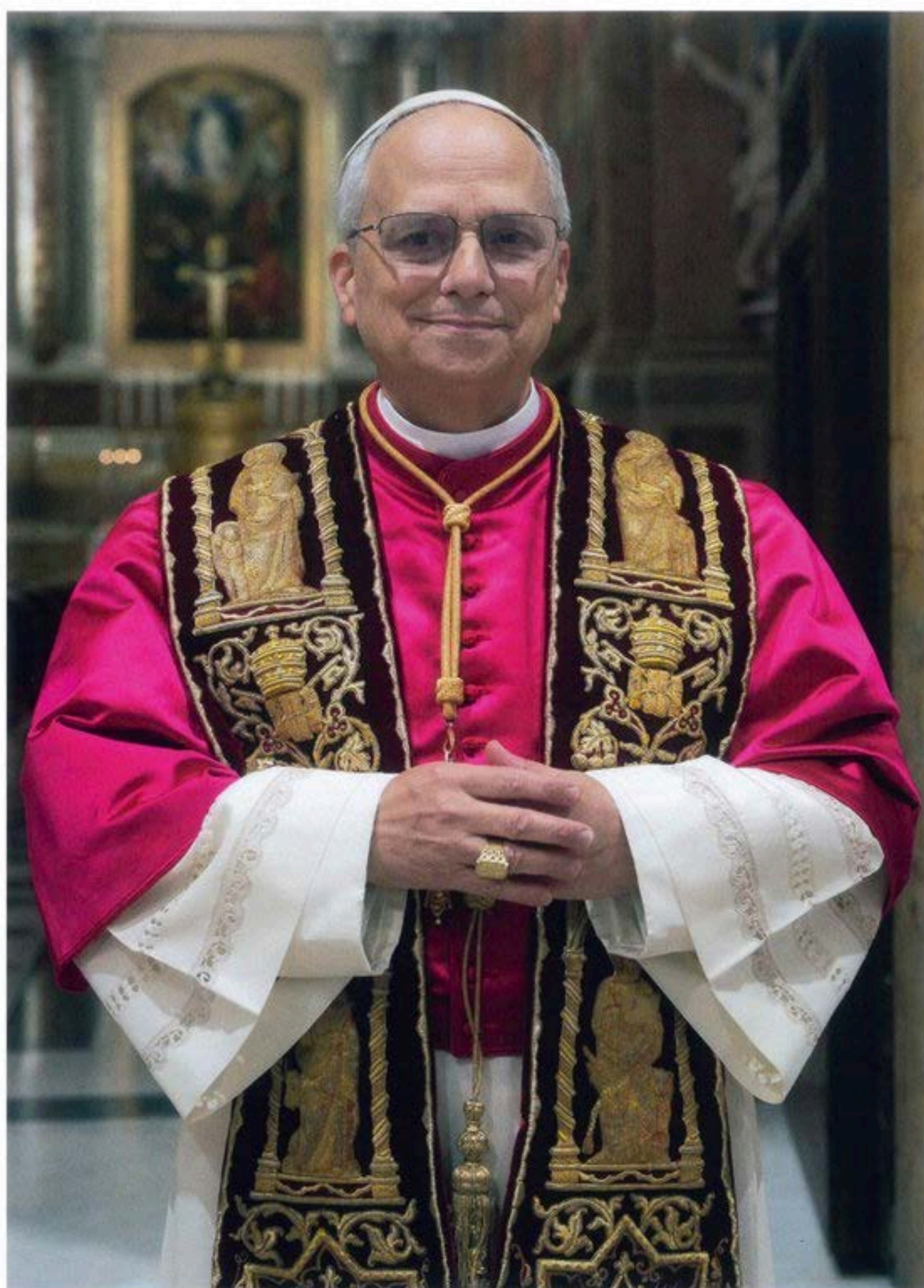


The Augustinian

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



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POPE LEO XIV: SPECIAL EDITION

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This is a special edition of *The Augustinian*, a twice-yearly publication of the Order of St Augustine in the Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, Australasia.

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FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear friends,

In union with our international Augustinian family, the Universal Church and the global community, the Augustinians of the Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, Australasia celebrate with gratitude and joy that in the election of Pope Leo XIV, a Pope has been chosen that will serve the good of all with compassion, wisdom and love. The election of a Pope who will serve with goodness is the outcome we have all been praying for.

As an Augustinian family, with humility, we rejoice that our brother Cardinal Robert Prevost, OSA has been called to this role of servant leadership in which he is called to be Pope for all.

Many of us have know the new Pope personally and have experienced his leadership when he served as Prior General of the Augustinians (2001-2013). During that time he visited all our communities and ministries in Australia and Korea. Of special significance was that he was the Prior General who initially encouraged our Province to work towards the foundation of the Order in Vietnam.

Robert Prevost was born in Chicago in 1955. After his schooling at an Augustinian high school/seminary in the United States, he professed vows in the Order in 1978, and was ordained to the priesthood in Rome in 1982 where he was undertaking higher studies in Canon Law.



He served at the OSA American mission in Chlucanas, Peru, and as Provincial of the Midwest (USA) Province; Prior General of the Order; Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru; and Head of the Dicastery of Bishops in Rome. He was made Cardinal in 2023.

Pope Leo XIV, when he served our Order as Fr Robert Prevost OSA (Prior General), loved and served all of us well. He will now do the same for the Universal Church. In his first address, Pope Leo XIV pleaded for peace and referred to the words of Augustine that while a Bishop for us, he is first a Christian with us. The values of communion in human relationships and profound interiority in our relationship with God are deeply embedded in the heart of Pope Leo XIV.

I commend Pope Leo XIV to the prayers of each of you.

Fr Peter Jones, OSA
Prior Provincial

For Augustinians across the world, it was a Papal election like no other – the election of one of our own! For our wider community here in Australia, it is even more special. We have a real sense that Pope Leo XIV knows us and our country well as a result of two things – his visits here on a number of occasions, and his special, personal gifts as a true brother in Augustine.

The man we knew as Bob or Robert met with us as ‘one of us’ – visiting Australia several times as Prior General, at home in our Augustinian communities, equally at home with people in our ministries – engaged with the Augustinians as President of the Provincial Chapter in 2002, travelling around the Province on Visitation in 2005, at World Youth Day in 2008 and the International Youth Encounter that followed.

Presiding at the Eucharist on the beach at Collaroy, he must have wondered about how Aussies do things, but he went with the flow – relaxed, sharing a simple message about Augustine and the Gospel – a scene reminiscent of Jesus on the shore encouraging his disciples in their activities and inviting them to ‘Follow me!’ in John 21.

In 2005, Robert visited Northern Victoria. Our journey included Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bendigo in the Sandhurst Diocese, led in its beginnings by Augustinian Bishops Martin Crane and Stephen Reville, and visiting churches in our former parishes of Rochester where he admired the unique, stained glass windows of Augustinian saints, and Echuca, the site of the first Augustinian Priory in Australia.



His visitation concluded with Sunday Eucharist at St Augustine’s in Kyabram and a meeting with Bishop Joe Grech and clergy of the Diocese at a Christmas lunch the following day.

With Robert, one sensed that he took the time to get to know every Augustinian he met. Even now as Pope he still answers his emails! In Pope Leo XIV, the Church has a compassionate pastor, a careful and respectful listener, a faithful friend, and a strong leader who is not afraid to make the hard decisions. Indeed, we are very blessed!

Fr Dave Austin, OSA

Image

Fr Dave Austin with Fr Robert Prevost at St Augustine’s Church, Kyabram, December 2005.



AUSTRALIAN AUGUSTINIANS REJOICE WITH NEWS OF POPE LEO, A SON OF ST AUGUSTINE

Augustinians around Australia are embracing the news of Pope Leo XIV's election with a mix of joy and admiration.

Pope Leo is the first pope from the Order of Saint Augustine and the seventh from orders following the Rule of Saint Augustine.

He served as Prior General of the Order from 2001 to 2013 and travelled extensively to visit the Order around the world, including Australia on many occasions.

Australian Augustinian Father Tony Banks has known Pope Leo since they first played tennis together in 1981.

Pope Leo "serves better than me", he said with a laugh.

He said Pope Leo is a quiet man with a warm character.

"He has a great sense of humour," Fr Banks said, who has been based in Rome for 12 years as the head of the Order of St Augustine for Australia and South-East Asia.

Fr Banks expected Pope Leo to be "his own" person and that would play out in his papacy.

He said he believed Pope Leo chose his name to reflect Pope Leo XIII and the landmark document *Rerum Novarum*.

In 2002, then-Fr Robert Prevost visited Villanova College on Brisbane's southside as well as chapter meetings.

Former rector Fr Peter Wieneke said he was confident Pope Leo had visited every Augustinian ministry in Australia.

He said Pope Leo was an approachable man, who was intelligent and a good listener.

Fr Wieneke found out about the news of his election after finishing a spiritual retreat with other priests of Brisbane archdiocese to see an extraordinary number of emails in his inbox.

He said he had two reactions - surprise that an Augustinian had been picked and a "bit fearful for him because it's such a big job".

"I pray it all goes well," he said.

Fr Wieneke like many Augustinians knew him as "just one of us", even remembering that they had called him "Bob", as Australians often did for Robert.

He said as prior-general he travelled around the world and so "he's seen Catholicism in all its varying realities – the poor and the rich".

College principal Paul Begg said it was exciting for the staff and students to have an Augustinian pope.

He said they would hold him up as an example of what it meant to be an Augustinian man today.

He said a few teachers still remembered his visit in 2002, while others had met him at conferences and youth festivals.

The Augustinians at St James parish, Coorparoo, were excited to hear the news.

Augustinian Father John Sullivan said they were "very happy and very proud".

He said the name Leo was significant to the Augustinian order because Pope Leo XIII had given a great boost to the Augustinians at a time of anti-clericalism in Europe.

He said with a laugh they had some hope for a Pope Augustine I.

Fr Sullivan remembered how supportive then-Fr Prevost was when they were setting up the order in South Korea.

He remembered they hit a crisis and Pope Leo was on holiday, but dropped that to hop on the first flight to Korea.



Fr Sullivan said Pope Leo had a strong character and would make decisions well.

"He's also a very personable person," he said. "He was very easy to talk to."

He said the Augustinian would bring openness, inclusion and a sense of hospitality to the papacy.

Article written by Joe Higgins and originally published in The Catholic Leader, 9 May 2025.

Images

Previous page: Augustinians Fr Peter Wieneke and Fr Saldie Resolado and staff from Villanova College at a thanksgiving Mass following the election of Pope Leo XIV (The Cathedral of St Stephen, Saturday, May 17).

This page: Fr Robert Prevost with Fr Tony Banks; Fr Robert; Pope Leo XIV with Province members in Rome during the celebration of the Prior General's 70th birthday on Sunday, 1 June.



A POPE FOR YOUTH

Many of us remember Fr Robert Prevost, OSA's visit to Australia during World Youth Day 2008 and the Augustinian Youth Encounter (AYE) that followed. Sophie Taylor sat down with Michael Dela Cruz, who was the Augustinian Youth Minister during WYD and AYE, to learn more about the youth's encounters with Fr Robert.

ST: Please share a little bit about yourself and your involvement with the Augustinians.

MDC: I'm currently the Assistant Head of Faculty in Religion at St Ignatius' College Riverview. I've been teaching for 13 years, with previous experience at Marist North Shore as the College Youth Minister. My passion for teaching and sharing my faith with youth stemmed from my time as Youth Minister for the Augustinians (2007-2011) and volunteering in Youth Ministry at Holy Spirit Parish, which was pastored by the Augustinians.

In 2005, I travelled with the Augustinians to World Youth Day in Germany where I met Fr Tony Banks. I was deeply moved by the experience. I was wondering if Web Development, my previous career, was the right path for me.

Fr Tony was looking for someone to head Youth Ministry for the Augustinians. I jumped at the opportunity. I only had experience volunteering at Holy Spirit Parish, but I made a career change. I have to thank Fr Tony for giving me the opportunity and a push when I needed it.

ST: It sounds like such an exciting time in your life. What are your memories of that time?

MDC: I remember the joy and energy that surrounded St Augustine's College, as pilgrims stayed in classrooms while attending WYD festivities in the city. The events of AYE gave greater emphasis on living in community. The theme for WYD was "You will be my witnesses".

For the Augustinians, we become witnesses by living in community with "All things in common", which became the theme of the Augustinian Youth Encounter (AYE).

During World Youth Day 2008, I promoted World Youth Day Week to the international Augustinian community and organised and coordinated a post-World Youth Day event, AYE.

From the organising end it was really chaotic trying to register people and putting final touches on AYE. Despite this, there was such a positive energy being at St Augustine's College with other youth from Augustinian communities. We braved the cold as it was the middle of winter, but the Lord blessed us with good weather for both WYD and AYE Week.

AYE was a more intimate event with over 250 participants from countries such as Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Canada, England, Ireland and the USA. You got to know more about people from overseas, some of whom I still keep in contact with. When they think of Australia, they think of that week. I remember the times of laughter in the icebreaker games, the line dancing or where each country had to present something of their culture to everyone. I can't forget the friendly football and basketball games! Then there were the moments of reflection, whether it was the morning Masses or the day where we bussed everyone to West Head for a walk through Kur-ring-gai National Park, where Fr Tony Banks celebrated Mass. And finally, the Mass outdoors overlooking Collaroy Beach as the sun was about to set.

I was glad we pulled off the event. I was relieved that it was over, but it was such a memorable time in my life and one that I will always treasure.

ST: What were your encounters with Fr Robert Prevost? What was he like?

MDC: He was a calming presence among all the busyness of preparations. He was very supportive of our approach to AYE, almost as if he trusted what we were doing was going to be alright. He was such a willing participant in everything that we did, from icebreaker games to the bushwalk in Kur-ring-gai National Park. He was easy-going, but also very observant and a very clear communicator in how he brought together the themes of AYE and WYD in the final Mass at Collaroy.

In every conversation he would have with you, he keenly listened to you with a calm smile. And he would be concise in a response.

ST: What memories of Fr Robert stand out for you?

MDC: We had a group from Puerto Rico arrive and we didn't think we needed Spanish translation. But it turns out we did. Fr Rob calmly said he would step in to do it. I felt embarrassed because I didn't want to put the Prior General to work. But he was very supportive of what was needed.

Around 2011, we had a chance to visit the Augustinian House next to the Vatican. He was keen for youth involvement so he urged us to provide the music for different parts of the Mass.

ST: How did you feel when you heard that Fr Robert had been elected Pope?

MDC: I couldn't believe it but I felt very blessed to have been part of the Augustinians. There was definite excitement in the house but I felt very reflective. I started looking through all the photos, just remembering the time he was here in Australia. All the people that I had connected with were commenting on Facebook, sharing photos and memories.

ST: What are your hopes for the papacy of Pope Leo XIV, and the future of the Church?

MDC: I hope that it leads to people reading more about St Augustine and the charism. My hope is that with the help of the Holy Spirit, he guides us through a new technological age while maintaining the richness of our Catholic Tradition. I like the name he chose and the reason why he did so. I thought it was really relevant for our time. Pastorally, I would like to see the Augustinian charism really shine through his papacy: that sense of community, synodality and subsidiarity.



POPE LEO IS ONE OF US

On Friday, 16 May, St Augustine's College held a liturgy to celebrate the historic election of Pope Leo XIV. The below is a reflection delivered during the Mass by Ms Margie McElhone, Head of Crane House.

When I was watching Pope Francis' funeral, I was googling the frontrunner for the next Pope and came across the name Cardinal Robert Prevost. I was shocked and told anyone who'd listen that I'd met him. He was one of the possible candidates and he was really normal. I felt we had some 'skin in the game'. His odds at that stage were 40-1.

So when he was elected last week I was beyond excited, texting friends in Australia and in Rome. The new Pope, he's one of us! Pope Leo XIV is Bob the Augustinian from Chicago.

I was lucky to have met him on a few occasions. Back in 2008, I was the Director of Mission at St Augustine's, overseeing Staff, Parent and Student Spirituality, retreats, liturgies, social justice, prayer, and our Catholic and Augustinian connections at the College and beyond.

It was also World Youth Day, when Pope Benedict came to Australia. Over 400,000 people from around the world came to Sydney to celebrate our faith. With so many visitors to Australia, following WYD the Australian Augustinians held the first International Augustinian Youth Encounter here in Sydney. It was for the extended Augustinian community: priests, nuns, young and old from schools and parishes from all corners of the globe.

Pope Leo XIV, or Fr Robert Prevost, "Fr Bob" as we knew him, was there as a participant and also as the Prior General of the Augustinians.

We started the evening's hospitality by sharing a meal, a very Augustinian thing to do. As I said at the beginning, Pope Leo was normal. Fr Tony Banks said to some of us he'll always be Bob. He was funny and real, and he really listened when you spoke with him. He participated with everyone in everything, sharing meals, planning activities, getting into group discussions. Drama, art and craft, letting us know of his beloved Chicago White Sox.

Joking and laughing with people he knew well and people he'd just met. He was involved in dancing and showing authentic community with everyone. We enjoyed bushwalking and prayer, and opportunities for Reconciliation and meditation culminating in a Mass at dawn at Collaroy Beach.

Pope Leo is one of us. An Augustinian who holds to the Augustinian charism, who lives the values of truth, love and community.

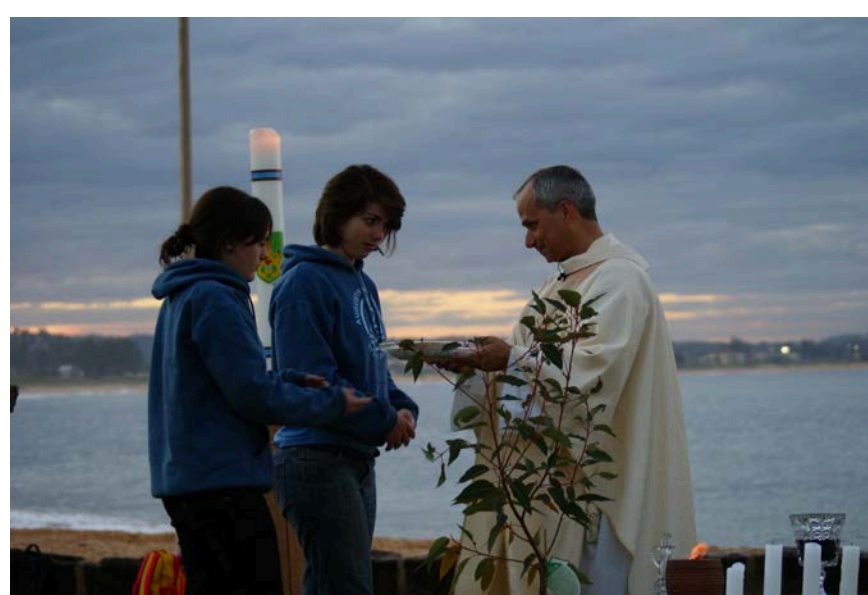
I met him again at an Augustinian Values Institute in New Jersey in 2009, a gathering of Augustinian priests, principals and executives, mainly from the USA. He returned to Saint Augustine's again in 2009, where he spoke at our assembly, presented awards to students, and welcomed the new student leaders for 2010.

Pope Leo displays the qualities of Jesus that we look at in our lives and we study in our religion classes.

Research his life and you will see real examples of him preaching and living the Kingdom of God in all his words and actions. He is a man of prayer and service for others, he's an advocate for the marginalised, forgiveness and love.

Humility is our theme for 2025. Pope Leo is a humble man, a man of integrity. He displays servant leadership, putting the needs of others before himself.

We have an Augustinian Pope, and he's one of us, closely following our values of truth, love and community. He's a man the world is excited about. He's met many people in this room. He has walked this space and visited our College numerous times. Hopefully he will again. This is a hopeful time for the church and a joyful time for us. Let us celebrate.



Ms Margie McElhone
Head of Crane House
St Augustine's College, Brookvale

Images

Previous page: Margie McElhone and Fr Robert Prevost.

This page: Fr Robert Prevost speaking to St Augustine's students in 2008 (top), celebrating Mass at Collaroy Beach (middle, bottom).

MEANINGFUL MEMORIES FROM VILLANOVA

This article is taken from a reflection delivered by John Holroyd, Head of the Religious Education Faculty at Villanova College.

“From lots of little ordinary things done well, something extraordinary can emerge” – that was what I took to be the theme for Bishop Robert Prevost’s talk on 30 July, 2012.

Along with Villanova staff members Graeme George, Steven Bremner and Dennis Harvey (then Principal), I had the privilege to attend the Augustinian teachers’ conference in Lima, Peru in 2012 where then-Bishop Robert Prevost was the keynote speaker. I still have my excited scribblings from that talk; I had been wondering how teachers in Augustinian schools could focus on a few values which could also serve as an authentic portal to a mega-galaxy of five million words from Augustine alone.

His talk was entitled Gospel, Kingdom, and the Augustinian School. Prevost’s speech began dramatically: “The Kingdom of God is at hand” – or in Spanish, *El Reino*: the Reign of God.

This was exciting but he didn’t mean there were chariots driven by Angels flying past the window. But instead, the Kingdom of God is at hand in very ordinary ways.

Prevost went on to say that an Augustinian education done well is what can bring the Reign of God closer.

This means going through lots of little humble doors – to your classrooms and sports or activity fields – and adding value to what you do by leaning in with certain values. This is how the doors we enter every day can “grow higher” and let in the King of Glory (Psalm 24:9).

He then described what the Augustinian values are which make ordinary lessons and ordinary days extraordinary. First, the search for truth. The good news is that the truth is out there. It exists, and we must seek it out with all our heart and mind. Further, there are times where the right-brain capacity to search beyond the horizon must be unshackled. This means leaving the classroom door open to expression of points of view unpopular within the secular culture, for example, that the Holy Spirit could be alive and active in the room.

Second, community. The Augustinian school sees community as the place where good learning and teaching happens. In particular, there are two aspects to this community, namely that we share everything in common (Acts 2:44), and also that the school is a place where friendships can form and are highly valued. No one is fully known except in friendship is what Augustine says. Students need to feel that they are seen and known, and then they will be better able to make friends. There is nothing worse than being the lonely student who has to get to class early, because he has no one to be with at break times.

Third, interiority. This means that in you and I there is a unique and free person with an unsquash-able value and dignity. It is that inner self, which Augustine calls the Inner Teacher, who really drives what you learn. The really good news, pointed to with startling emphasis by Augustine, is that there is an “inner teacher” within each person, before whom we “need not feel ashamed” and who is in fact the hidden Christ. If there is a North Star Augustinian value, then this is it.

These values became our Gateway values, and we can live them out each day, turning the ordinary into something extraordinary. With the committed teacher, who has the daily capacity to say a yes to the values, the water slowly turns into wine.

I want to mention someone else who was involved in that conference in Peru and that's Fr Mike Morahan, OSA, the last priest-rector of Villanova College.

It was Fr Mike who humbly organised the education conference in Lima. The little humble things we do at Villanova entered a wider stream – and something extraordinary has grown out of that current and others such.

John Holroyd

Head of Faculty, Religious Education
Villanova College, Brisbane



Images

Cardinal Robert Prevost leading the clergy and the local community in a Corpus Christi procession in Chiclayo (left); standing in floodwaters in the aftermath of heavy rain in Peru in 2023 (top right); caring for the homeless and marginalised (bottom right). Source: Vatican Media.

My experience with Fr Bob, Pope Leo XIV, was in 2001 at the Augustinian monastery in San Gimignano, Tuscany, where Fr Brian Lowery was Prior. We were on a tour with Fr Mike Morahan, OSA and parents from Villanova College. The Italian students tour the alternative year.

Fr Brian welcomed us and asked if at the evening meal we could sit next to someone we had not met before. Travellers and pilgrims stayed at the monastery.

I sat next to Fr Bob, an Augustinian priest from Chicago. Because of his accent, I referred to him as "Fr Barb".

We shared dinner, stories of our work and sport which was of common interest to us both. We arranged to meet the following morning at 5:30AM for a run around the walls surrounding the monastery. Fr Bob did stretching, which led me to believe that he was determined and dedicated. During the evening meal and run, I found Fr Bob engaging, humble, fit, and personable, with a sense of humour. A lovely companion to cross paths with on our journey.

Gavin Pascoe

Former staff member,
Villanova College, Brisbane



The 2001 Villanova College pilgrimage group at San Gimignano Monastery. Pictured: Fr Robert Prevost OSA, Gavin Pascoe, Angela (staff member), Fr Mike Morahan OSA (Rector of Villanova College), Keith Druery (then-principal of Villanova primary), Anne Druery, Jim McMahon (deceased grandfather of a current student, and father of past student and current College PNF President, David McMahon), Mr and Mrs McKinlay (parents at Villanova), Amanda Waterson (staff member and rector's secretary), Graeme and Kay Twadell (Villanova College parents, with grandchildren currently at the College).



A GRACE-FILLED ENCOUNTER

Long before his election as the 268th Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo XIV, then known as Fr Robert Prevost OSA, visited Holy Spirit Parish in St Clair, NSW—a moment now fondly remembered by parishioners as both a grace-filled encounter and a treasured memory.

At the time, Fr Robert was serving as Prior General of the Order of St Augustine, a global leader of the Augustinian family. Yet, his presence at St Clair was not one of formality or distance. He came as a humble brother in Christ and Augustine, genuinely engaging with the community and leaving a lasting spiritual imprint on so many.

He is deeply remembered as a humble shepherd among the people. Despite his leadership responsibilities and global standing within the Order, he approached our community with openness, warmth, and humility. Parishioners recall how he naturally connected with people of all ages—from children to the elderly—with a heart that truly reflected the spirit of Christ.

His ability to be present, to listen deeply, and to engage with joy made a profound impact. For the people of St Clair, this was more than just a visit; it was a personal encounter with someone whose leadership would one day touch the entire Church.

A Memory That Lives On

Looking back, the parish cherishes the memory of welcoming Fr Robert Prevost OSA—not just as a renowned Augustinian and Prior General of the Order, but as the future Pope Leo XIV. His time with the parish community remains a beautiful example of the Church's call to closeness, community, and humble service.

Today, as Pope, he continues to live out those same qualities. For the people of Holy Spirit Parish, it is a special blessing to say: *"We met him when he was simply Fr Bob".*

Personal Encounters: Testimonies of Faith and Friendship

Seaview shares: "I met the then-Cardinal Robert Prevost at the OSA International Laity Congress in Rome last year. I had several rosaries with me and asked him to bless them. Not only did he kindly do so, but he was warm, approachable, and gracious. Even though he was clearly a busy man, he made us feel as though he had all the time in the world to be with us."

Rachael reflects: "I first met him at the 2008 International Augustinian Youth Encounter, where his words on humility, interiority, and building loving community stirred something profound in me."

Later, during a time of personal discernment, his gentle presence and wise counsel over a simple meal helped me hear the Spirit's voice more clearly. Whether as Prior General or now as Pope Leo XIV, he leads with charity, encourages communion, and invites the Church to walk together in faith, unity, and love."

Trina recalls: "In 2008, at the Augustinian Youth Encounter, Fr Robert—then the Prior General—joined in our icebreaker games wholeheartedly. He was so down to earth and connected with us in both fun and faith. It's such a blessing to now have a Pope who truly loves and values the people."

Esther remembers: "I found him to be a very humble priest, and his memory is remarkable. When I met him in 2012, he asked me about my husband. This was after I had met him in 2005, when I shared that my husband was very sick."

Sarah recalls: "My first impression of Pope Leo XIV—then Fr. Robert Prevost OSA—was of a humble and simple priest, despite his role as the Superior General of the Augustinian Order at the time. He was warm, approachable, and easy to get along with. His calm demeanour and friendliness put everyone around him at ease."

Dom shares his pivotal experience: "The 2008 Augustinian Youth Encounter came at a key time for me. I was 16 and just beginning my faith journey after World Youth Day in Sydney. Sharing meals, playing games, and praying with Fr Robert—now Pope Leo XIV—was unforgettable. Like many of the Augustinian priests, he was warm, engaging, and genuinely cared about meeting us where we were. His example left a lasting impression."

Jacinta remembers: "I had the honour of attending a pilgrimage with him to the sacred sites of St Augustine in Italy and also the Augustinian Youth Encounter in Australia

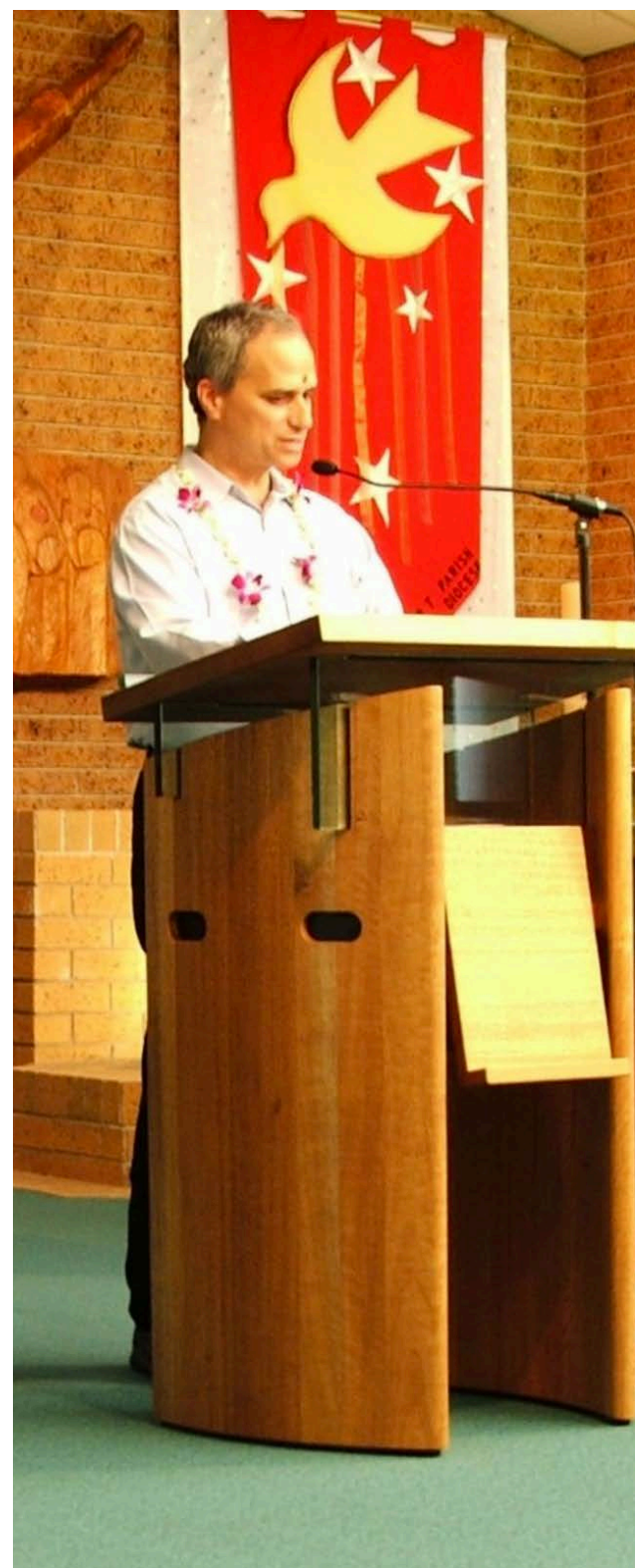
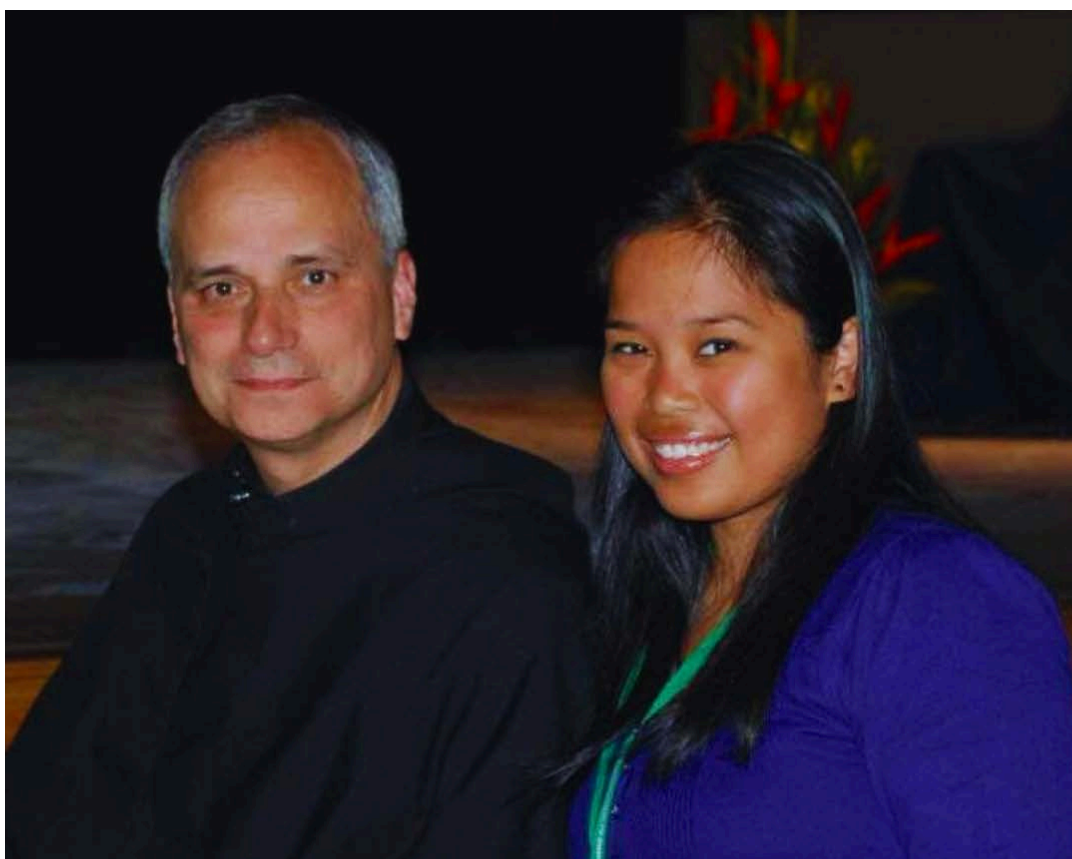
It was struck by his linguistic skills, humility, intellect, and his quiet assurance. He had a twinkle in his eye and a joy among the people—qualities I've always admired in the Augustinians."

Patricia reflects warmly: "I first met Fr Bob at the 2008 Augustinian Youth Encounter in Brookvale, where Fr Tony Banks introduced him simply as 'Bob.' Even though he was the head of the Order, he was incredibly humble, open, and quick to smile. I felt instantly welcomed and at home with him. I may have even shared lunch with him that week. I remember his 2011 World Youth Day homily in Madrid where he reminded us that life's ups and downs are best navigated when we are rooted in Christ and Scripture. His words have stayed with me to this day."

A Legacy of Presence

From Sydney to Rome, from simple parish visits to major international gatherings, Pope Leo XIV's story is marked by his ability to be truly present to those he meets. The people of Holy Spirit Parish in St Clair hold the precious memory of encountering him in their midst—long before the world came to know him as Pope.

And now, as he leads the universal Church, they carry the joy of having known him as Fr Robert or Fr Bob: the Augustinian priest who listened, the pastor who laughed and joined in their fun games, the shepherd who walked alongside them.



Images

Fr Robert with Trina (top-left), celebrating with parishioners (middle-left), speaking at Holy Spirit parish (right), participating in cultural celebrations (bottom).



A TRULY ROBERT PREVOST RESPONSE!

Two years ago, a February edition of *The Tablet* newspaper reported in “View from Rome” the news that Pope Francis had chosen Bishop Robert Prevost, the 67-year-old Chicago-born Augustinian friar serving in Peru, as the next Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops.

My ears pricked up as I continued to read and I wondered. What would this mean for this Augustinian? What might this mean for the wider Church?

As Christopher Lamb went on describing the role, one comment caught my attention in a special way. He wrote, ‘The dicastery prefect has his own regular one-to one meetings with Francis to go through decisions, usually on a Saturday morning.’

Captured by this idea of Saturday meetings I penned a letter to the then-Bishop with my promise of special prayer for their Saturday sessions, and not so long after I had sent the letter I received an email.

Dear Mary,

Your letter from March 9th was given to me today (I just arrived in Rome early this morning, after celebrating Holy Week and Easter in the Diocese of Chiclayo, Peru).

Many thanks for writing, and especially for your prayers. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and the intention to set aside time on Saturday morning for prayer. I was officially installed today as the new Prefect for the Dicastery for Bishops, and it is indeed a monumental task, a ‘heavy responsibility’ as you read in The Tablet. I will need all the prayers of so many good people like yourself, and as a good student of St. Augustine, I can only rely on God’s grace.

I hope you are well.

Fraternal best wishes,

+ Robert

That promise of Saturday prayer has now become a more constant, everyday prayer for this brave Augustinian in his new and glorious role.

Mary McCormick

Coordinator, Friends of St Augustine



OUR COMMUNITY CELEBRATES

St Augustine's College proudly marked the historic election and inauguration of Pope Leo with two community-focused Masses, which invited students and staff to reflect on the significance of this new papacy through prayer, music, and shared faith. A highlight was a reflection delivered by Ms Margie McElhone, Head of Crane House, during Mass on Friday, 16 May. Margie was Director of Mission during the visit of Fr Robert Prevost OSA in 2008 and 2009. Her words captivated students and offered an insight to Pope Leo as "Bob" or "Father Bob", a "normal guy".

The celebrations continued on Sunday 18 May with a well-attended community Mass at St Kieran's, Manly Vale. The liturgy brought together a wide cross-section of our Augustinian community, including current students, staff, Old Boys, parishioners, and all the Augustinians at Manly Vale, who wore their distinctive black habits for the occasion. Music was provided by a talented ensemble of current students, staff, and alumni, creating a rich and uplifting setting for the celebration. Prayers were led by both current and former staff members, reflecting the enduring spirit of community and shared mission.

Further north, the parish community of St James', Coorparoo celebrated the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV with a Thanksgiving Mass on Sunday, 1 June (Ascension Sunday). The community prayed together for Pope Leo and shared fond memories of his previous visit to the parish when he was Prior General of the Order.



Images:
Fr Robert Prevost with members of the Province during his visit to St James's Parish, Coorparoo in 2002 (top); St Augustine's students join the choir (top left); Fr Senan Ward shares a reflection on Pope Leo at St Augustine's College (bottom left), the Augustinians in Coorparoo celebrate their Thanksgiving Mass following the papal inauguration (right).

Pope Leo in Australia

2002



Fr Robert attends the Provincial Chapter and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Province. The Chapter is held at the Christian Brothers in Indooroopilly. Fr Robert celebrates Mass at St James' Parish, Coorparoo, before heading to Sydney.

2004

Fr Robert attends the Mid-Chapter at Anderley Lodge, Mackillop Centre, North Sydney, New South Wales.

2005



Fr Robert conducts visitation of the whole province.

2008

Fr Robert visits Australia for World Youth Day and takes part in the Augustinian Youth Encounter that follows.

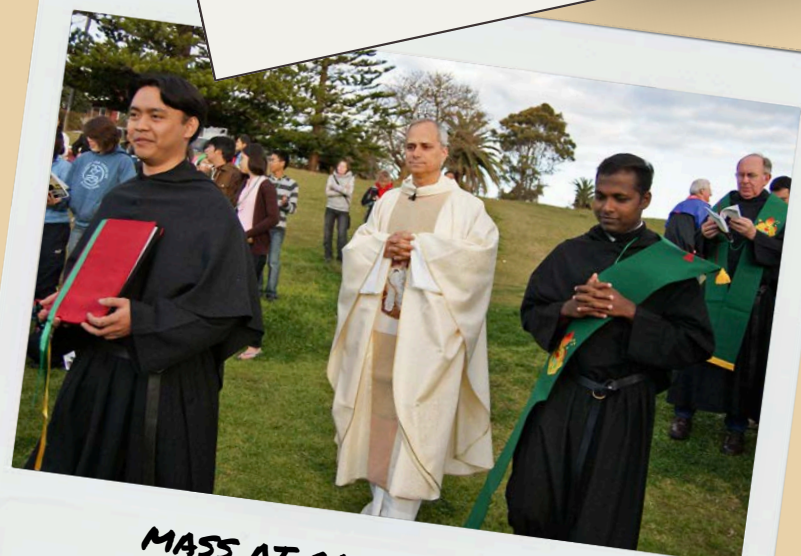
2009



Fr Robert attends the OSAAP (OSA Asia-Pacific) meeting in Brookvale, New South Wales. He officially opens the new houses and Grace Chapel at 60 Alfred Rd, Brookvale.

2010

Fr Robert attends the Chapter at St Augustine's College, Brookvale.



During his visit to Australia in July 2002, then-Prior General Fr Robert Prevost OSA delivered an address to the Augustinian community. The below are excerpts from his address.

The thoughts I offer you are meant as an invitation to consider what it means to be Augustinians today, especially in a world that so often has become insensitive or unaware of the profoundly meaningful, yet highly elusive, dimension of the spirit in human life today.

The Challenges of Living Our Augustinian Charism Today

Authentic concern for the human person. Our culture is markedly person-centred, and the Church declared in the Second Vatican Council that we cannot live, nor do we want to live, with our backs turned to the anguish and the hopes and desires of the human person (GS 1). The option of people of faith cannot be to isolate oneself from humanity...

Nor can we avoid a true concern for the problems of our brothers and sisters as they struggle to find meaning and a reasonable level of wellbeing in their lives....

Respect for the human person and his/her dignity, sensitivity to what is truly human, dialogue with diverse cultures, the acceptance of human values, living in tune with the deepest longings of humanity – all these are indicators of what must be the spirituality of persons of faith who seek to imitate Augustine's style of life...

Attitude of constant searching. A culture in crisis is, necessarily, a culture in search for something. Our society today leads us to a search for meaning, for truth, for wellbeing, happiness and peace. It is the same crisis that Augustine lived...

...to make a choice for humanity does not mean to set God off to the side – to leave God outside our consideration.

Christians today, and even more so, those who live the Augustinian charism, are called to be “professionals” in the search for human meaning, and to give witness to the salvation and fulfilment that comes from God in Christ.

Life in community and interpersonal relationships. Loneliness and manipulation of the masses are, paradoxically, two of the principal threats that people around us suffer today. How do you live “humanly” in a society like ours, which causes isolation and loneliness on the one hand, and at the same time manipulates and victimizes whole groups of people within our society? How do we respond to this challenge? There is no fuller and more authentic manner of living as a person and as a Christian, responds St Augustine from his own experience, than to live in community, walking together and supporting one another...

Sense of church. The Church – self-proclaimed as “light to the nations and universal sacrament of salvation” in the hope-filled context of the Second Vatican Council – is considered by many today to be an obstacle in the path that leads to God.

The Church lives today in the midst of a painful crisis, and at the same time must recognize the need for a new and powerful evangelization.

To be Church in an authentic fashion, and to be “one with the Church”, is a very real challenge for us today. The Church needs to be a fraternal community, in service to the Kingdom, a sign of a new world of hope that is more just and more human.

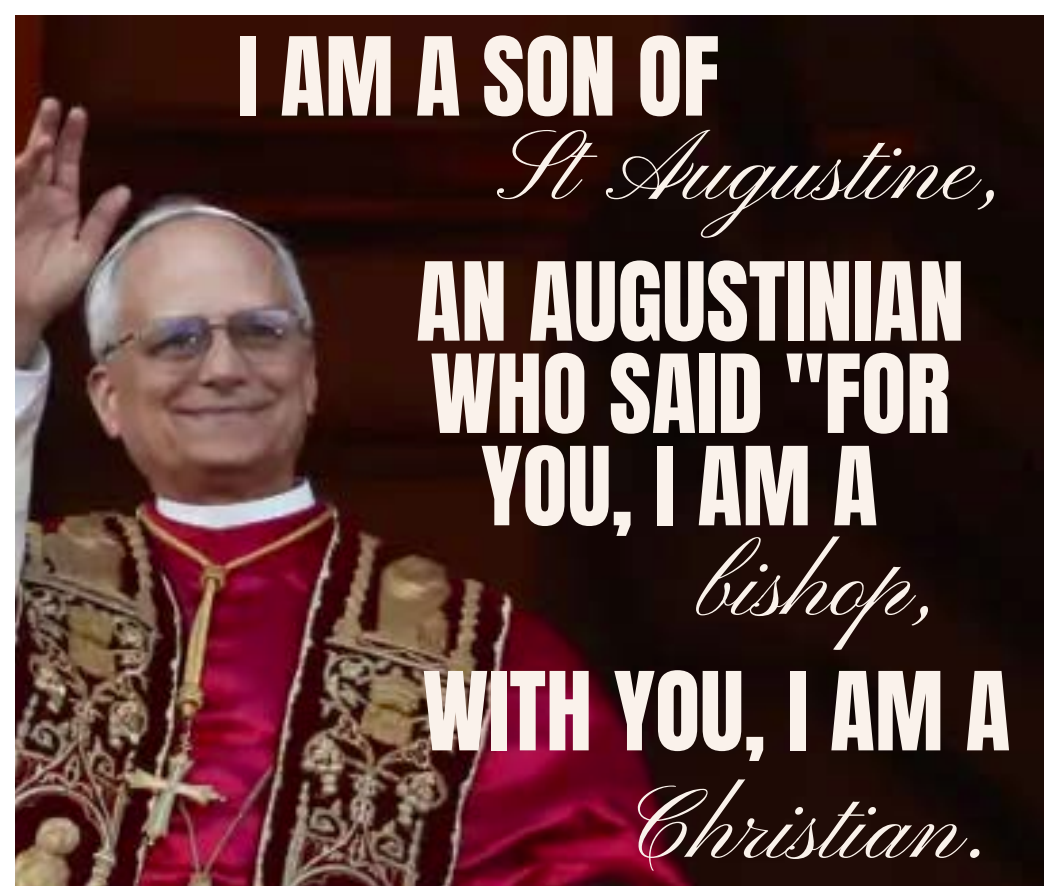
A theological reading of poverty. One of the greatest and most urgent problems facing the world today is the increase of unjust poverty and oppression, and not only in the so-called "third world". It is impossible to be Christians today if we turn our back on the "cry of the poor" and their struggle to find justice. The misery of millions of human beings is proof of the existence of sin in our world, and the negative effects of a globalization that increases the wealth of a select few, and creates more poverty makes it ever more important to ask ourselves "where will the poorest among us find something to eat?"

A truly Christian commitment demands that we embrace the cause of justice and peace, what Augustine calls "two inseparable friends" (*Com. Ps. 84, 12*), as a condition of true living of the Gospel of fraternity, and in order to give a minimum of credibility to our Gospel witness in the world of pluralism and frequently of conflict.

Concluding remarks. "Times have changed. The world and the Church have changed...". Are we merely repeating the same things we have been doing...or are we capable of entering into a true process of renewal?

Are we bystanders, watching as history goes on around us, or do we actively participate in creating human history? Are we courageous in reading the signs of the times? Do they say something to us, as we look at the problem of terrorism, the challenge of globalization, the suffering of millions of human beings? Or do we live with our backs turned on such elements of our world? Are we searching for the most effective means of evangelization, and of sharing our spirituality with our world, or are we satisfied with using the same old formulas and the same language that we have used for the past 50 years?

St Augustine inspires us and urges us on to seek constantly, to look for new ways in which we can respond to the needs of the people of our times. The same words that he spoke to his followers are valid for us today: "In this life, we are travelers, always on the way. This means that we must make progress, move forward. What you already are should displease you, if you want to arrive at what you have not yet become... Grow always, go forward always, make progress always. Do not stop along the way, don't go backwards, don't get distracted on the way." (*Serm. 169. 18*)





POPE LEO'S PRAYER INTENTION

JUNE 2025

For mutual coex



Scan the QR code to watch "The Pope Video" for this month's intention, which has been produced by the Worldwide Prayer Network.

Let us continue
living this *Augustinian spirit.*

POPE LEO XIV



Our thanks go to all who contributed to the production of this special edition of *The Augustinian*, especially:

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