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International Commission for Augustinian Centers of Education**

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Theme - *Augustinian Pedagogy: A Passion for Education*

**Passion for Augustinian Spirituality:
Love of Knowledge and Search for Truth**

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Friends in St. Augustine, Good morning!

“O truth, O truth, how deep is the yearning for you in the inmost depths of my being.” These were words of St. Augustine, who was also preoccupied with the search for truth.

Preliminaries

It is my joy to be invited to speak before this international congress and to be with you for the next four days for the following reasons: first, as we are all aware of the message of our Prior General, Fr. Alejandro Moral Anton OSA, in his invitation for all of us for the said congress, quoting the Constitutions of the Order, this reminds us that we need to have the ‘greatest esteem for educational apostolate and consider it as one of the special mission of our Order’ (*Const* 161). Thus my oneness with you fellow Augustinian educators and our felt-presence for this congress demonstrates our esteem for this apostolate.

Second, as part of the plan of action of the Commission on Educational Apostolate, on level of the whole order, provincial and local educative community, that is to strengthen the Augustinian culture and spirituality in our schools, thus short conferences on Augustinian spirituality and congress on Augustinian education will be held. Perhaps through this presentation, both friars and lay educators and other supporters of this educational apostolate will be encouraged to collaborate and network with others in our work and ministries as Augustinians. I accepted the challenge to share with you my thoughts in the hope that I will continue to learn from other Augustinian schools context.

Third, although the topic spirituality is my interest, and it is my passion to speak about this may it be in the classroom, in the church, in the basic ecclesial communities, in an academic session or in gatherings like this. But above all I cannot say 'No' to the request of our Vicar General & President of the Commission on Education, Fr. Joseph Farrell, OSA. I hope my sharing of spiritual thoughts of Augustine will be of great help to us all, as we continue moving towards God, the Truth. It is my ardent wish to be able to do this, or else my spiritual master Augustine would reprimand me, he who says: "If there is nothing you can say that can make me better than what I am now, then why are you speaking to me?" Which means that if I have nothing to say that will make you better than what you are now, I better keep my mouth shut!

In this Augustinian Education Congress, the theme is – "Augustinian Pedagogy: A Passion for Education" guided by the words of Augustine "The love of knowledge and truth should invite us to continue learning. The love of others should compel us to teach." To explore the theme I was tasked to deliver a talk on the topic – Passion for Augustinian Spirituality: The Love of Knowledge and Search for Truth." I have nothing new to share with you, but to delve the topic, I would like to try to expound this in three parts: first, Form: Augustinian Spirituality in Educational Apostolate; second, Re-Form: Various Discussions Related to Knowledge and Truth; and third, Transform: Challenges for Augustinian Educators Today.

Form: Augustinian Spirituality in Educational Apostolate

Of the many definitions of spirituality, I would like to bring us here how Tarcicius van Bavel, OSA defined spirituality as 'window on the gospel'. Augustine had undergone word-journey - from disliking the sacred writings, slowly finding its delight after how Ambrose broke open the word to his moral conversion in the garden of Milan until the study of scriptures after his ordination. This journey towards biblical spirituality and his context: the place, people, political and religious environment form part Augustine's lived praxis or his

spirituality. Truly context is content. The context of Augustine became the content of his spirituality.

Augustine's spirituality was well expressed in the Rule he wrote for his community. The Constitutions said "the principal document of our spirituality is the Rule. (*Const*, 16). Luis Marin de San Martin, OSA defined Augustinian spirituality as "the spirituality proper to the Order of St. Augustine that joins the teaching and example of the Bishop of Hippo with the spiritual features of the mendicant movement, all of this as lived and manifested by the Order throughout its history in all its different circumstances of time, place and culture" (San Martin, 2013, 194). San Martin identified four pillars of Augustinian spirituality, namely: interiority, community, poverty and ecclesiality. San Martin and the document of the Ordinary General Chapter 2007, acknowledged a two-fold source of Augustinian Spirituality, namely, that from Augustine himself and that from the mendicant tradition.

From Augustine himself, the essential elements of Augustinian spirituality are interiority, communion of life and service to the Church. From the mendicant tradition, this dimension underscores our search for God, fraternal life and the desire to follow the "poor Christ." In terms of interiority and search for God, the words of Augustine, "You have made us and drawn us to yourself and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you (*Confessions*, I, 1, 1), speaks of a never-ending search for God and offers a "living and integrated account of Augustinian spirituality" (Robert Russell OSA). With regards to communion of life and fraternal life, van Bavel, OSA, noted that Augustine's spirituality embraces the gospel values of community, loving our neighbor as a concrete expression of loving God and development of good relationships. Thirdly, the love for the church brings us to a total availability for its needs, by accepting the tasks which the church asks for us...this service to the Church constitutes one of the essential characteristics of Augustinian spirituality (*Const* 35). Miguel Angel Orcasitas, OSA, claimed that among these three elements that serve to structure Augustinian Spirituality: the search for God, community and service to the Church, community as the core, because it is the stage of the search for God and the structure within which the Church is served.

These three elements of Augustinian spirituality, can also be seen in terms of our personal call for *metanoia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* or the Christian call for conversion, communion and commitment. Applying these three elements of Augustinian spirituality to educational context, we can anchor core values of the Augustinian education, the three-fold function to any higher educational institutes and the spirituality of educational leadership.

The core values of the Augustinian education - truth, unity and love (*veritas, unitas* and *caritas*) are well-anchored on the elements of Augustinian spirituality. The search for truth is at the heart of an Augustinian education. McCloskey (2006) argues that Augustine set on an ongoing journey in pursuing and learning the truth. He goes on to say that Augustine never captured truth for all and that each new truth moved forward and lifted him upward in his dialogue with the Inner Teacher, Jesus Christ. The core value of unity is promoted in Augustinian education through dialogue between teachers and students and with one another, and with school leaders and the members of the educative community. Learning with others is of utmost importance and the means by which learning takes place. The final core value of Augustinian education is love. The value of love begins with a love for God. Tack asserts that Augustinian education has an important connection to the human heart and therefore relationships with God, with one's self, and with others. The love of God is then expressed through the promotion of love for learning and care for the learner.

In the Philippines, the higher educational institutions operate on a trilogy of functions, namely, research, instruction and community service. Although each area functions individually, their existence is inter-related with one another and anchored as well in the three elements of Augustinian spirituality. Research in a school setting draws its search for new knowledge or broadens existing knowledge from instruction and community service. An Augustinian school is a school which invites discovery of the truth through re-search and study and is guided by searching and finding continuum, as Augustine himself noted, "When truth is eagerly sought, finding it produces greater enjoyment. Found, it is sought again with renewed desire" (*The Trinity*, 15, 2, 2). Instruction utilizes either theoretical or practical foundations, it also applies the knowledge gained from research and community service. Augustine claimed, that 'instruction is completed by love.' (*Customs of the Catholic Church* 1, 28, 56). This love as earlier noted by Tack, is love for learning and care for the learner, thus oneness of the learning community. Truth is possession of the whole educative community, as Augustine noted, "truth is the inheritance of all and, for that reason, it is not the particular property of anyone. That which is in common is between also with all who come may use it and be enlightened. It is equally distant from all and to all equally close. (*Commentary on the Psalms* 76, 12). On the other side, community service derives its plans and programs for delivery of community development-oriented service from outputs of instruction and research. The social apostolate is to be exercised by establishing active groups with our communities, among the faithful and among the students of our schools, not only to provide social assistance, but especially so that they can serve as agents of the Augustinian social commitment (*Const.* 184).

To strengthen Augustinian values and identity in our school, the person of the leader is seen as central. Connecting with the element of interiority is the

Reflective style of leadership. The reflective leader is one who is capable of self-assessing his or her essential characteristics and traits in getting things accomplished. The spiritual leader when confronted with great challenges will often times retreat to a quiet place and employ prayer, meditation, or sense of quietness to come up with an appropriate response to the situation that confronts the school. Contemplation, not confrontation, is the preferred practice for spiritual leaders when solving problems (Thompson, 2012, 116). The Collaborative style of spiritual leaders relates to their uncanny ability to make and keep valuable conflicts through dialogue and friendship. The spiritual leader has a heart that is in tune with the purpose of the group, organization or the whole educative community. It is natural for a spiritual leader to have a sense of community within and beyond the work place (Groen, 2001). The educative leaders need to practice a kind of Servant leadership which is central to caring and loving others. This style of leadership involves motivating and inspiring individuals through a clear vision and agenda that serve the school's needs. Robert Prevost, OSA in his article, 'The Servant Leader in the Perspective of Augustinian Spirituality', noted that this type of leadership is gospel-based, there are some Augustinian insights to human experience that give a deeper appreciation for this type of leadership and a style of leadership that is needed in Augustinian communities today. That also includes educative communities.

In sum, these three elements of Augustinian spirituality: interiority, communion of life and service to the Church anchored the Augustinian core values of *veritas*, *unitas* and *caritas*. In terms of triology functions of any higher educational institutes, namely research, instruction highlighting the learning community and community service also find its foundation. The Augustinian leadership styles of reflective, collaborative and servant leader can also be rooted to the spirituality of Augustine.

Re-inform: Various Discussions Related to Knowledge and Truth

The Augustinian's love for knowledge and search for truth or in other language our devotion to study – whether sacred or profane finds its place within the context of the mind's ascent to Truth. This intellectual dimension of Augustinian spirituality has been duly noted. Several known Augustinian scholars like Gary McCloskey, Theodore Tack, Donald Burt, Alberto Esmeralda, Insunza Seco, Rubio Bardon, and Galindo Rodrigo treated the topic exhaustively. For my part, having learned from those scholars, we will discuss this intellectual dimension as it pertains to the educational formation of students under the following headings: (a) Through Interiority to Truth; (b) Faith and Reason; and (c) Virtue and Science (*Virtus et Scientia*).

(a) Through Interiority to Truth

Interiority is of utmost value, Augustine lived it to the full. It refers to the life of integrity or singleness of purpose that a person must strive to make progress in spiritual life. It involves focusing and concentrating on the importance of self and above all, on the God within rather on things outside. Fermin Fernandez Biezobas, OSA, observes that Augustine summons people to journey in life by living the adventure of interior tourism. As Augustine claimed, "People go to admire lofty mountains, and huge breakers at sea, and crashing waterfalls, and vast stretches of ocean and the dance of the stars, but they leave themselves behind out of sight" (*Confessions*, X, 8, 15). Augustine illustrated this journey into interiority when he said, "Come back to yourself. It is in the inner self that truth dwells" (*On True Religion* 39,72). The pathway that followed in this interior tourism as Biezobas, OSA claimed is that of transcended interiority.

Augustine recounted, "I entered under your guidance the innermost places of my being, I entered, then, and with the vision of my spirit, such as it was the immutable light. The light I saw was not this common light at all, but something different, utterly different, from all these things. Anyone who knows truth knows it, and whoever knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. O eternal Truth, true Love, and beloved Eternity, you are my God, and for you I sigh day and night" (*Confessions* VII, 10, 16). The method of interiority encounters the Truth within. McCloskey (2006) noted that in Augustinian pedagogy to learn how to become passionate for learning truth is not only personal but also has communitarian approaches.

(b) Faith and Reason

Augustine, as a child learned the Catholic faith from Monica, his mother. But he abandoned this faith as an adolescent because he could no longer discern its reasonableness and rejected a religion that was not, to his mind, also an expression of reason, that is, of the truth. His thirst for truth was radical and therefore led him to drift away from the Catholic faith. Yet, his radicalism was such that he could not be satisfied with philosophies that did not go to the truth itself, that did not go to God and to a God who was not only ultimate cosmological hypothesis but the true God, the God who gives life and enters into our lives.

Augustine's entire intellectual and spiritual development is also a valid model today in the relationship between faith and reason, a subject not only for believers but every person who seeks the truth, the central theme in the balance and destiny of every human being. These two dimensions, faith and reason must

always go hand in hand. As Augustine himself wrote after his conversion, faith and reason are “the two forces that lead us to knowledge” (*Against the Skeptics*, III, 20, 43). In this regard, through the two rightly famous Augustinian formulas that express this coherent synthesis of faith and reason: “I believe in order to understand” – believing paves the way to crossing the threshold of truth – but also, and inseparably “I understand, the better to believe”, the believer scrutinizes the truth to be able to find God and to believe (cf. *Sermons* 43, 9). The harmony between faith and reason means above all that God is not remote: he is not far from our reason and our life; he is close to every human being, close to our hearts and to our reason, if we truly set on the journey.

(c) Virtue and Science (*Virtus et Scientia*)

The Philippine Augustinian schools’ insignia contains three symbols: an eagle which holds up in its talons, the emblem of the Order of St. Augustine and below its wings, the words “*virtus et scientia*” The symbol of the eagle is peculiar to institutions connected to the Spanish Augustinians. The eagle, you see, is connected to the Royal House of king Philip II, the Spanish King who gave his name to our country, the Philippines The eagle as our insignia is therefore special: it can evoke the Spanish imperial eagle or the golden eagle – both of which exist in real life. It also symbolizes Augustine, for he was like an eagle because of the heights of contemplation to which he soared and the keenness of his theological vision.

The school’s motto is *Virtus et scientia*. This phrase is absent from the writings of Augustine, but that it paraphrases many of Augustine’s formulations on the relationship of science and faith, wisdom and understanding, doctrine and practice. Alberto Esmeralda, OSA noted that while it is true that the binomial virtue-science does not appear in Augustine’s works, their opposites Concupiscence-Ignorance do exist. Augustine teaches that apart from death, the two effects of original sin in us are concupiscence and ignorance. Concupiscence, the weakening of the will, and ignorance, the weakening of the intellect, become the yoke of our slavery to sin. But as Augustine said, our Lord, the Divine Physician, is so wise that he offers two kinds of remedies of our sickness: a cure by contraries, and a cure of similarities. In this case the Divine Physician gives the remedies for concupiscence and ignorance as contrary remedies - the virtue and science. He gives us virtue and science through a formative process that we call “Augustinian education”. Virtue, strength of character, and science, strength of intellect, are the two wings that allow our eagle to fly, to soar, to transcend and overcome the limitations of human frailty. These days, the eagle that spreads its wings once more to fly to new heights are our pupils and students. The motto *Virtus et scientia* therefore should be taken as an indication that Augustine’s love

for knowledge and search for truth or our devotion to study and learning must be taken as integral elements in one's growth in the Christian life.

Transform: Challenges for Augustinian Educators Today

There are enormous challenges for us all educators in this 21st century, however I will limit only three that relates to the topic assigned to me.

First, On Being Passionate on Augustinian Spirituality

We need to transmit with fidelity the charism or spirituality of our Order. The challenge today is to creatively respond to the new demands of future education while upholding the value of tradition (cf. Mark Stower). All members of the educative community should strive to be continuously formed in an Augustinian way. As the Constitutions noted, "we must encourage the educational community in our schools to live the values of the Gospel from the perspective of Augustinian spirituality and pedagogy (*Const* 163). What is important is that we are witnesses of these values, for modern day people will not listen to teachers unless they are witnesses. Our goal as Augustinian educators is to "fortify the Augustinian identity and values through establishment of formation standards and integration in the curriculum, instruction and research" (*Cebu Province, Quadrennial Program*, 54).

Second, On Developing the Gift of Searching

The teachings and learnings we receive, what we hear, see and experience, the whole life itself raises continuous queries. The person who seeks with passion the right answers advances in knowledge and wisdom. To seek is to wonder. Thus, through the educational plan it is possible to create the conditions for a person to develop the gift for searching and be guided in discovering the mystery of his being and of the reality that surrounds him or her until he or she reaches the threshold of the faith (cf. *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools*, 51). The educators need to engage in dialogue that would enhance learning and discovery of truth from self-awareness to social awareness.

Third, On the School Which Invites Discovery of the Truth

The school considers human knowledge as truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads to the discovery of Truth itself. A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, who is well prepared in his or her subject, does more than convey the sense of what he or she is teaching to his or her pupils. Over and above what he or she says, he or she guides his or her pupils beyond his or mere words to the heart

of total Truth. (cf. *The Catholic Schools*, 41). Thus, the identity and climate of an Augustinian school is the one that invites discovery of truth through study and living it out through ethical commitment (cf Santiago Insunza Seco, OSA).

Conclusion

Being here at the Villanova University, named after St Thomas of Villanova, the Patron of Studies of the Order, we who are working in the school apostolate are all reminded of the mandate to be formed, re-informed and transformed. We need to commit to an on-going formation of Augustinian spirituality and pedagogy. We need to be re-informed with the importance of our devotion to study and pursuit of wisdom and encounter the Truth within and lastly be transformed in our pedagogy in our love of knowledge and search for truth.

To end, allow me to quote the word of Jesus in John's Gospel, "*I am the way, the truth and the life*" (Jn14:6). Augustine commented on these words by saying "I am the way, the truth, and the life. It is by me that you come; it is I that you come to , and in me you remain. How do you wish to go? I am the way. Where do you wish to go? I am the truth. Where do you wish to remain? I am the life. (*On Christian Doctrine*, 1, 34). May we continue our restless journey of this lifetime project of being passionate for the truth and finally be transformed into the person of Christ - the Truth.

Thank you...Gracias...

Questions for Reflection

1. Considering the culture of the youth and of one's country, what elements of an Augustinian spirituality you consider a challenge in the work of education?
2. What can you as consider a great challenge for educational centers related to the becoming of our Augustinian schools that invites discovery of truth?
3. *The Augustinian's devotion to study and the pursuit of wisdom are the intellectual dimension of our spirituality.* What educational program or plan would you craft to create the conditions for a person to develop the gift of searching?