy into our end-of-year dinner, making this a big one! All are welcome to attend, and this year we have sourced a NEW VENUE, the Balgowlah RSL Club at Seaforth.

The Christmas Dinner will take place on Saturday, 29 November 2025. At the dinner, we will have lots of raffle and lucky door prizes, together with lots of games and entertainment on the night to help fundraise for our Augustinian seminarians. Please make sure to diarise this fundraiser now and more details will follow closer to the event.

Also, just a reminder that yearly membership fees of \$30 are now due and monies can be deposited directly into AFA's account –

Name: Augustinian Formation Association;  
BSB No: 032190  
Account No: 105386  
Ref: (Surname)

Membership Fees or cash can be dropped into the parish office at Manly Vale.

Hope to see many of you at the Christmas Dinner on 29 November.

God Bless,

**Adriana Bowyer**  
**AFA President**



## GIFTS OF PROVIDENCE

On July 8th 2025, a lovely young Syrian refugee family moved into a rental home in St Clair. They have a three-year-old boy. Rita from the Catholic Care Refugee program asked me a couple of weeks before if I would be able to help the family with material goods, as they had arrived with no possessions apart from personal items.

After the initial feeling of being overwhelmed, I took stock and told myself that when I retired from work at the beginning of 2025, I had told myself that I would like to help a refugee family settle here in Australia in some capacity, so I said to myself: "just get on with it!"

I knew it was not something for me to do by myself, as I belong to the wonderful Parish of Holy Spirit at St Clair, where there are many generous and helpful Parishioners, and especially with being part of the Social Justice Group, who see awareness and support of refugees as a very important part of our mission.

Fr Perci enabled a notice to be placed in the bulletin over two weeks, asking for donations of material goods in good condition with Rita's and my phone numbers as contacts.

In order to give the young couple some control over their lives, people were asked to send photos of their goods being donated to either Rita or myself after they offered any goods. These photos were sent on to the couple and they were told they could accept the items or not.

As I had worked with the Student Support Wellbeing group at CSPD for 20 years, I had many contacts, so also put out a request for any help with goods. It took no time for parishioners and school counsellors to offer goods.

We knew we needed some strong men with trailers or vans to help with the pick up and delivery of heavy goods. The Parish office had a couple of names, and with the help of the Men's Business group, four men offered to help, including Geoffrey, Darren, Frank, and Michael.

A counsellor offered contact with her brother, as he was cleaning out a deceased estate in Warwick Farm, so two men, Michael, with a covered in trailer, and Geoffrey, went to pick up a fridge and other white goods and could keep them until the delivery evening of July 8th: the gifts of Providence.

When I met the couple on the morning of July 8th, they were very pleased to receive some goods as their home was empty. I took some tea and coffee and suggested we have coffee, but was told "we have no teaspoons". This was a stark realisation of what it's like "to have nothing."

They awaited Vinnies calling to bring more food and other essential items, and they were visited the same day. By nightfall, the men who had to come after work had picked up and delivered a 6-piece lounge setting, fridge, table and chairs, a single bed for their little boy, bedding, a dinner set, an air fryer, cutlery, TV and many other items, turning an empty house into a comfortable home. Some food items were provided for the men and other Syrian people who had come to help.

It was so heart-warming to see how the parish community came together to assist this family so they can settle here. There were some issues a few days later when the freezer stopped working, but they were able to access one from some friends a few days later.

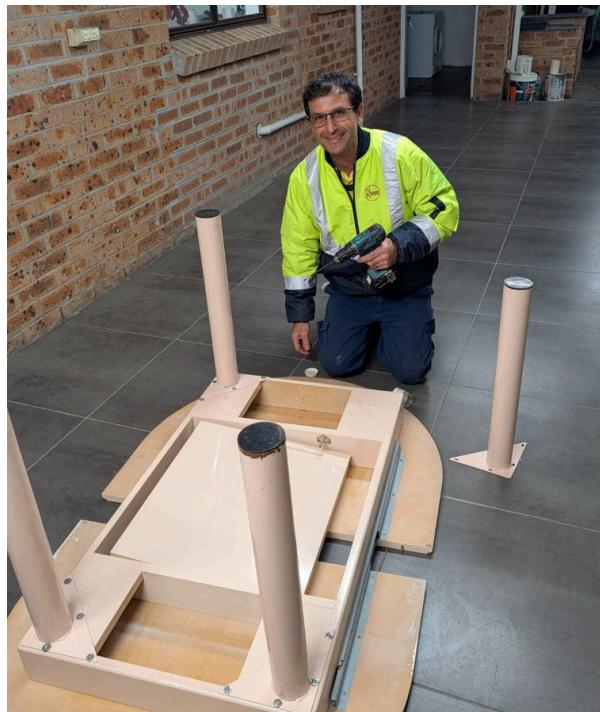
People have offered to help get to know the family, and this will happen once they feel less overwhelmed by all the newness of their environment. CatholicCare will help them to engage with programs at Mamre House as a way of learning the language and making friends. They are picking up English very well for people who have only been in this country for about two months.

One thing the family did have on display is a small framed picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour behind an incense light.

As time goes by, they will need emotional support and friendly faces while they navigate the different cultural systems of Australia, get to know people, and be able to make friends.

May they continue to feel very blessed and welcome in our community.

**Jeanne Appleton**  
**Social Justice Group**  
**Holy Spirit Parish, St Clair**



Images: Some of the helpers on July 8 (previous page); Michael helping to assemble a table (bottom).

# ONE MIND, ONE HEART ON THE WAY TO GOD: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF AUGUSTINIAN MINISTRY AT HOLY SPIRIT PARISH, ST CLAIR

Thirty years ago, the Augustinian friars stepped into the life of Holy Spirit Parish in St Clair, western Sydney. What began as a new chapter in the pastoral care of a young and growing suburban parish has become a living testament to the power of community, prayer, and friendship in the spirit of St Augustine.

Since 1995, the Augustinians have journeyed with the people of Holy Spirit Parish as shepherds, companions, and brothers in faith. Their presence has not only enriched the sacramental life of the community but has helped shape a parish identity rooted in collaboration, hospitality, inclusiveness, friendship in community, and a restless desire to seek God together in all things.

## **The Augustinian Flame**

For many parishioners, the arrival of the Augustinians brought a new vitality to parish life. As Kelly Apikota recalls, "Father Brendan Quirke OSA brought new energy into our community through his strong faith and encouraged my children to join in church activities." Her family's long and devoted service in music, liturgical ministry, outreach, and pastoral care was deeply nourished by the example of Augustinian leadership. "Our faith and life flourished," she shares. "The Augustinian flame was lit in our hearts."

This flame has burned through times of joy and sorrow. When Kelly's son Beni and husband Tapu passed away in the same year, it was the presence, compassion, and prayers of the Augustinians and the wider parish community that carried her through.

"You kept my spirit alive," she says with heartfelt gratitude.

## **Faith in Community**

From the beginning, the Augustinians have drawn parishioners into deeper communion with one another, echoing St Augustine's conviction that "we come to faith within community." Lorenz and Sylvia Herft, coordinators of Friends of St Augustine (FOSA), witnessed how study, prayer, and friendship became the pillars of a vibrant lay movement. "Augustinian spirituality and charism—unity in community and mutual love—opened us to a deeper exploration of faith."

The spirit of collaboration has been central to parish life. As Carol Vella reflects, "From the moment I met the first Augustinian assigned to the parish, I felt invited to be part of this collaborative relationship." Over the years, that invitation led to greater involvement in ministry, parish commissions, and liturgical life. "The Augustinians have helped me see that I too can contribute to growing relationships in the parish so others feel welcomed and want to be involved."

## **Pilgrims Together**

At the heart of the Augustinian presence at Holy Spirit Parish is a deep and enduring truth: we do not journey to God alone. As St Augustine reminds us, “Let us walk together and do good on the way”—a call to live as pilgrims bound by friendship, seeking God in one another and in all things.

This sense of shared pilgrimage has shaped parish life for the past 30 years. Jenny Kyd captures it beautifully: “The Augustinian spirit taught me that we’re all pilgrims, journeying together toward God.”

In this parish, the restless heart finds not only a home, but companions for the road. St Augustine’s famous words—“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You”—continue to echo in the hearts of parishioners, drawing them into deeper communion with God and with one another.

Maggie Fono’s journey is a living example of this spirit. Over the years, she has flourished in many roles—leader, musician, parent, and friend—all animated by the desire to serve and grow in love. “Our hearts are always searching for God,” she says. “That reminds me to seek Him in every part of my life.” Through her service in music, hospitality, youth, and pastoral care, Maggie has found not only personal growth but a way to lead others into that same encounter with God.

Her family’s witness continues to enrich the life of the parish. Her mother, Seaview, currently serves as Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council—a role that reflects their shared commitment to building a Church where leadership is exercised with humility, and community is formed through mutual love. Together, their story reminds us that the Augustinian way is not a solitary climb, but a journey made side by side, “with one mind and one heart on the way to God.”

## **A Bottomless Plate**

To describe the Augustinian legacy at St Clair, parishioner Kriz Florido offers an image that captures the spirit of the community: “A bottomless plate.”

It began with shared meals after Mass and blossomed into a culture of sharing lives, hopes, and sorrows. The plate, she says, “overflows with charity, compassion, hope and prayers,” fostering a parish that is inclusive, supportive, and joyfully rooted in the Gospel.

Kriz continues: “The Augustinians were not just our priests, but our confessors, mentors, spiritual guides, counsellors and friends. The bond they formed with parishioners remains and transcends distance. The Augustinians became our family; the church our home.”

## **Charism in Action**

Margaret and Peter Moriarty, made affiliates of the Order in 2005, have long championed the richness of Augustinian life. “Their welcome, kindness and hospitality have greatly enriched our parish life,” Margaret reflects.

She also adds a delightful confession: “I have yet to come across a boring sermon from any of them!” Indeed, many parishioners have noted how Augustinian preaching—thoughtful, relevant, and often peppered with humour and real-life stories—has opened their hearts to Scripture in fresh and meaningful ways.

Deacon Rod Pirotta, whose vocation as a permanent deacon found early roots in the parish, credits the Augustinians with creating the conditions for growth. “I was supported spiritually through hours of listening and hospitality. I was affirmed in my abilities and the ministries I led. Religious orders bring that extra ingredient to parish life—making it a growing, hospitable, and faithful community.”

### **Gratitude for the Journey**

As the Holy Spirit community marks this 30-year milestone, the words that resound most clearly are those of deep gratitude—for the friendships formed, the lives changed, the vocations nurtured, and the enduring witness of the Augustinians. In the words of one parishioner: “Augustinians have been one with us in our faith and life’s journey.”

From shared laughter to sacred silence, from the waters of baptism to the solemn grace of farewells, from joyful fellowships to the life-giving rhythm of Sunday Mass—this has been a sacred journey of walking “with one mind and one heart on the way to God.”

As Holy Spirit Parish looks to the future, it does so with renewed faith, abiding love, and the confident hope that the Augustinian presence will continue to accompany and inspire—nourishing hearts that seek, and shaping a community of pilgrims who serve, love, and grow ever closer to God.

*Ad multos annos!*

**Fr Percival Sevare, OSA**  
**Parish Priest, Holy Spirit St Clair**





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Let us continue  
living this *Augustinian spirit.*

POPE LEO XIV



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