

# ON THE WAY WITH ST. AUGUSTINE

## AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES

### SPIRITUALITY AND ORGANIZATION

#### PREFACE

This book, **On the way with St. Augustine** (Handbook for Augustinian Secular Fraternities) appears while we can still hear the echoes of the Grand Jubilee Year 2000 of the Incarnation. This event reminds us of that springtime in the Church which flourished in the happy years of Vatican Council II.

Among other things, the Jubilee Year advanced the idea of ecclesial co-responsibility. It has been repeated consistently that the laity are the Church in the heart of the world, and that the new evangelisation is unthinkable without a firm lay missionary commitment. The direction of this document comes from this spirit to flow out to the whole Augustinian world. The sources of this guidebook come as well from the broader foundation of the ecclesiology of communion, which is a constant theme in the thinking of Saint Augustine, and was underscored in the Vatican Council II, even to the point of declaring "*The church has not been truly established and does not truly live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy.*" (*Ad gentes*, 21).

As branches of the one vine, (John 15,5) we are called "*to live united in what binds us together and separately in what makes each of us unique, yet, willing to share our differences and enrich each other in one vocational identity*" (Conclusions of the International Congress of Lay Augustinians, 4). This sentiment expresses our common Christian dignity and our belonging to the mystery of the Church-communion. (See, *Christifideles laici*, 64)

Deeply rooted in the theology of the Bishop of Hippo, historically, these convictions have led to the creation of groups called *Augustinian Secular Fraternities*. Their doctrinal stamp has survived the passage of time, but some important aspects have suffered sporadic pruning.

The Synod of Bishops of 1987 took as its theme the study of the lay vocation and mission in the Church in the twenty years since Vatican II. As a result of this Synod, Pope John Paul II published the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, on 30 December 1988.

It is not enough to talk of an age of the laity or to think that we are in a passing stage of association. The Spirit of God appeals, inspires and invites us to look at the origins of what is a core value. We stand before an encouraging growth of Augustinian Seculars, with an undeniable affection for Saint Augustine. For this reason the initiative of a Congress for Lay Augustinians met with a large attendance

and the participants requested the publication of a guidebook/handbook which would offer outlines defining the characteristics of *Augustinian Secular Fraternities*. The *Rule of Life* for Augustinian laity, which was published in 1980, provided a framework for the wide spectrum of lay Augustinians. Time is ripe to assist the organization of this rich lay reality, offering additional elements for deepening lay spirituality particularly in its Augustinian aspects.

A dedicated group of religious and lay specialists worked enthusiastically on the creation of this handbook. The work was co-ordinated by the Order of Saint Augustine's International Secretariat for the Laity, led by Fathers Santiago Insunza, Columba O'Donnell, Arno Meyer, José Salvador Roldán and Giovanni Scanavino. Rather than being a definitive or final text, the aim of this handbook is to describe, orient and promote the spirituality and the basic organisational elements of Augustinian lay groups. The same functional character which led to *Rule of life and General Statutes for Secular Augustinians*, published in 1980, has created this updated text.

This *HANDBOOK FOR AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES* presents a proposal for co-responsibility and participation in the Augustinian Family for laity. Based on Augustinian spirituality, this is a compact document alternating between the doctrinal and organisational aspects for the purpose of contributing to bringing together laity in communion and mission. The Church has a mission for communion (See, *Christifideles laici*, 32). When the missionary dimension of the Christian vocation is taken seriously, people develop and the Church grows because "it is not the case, after all, that when you have given faith, you have lost faith, or when you have spent hope, you have lost hope, or that when you have given charity you will be left without charity. These are the springs and fountains; they abound by gushing and flowing." (Sermon 107A).

We give this booklet to lay Augustinians, present and future, with the hope that it will serve to foster lay fraternities, and help them in their journey both as children of the Church and followers of Augustine.

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# **COMMUNITIES OF SECULAR AUGUSTINIANS FRAMEWORK-HANDBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea of **On the way with St. Augustine** (HANDBOOK FOR AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES) came from suggestions of the First International Congress of Lay Augustinians (Rome, 16 – 21 July 1999). The text which we present here has been approved by the General Council of the Order on 11 October 2000, and officially promulgated by the Ordinary General Chapter 2001.

This Handbook aims to set a common framework for Augustinian laity as well as provide a basic structure that will ensure that the name, SECULAR AUGUSTINIANS, is used properly. Only in this way is it possible to establish certain minimum norms to certify a group as an AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITY.

The idea is to propose a common theoretical framework which, when it is implemented, allows for different models or possibilities. The members of each Fraternity must draw up their own particular statutes in accordance with their own circumstances and characteristics. Thus, the framework provides for a wide margin for freedom and creativity.

Why speak about *Secular Augustinians*? Frequently, looking at history is like turning towards the light. Since the beginning of the Order there have been Secular Augustinians. It is a name that presumes the same spirituality as well as a common formative process and juridical structure. If this were not so, how would it be possible to identify lay Augustinians and describe their participation in the life of the Augustinian Family?

Sharing the name of AUGUSTINIAN is a tradition in the Order and a result of the Church-communion proclaimed by St. Augustine. A single name – with the specification of secularity in the case of the laity – highlights unity in the Church and is, at the same time, a clear sign of union.

Today, the term *community*, in its general sense, can be used to refer to lay groups. However, it would seem more appropriate to reserve it for the religious life and to use the term *Fraternities* when speaking of the laity. This was the original use in the Mendicant Orders and highlights the identity of the lay group, avoiding confusion and imitation between religious communities and lay communities.

Keeping this in mind the *Rule and Statutes of Secular Augustinians* (Intermediate General Chapter 1980), to its credit, avoided the usual pitfalls of synthesizing these two realities. Now, twenty years after its publication, we have the duty to express our gratitude to those who drafted it, as well as the obligation to complete it and bring it up to date, in accordance with the present state of the Church and the world today. Consideration was also given to the Statutes of the different Fraternities within the Augustinian world. Suggestions were also gathered from lay people from different countries in the revisions of the first five drafts of the final text.

In pastoral work, especially among the young, *Augustinian Secular Fraternities* ought to be an explicit offering, along with religious life and membership of an institute of consecrated lay persons, as one of the forms of integration into the

Augustinian Family, by which an individual can share in a single mission and spirituality with others while living out his or her own vocation within the Church.

Many other people, associated with our activities for a variety of reasons, also call themselves “lay Augustinians”: teachers in our schools or the members of groups of brothers/sisters or groups that meet around some Augustinian activity. The first part or doctrinal section of this document may also be of benefit to them; they also form part of the Augustinian Family, although in a different way than the Augustinian Secular Fraternities do.

However, the HANDBOOK FOR AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES is aimed directly at the men and women who have freely opted for a juridical bond with the Augustinian Family, through their belonging to a Secular Fraternity. In other words, the document follows the same outlines as the *Rule and Statutes of Secular Augustinians* (1980) and, from now on, this FRAMEWORK-HANDBOOK supersedes that text.

Augustinian Fraternities must not concentrate their efforts on highlighting differences between the two texts. First of all, emphasis must be given to strengthen common elements, because: *“Woe to those who hate unity, and create divisions among people! Let them listen to him who wanted to make them one, into one, for one: let them listen to him who says, Do not create divisions: ‘I have planted, Apollos watered; but God made it grow. Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth’. They were saying, ‘I am for Paul, I for Apollos, I for Cephas’. And he says, ‘Is Christ divided?’ Be you one, be one thing, be one person: ‘No one has ascended into heaven, except Him who came down from heaven’. Behold, they said to Paul, we wish to be yours. And he said to them, I do not want you to be Paul’s, but to belong to Him who is Paul’s together with you.”* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 12, 9)

Second, there has to be an awareness that both service to the Church in being witnesses and builders of the Kingdom in this world, as well as the missionary dimension of faith, must be of prime concern. Excessive concern with name and identity or indifference in the face of social reality, easily lead to narrow-minded behaviour.

The conciliar Constitution *Lumen gentium* offers us a positive description of the laity: *“The faithful are by Baptism made one body with Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.”* (31) This doctrinal clarification - a single Baptism and the unity of mission - calls for complementarity and for collaboration among everyone in the Church. *“All of us, pastors and lay faithful, have the duty to promote and nourish stronger bonds and mutual esteem, cordiality and collaboration among the various forms of lay associations.”* (*Christifideles laici* 31).

Augustinian Secular Fraternities do not profess faith in St. Augustine but in Jesus Christ. They do not seek to stand out in order to occupy more space in the life of the Church, rather they try to be *“among you as one who serves”* (Luke 22, 27). They know their own limitations and are aware that they are members of a pilgrim Church

with her blemishes and wrinkles that keeps going forward through prayer (See, Sermon 181, 7).

Even though some risks cannot be ignored, especially those that arise from the confusion of identities or the presentation of one vocation eclipsing others, the challenge to promote Augustinian Fraternities and foster their growth opens up for us the beautiful experience of a Church-communion and the opportunity to mould the Augustinian Family of the future.

## I. BASIC THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL QUESTIONS

### 1.1. THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AND PASTORAL REALITY

1. According to Vatican Council II, the Church is the new People of God made up of all the baptised who walk in the light of the Spirit (See, Constitution on the Church 2, 9-17). Even though they perform different functions, all the members of this people constitute a communal and fraternal unity.

One of the first questions that arises is the nature and mission of lay people. In other words, consideration of the theology that underpins the laity's own nature must be a starting point. Another question is the history of the laity in the Church, a history which has clearly had its high and low points. Especially since Vatican Council II the leading role of the laity in the Christian community has been rediscovered.

Vatican II shed light on a new conception of the Church. Focus on the Church's theology on communion is the innovation that has had the greatest impact on ecclesiology and on the life of the Church. (See, *Christifideles laici* 19). In fact during the first millennium, the notion of communion permeated the consciousness of the Church. Also, we should not forget that the Constitution on the Church opens with a fundamental affirmation: The Church is, first of all, like a sacrament, "*a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all men.*" (*Lumen gentium* 1) She cannot be understood from the outside, she cannot be measured and analysed by the criteria of any other institution and, when we speak of the laity, we are not simply considering where to situate, and what functions to assign to, a group – undoubtedly the most numerous group – of the ecclesial community.

A valid starting point for reflections on the role of the laity is accepting through faith of this human and salvific reality, that we call Church, imbued with the presence of God.

2. To say that the Church is the communion of faithful is to say that all Christians possess a true equality. "*Although by Christ's will some are established as teachers, dispensers of mysteries and pastors for the others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality among all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ.*" (*Lumen gentium* 32) This common dignity was classically formulated in beautiful words by St. Augustine and quoted in *Lumen gentium* (32): "*What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation*" (Sermon 340, 1).

Secularity – as a common theological fact that precedes the variety of functions and charisms – may be achieved in three forms of Christian living: laity, ministry and religious life. No one of these forms derives from the others; rather they are in communion with differentiated equality. This is why Vatican II speaks first of the People of God (chapter 2) and then of the hierarchy (chapter 3).

3. The concept of a communitarian, fraternal and co-responsible Church, which has in Baptism its common point of reference, lies beneath the image of People of God, as presented in chapter 2 of the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*. The unique sacramental base and the dignity of the Church, born from Baptism as reflected in chapter 2 of the Constitution, is present in the current edition (1983) of the Code of Canon Law which states, "*From their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one's own condition and function.*" (CIC, 208)



The theological roots of the lay faithful as presented by Vatican II must be sought in the sacrament of Baptism: *“Only through accepting the richness in mystery that God gives to the Christian in Baptism is it possible to come to a basic description of the lay faithful.”* (*Christifideles laici* 9) The deeper we go into the theology of Baptism, the clearer the image of the laity becomes. Baptism is called Christian because of its relation with the person and mystery of Jesus Christ. The baptised are incorporated into Christ (Rom 6, 5) and linked to Jesus in His death and resurrection. (Rom 6, 3) Essentially, Baptism is communion with the Paschal mystery of the death/resurrection of the Lord. (Rom 6, 3 ff; Col 2, 11-13) This Christological basis is integrated with the anthropological, pneumatological, eschatological and ecclesiological dimensions.

4. The anthropological dimension marks the start of something new; it means the newness of a birth with all its hope, commitment and confidence. The human being's free response reciprocates the freely received gift of God. This is the concept of conversion as vocation and permanent work of a Christian.

To speak about pneumatological dimension is to refer to the equality between life in Christ and life in the Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes water produce rebirth in Christ and pardon sins. *“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Cor 6, 11)

The eschatological dimension highlights the life that awaits all the baptised at the end of time. We must not forget that the Church, and through her the baptised, conforms herself – in only a provisional and imperfect way – to this eschatological reality of the Kingdom which we must already proclaim today.

Finally, the ecclesiological dimension refers to the incorporation of the baptised into the Body of Christ which is the Church. (1 Cor 12) Communion in *“one Lord, one faith, one Baptism”* (Eph 4, 5) surpasses all differences among the baptised and brings fraternal communion. *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal 3, 27-28) About the mystery of unity St. Augustine says: *“There are many men and only one man; many men and only one Christ. Christians together form the one Christ with their head who is ascended to heaven. It is not that He is one and we many: In Him, who is one, we, who are many, become in reality one. This, then, is the only man that truly exists: Christ, head and body.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 127, 3)

5. The move from a Church of inequality – with two well-defined categories of people – to a Church of equality, presupposes a theological reconsideration of those roles that are not fundamental to ordained ministry and ecclesial practice. Although the signs of the times favour a renewal of the laity, the transition has yet to begin. It is a road down which we still have to travel. The process that has begun requires progress in the areas of participation and shared responsibility. We must accept change with absolute integrity, supported by clear-cut trust among all the members of the People of God. This trust can only arise through a growth in faith in the power of the Spirit present among us, and through ever-greater mutual love. Feeling ourselves to be pilgrims in the light of the Spirit, with trust and love we must move to erase our mutual prejudices, recognize the maturity of the laity and translate this Church-fraternity of Christ into concrete reality.

Theological discussion is well ahead of the full participation of the lay faithful in the life of the Church and its evangelizing presence in the world. We must not forget that *“the world becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfil their Christian vocation.”* (*Christifideles laici* 15) Today, even though the basic judgement

principle of ecclesiology is the lay person, there is still a lack of a developed baptismal theology from which the essential equality of all members of the People of God can be built. Only by blowing on the embers of Vatican II will it be possible to put the identity of lay people, priests and religious in their respective places without ambiguity. It is just as important to speak of equality among lay faithful, ordained ministers and religious (*Lumen gentium* 32) as it is to underline that this is a differentiated equality. It is diversity and complementarity in the unity of a single Spirit.

## 1.2. THE LAY FAITHFUL AND THEIR PLACE IN THE CHURCH

6. It is not easy to eliminate habits or language that has been used for centuries. Such a task is like moving history. When some people hear others speak about how the hour of the laity has come, they become suspicious because they think we are facing a dangerous situation. They seem to think that highlighting the leading role of the lay faithful is disrespectful to priests or religious, or that an invading army has burst into the Church. Likewise, some laity seek vindication and reject any kind of hierarchical differentiation.

The whole Church (although not all its members to the same degree or with the same offices) is priestly, prophetic and royal. No one can manage lay participation in Church life as if it were some delegation or gratuitous concession that can be increased or reduced according to circumstances. *“From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laity’s right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord Himself that they are assigned to the apostolate.”* (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3)

7. The plan for a new theology of the laity would remain an abstract concept if certain duties were not clearly laid down. This has nothing to do with being in the secular world – we are all there anyway – rather it involves the lay faithful entering into relation with the temporal order in a very distinct way. In that world – made up of such realities as marriage, family, work, political and economic activity, culture, scientific research etc. – they carry out their ministry and announce the good news of the Kingdom in everyday life and activity. Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, reminds the laity that *“their own field of evangelising activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, the sciences and the arts, international life, the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering.”* (70)

8. On the subject of the promotion, formation and pastoral activity of the lay faithful, the Santo Domingo Document (1992) highlights four aspects: the first aspect is the laity’s commitment to the field of temporal realities (family, culture, economics, politics, education, the mass media, etc.) and not just to their functions within the Church. A second aspect is the grouping of the lay faithful into associations and movements so as to avoid the dangers of being closed to the outside, disconnected from group pastoral ministry or lacking enculturation within their own particular environment. Recognition of the evangelising role of women and the struggle against their social and ecclesial marginalisation is a third aspect. Finally, the need to reaffirm the preferential option for the young, to adopt youth culture and to open spaces for young people’s involvement in the Church and in evangelisation through appropriate pastoral ministry is the fourth aspect. (95-120)

9. The so-called *hour of the laity* has its roots in the 19th century. Despite a highly clerical ecclesiology – even reaching a point where the laity were considered an appendage to the hierarchy – and without overcoming the classic dualistic notions of sacred-profane, spirit-flesh, clergy-laity, the principle was proclaimed, nonetheless, that the mission of the lay faithful was to consecrate the world to God.

The emphasis given to the role of the laity today must be motivated by theological reasons and not by the statistical situation of religious and priestly vocations. Consequently, the function of the lay faithful must never be seen as being merely supplementary. The roots of the lay vocation must be sought within a new concept of the Church and within a view of creation that lays to rest, once and for all, the breach between the Church and the world, the material and the spirit. We still cannot speak of an adequate interpretation of these traditional pairings; it is alright to mark out different territories but, at times, unscalable walls are built up around them.

## II. A GLANCE AT AUGUSTINIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

### 2.1. THE CHURCH-COMMUNION OF ST. AUGUSTINE

**10.** St. Augustine conceived of the Church as communion. This concept, expressed using various terminologies, has a rich and multifaceted significance. In this way, Augustinian theology certainly helps us to avoid the danger of an ecclesiology in which a partial vision prevails, a vision of one element over others or of one group as opposed to another.

The principal concern of Augustinian theology is to reflect biblical revelation faithfully, and to demonstrate the unity of the Church and in the Church over and above any distinction of persons, functions or ministries. The Holy Spirit creates communion within the Trinity, between the Trinity and human beings and among human beings themselves (See, Sermon 71, 18). Consequently, a Church cut off from the Spirit ceases to be a Church, yet, if she possesses the Spirit, she is communion, both with God and among her members. In order for there to be a Church and for it to be possible to speak of a Church, what counts above all is unity with Christ and in His Spirit.

For St. Augustine, the unity of the Body of Christ constitutes the fundamental thesis of Church theology: *“This bears witness to Christ and to life, in other words to the Head and the body; to the King and the people; to the Pastor and the flock and to the whole mystery of the Sacred Scriptures; to Christ and the Church”* (Expositions of the Psalms 79, 1). Church-communion is the framework in which Vatican II placed discussion of the lay faithful and is the starting point for subsequent reflections on the theology of the laity. John Paul II himself considered this theme; only by placing ourselves in the living context of Church-communion will it be possible to understand adequately the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world. (See, *Christifideles laici* 18)

**11.** In St. Augustine’s regular catechesis we note a definite insistence on the call to the Church as a single body. So that all those who hear the call may, without distinction, mature in this vision and mentality, we all belong to the same body, we must all demonstrate that we are one body; we must all form one body, *“The whole Christ is Head and Body, as I am sure you already know.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 56, 1)

For St. Augustine, faithful as he was to the ancient patristic tradition, the Scriptures cannot be understood without using as a fundamental principle of interpretation, the union of Christ and the Church, Head and Body, of the Whole Christ.

Having made the proper distinction between head and body, the identity of the single body guarantees the one subject of present and future history, in other words of a future that has already begun in the present. The Church exists in time as an extension of the incarnation and of Christ’s own history. Christ continues to suffer in the Church and His suffering is made complete in her, just as the Church earlier suffered in Christ, her head. *“We already know the head and the body, He is the head and we the body. When we hear His voice we must understand it as coming from the head and the body, because the whole suffered. We also suffered in him and, what we suffer, He suffers in us. If a man’s head suffers, can we say that the hands do not suffer? Or, if the hands suffer, can we say that the head does not suffer?”* (Expositions of the Psalms 62, 2; See, Expositions of the Psalms 61, 4)

**12.** Likewise, the mystery of the body of Christ becomes the foundation of the Church's hope in time: her tensions, lamentations and impatience – in a word, her expectation – are maintained by virtue of her insertion into the body of Christ, whose head already rests in glory. *"We are waiting for that very inheritance, eternal life. The whole body has not yet received it, because the head is in heaven, while the members are still on earth. The head is not going to receive the inheritance alone, leaving the body behind. The whole Christ is going to receive the inheritance, the whole as man, that is to say, head and body. Since we are members of Christ, we must be hoping for the inheritance."* (Sermon 22, 10; See, Expositions of the Psalms 88, 1, 5)

## 2.2. THE MINISTERIAL CHURCH GUIDED BY A SINGLE SHEPHERD AND TEACHER

**13.** When St. Augustine distinguishes the different ministries in the Church, he always refers to ministry in unity. As a shepherd, he considers himself to be above his flock only by virtue of the task, which he has been entrusted to him, to watch over and teach them. Although, he must be placed higher than they are to watch over them, he does not consider this to be a position of privilege or power that distinguishes him from his faithful. Quite the contrary, it is an attribute of his ministry, a service (somewhat burdensome, uncomfortable and dangerous) that impels him to consider as safer and more truly dignified the position he shares with all his fellow baptised: *"What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation."* (Sermon 340, 1)

**14.** Christ and His Spirit enable us to share in a number of characteristics and charisms which should never be employed without recalling their origin, their value and the fact that they spring from a common source. The task of teacher and shepherd must constantly refer to the true Teacher and Shepherd, of whom all of us are the disciples and flock, including the so-called teachers and shepherds. As disciples we must all diligently follow the teaching and guidance of the true Teacher and Shepherd by cultivating our interior lives. The true Teacher teaches everyone in the school of his/her own heart.

Thus, the true Supreme Pastor never ceases to guide His flock, even when His subordinate pastors follow only their own interests and do not feed the flock according to Christ's heart: *"Who are the ones that feed themselves? Those about whom the Apostle says, 'For all seek their own advantage, not that of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 2, 21) You see we, whom the Lord has seen as worthy to set in this high station thanks to no merits of our own but about which a very strict account indeed has to be rendered, have two things about us that must be clearly distinguished: one, that we are Christians, the other, that we are placed in charge. Being Christians is for our sake; being in charge is for yours. ... The sole reason people are put in charge is to consider the interests of those they are in charge of - only the interests of those they serve - and not at all to attend to their own advantage. Anyone put in charge that just enjoys being in control, seeks his own honour, or looks to his own convenience is feeding himself, not the sheep."* (Sermon 46, 2)

**15.** It is better to feel yourself to be part of a flock than to hold a position of responsibility: *"And there are many people who reach God as Christians without being in charge of anything, and no doubt have a much easier journey by travelling light and carrying less of a burden. But we bishops, in addition to being Christians*

*who shall render to God an account of our manner of life, are also in charge of you, and as such we will render God an account of our stewardship. If I tell you this it is that, having sympathy for us, you will pray for us*" (Sermon 46, 2.14).

In walking alongside the People of God, St. Augustine recognises himself as being at the same time teacher and disciple. He says to the faithful: *"I watch over you by virtue of my office, but I also wish to be watched over by you. Under the Pastor I am a pastor to you. From that position I address you as one who teaches, but with you I am a disciple in the school of the one Teacher"* (Expositions of the Psalms 126, 3).

As a bishop he carries out a ministry, a service, but the only one who really teaches is Jesus Christ: *"for we have all one Teacher, and we are fellow-disciples in one school"* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 16, 3). To his listeners, he never stops reiterating his status as faithful Christian in the Church and highlighting the risks he must run in speaking about God. *"And as for me, brethren, you must consider who I am that undertakes to speak to you, and what I have undertaken.... In proportion to the measure I have received, I give you: where it is opened, I see with you; where it is shut, I knock with you."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 18, 1) What is important in the Church is to welcome the Word in our hearts because *"inwardly, where nobody can see us, we are all hearers."* (Sermon 179, 7) St. Augustine graphically expresses this idea when he says, *"the shepherds themselves are likewise sheep."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 123, 5)

**16.** On various occasions, St. Augustine demonstrates his preference for learning over teaching. He does not present himself to the faithful as the perfect doctor but as one who also wishes to progress in the apprenticeship. (Letter 266, 2) With evident anxiety, he describes the role of pastor of the Church: *"Those, who have this purpose (i.e., denying the Shepherd) in feeding the flock of Christ in order to have them as their own rather than Christ's, are convicted of loving themselves, and not Christ, through their desire of boasting, or wielding power, or acquiring gain."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 123, 5)

In speaking of certain temptations within the Church, he is thinking of both clergy and laity. *"The temptation of government, the temptation of danger towards the Church touches us especially. But, how can you be foreign to such temptation if the whole ship is in danger? I say this so that in this fourth temptation, though it is peculiar to us, you do not cease to pray because you will be the first to be shipwrecked. Do not lessen your attention. Do not cease to pray for us. Oh brethren, why do you not sit by the tiller? Why do you not sail in the same ship?"* (Expositions of the Psalms 106, 7)

### 2.3. IMAGES OF ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

**17.** Augustinian language assists us to regain an ecclesiology of communion, something fundamental for understanding and living the mystery of the Church. Let us use two expressive and complementary images: That of the whole Christ and that of the bridegroom and the bride. The whole Christ (head and body) is the image that must constantly guide us to understand the true reality of the Church, her dynamic relationship with Christ and the continuity of this relationship in a single historical subject, even when we distinguish between the head and body. The bride and bridegroom, even though it is rooted in the distinction between the two subjects, is another image that regains unity in the interpersonal relationship and the mystery of love (the one flesh).

## - THE WHOLE CHRIST

**18.** As members of the whole body, we are already with Him. *"To be with"* (He with us and we with Him) is a concept that highlights the Church's participation in Christ. This involves a communication of characteristics that permits the historic and sinful Church to be also divine and already a part of the glorious state of her head.

Through Baptism, all members of the Church with equal rights are like Christ. In His humanity we have been consecrated by the same Spirit and we too are Christ: *"Christians are Christ Himself. ... We are the body of Christ because we are all anointed and we are all in Him; we are Christ and we are of Christ because in some way the whole Christ is head and body."* (Expositions of the Psalms 26, 2, 2) *"Let us rejoice, then, and give thanks that we are made not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brethren, and grasp in your mind the grace of God upon us? Marvel! Be glad we are made Christ! For if He is the head, we are the members: the whole man is He and we."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 21, 8; See, Homily on the Gospel of St. John 108, 5)

**19.** Being with Christ and like Him means participating in His sanctity. This sanctity is His, but it is real for us too. We cannot ignore it without being ungrateful and, at the same time, we must recognise it in order to be humble: *"If it is said that we were sanctified, may each of the faithful also say: I am a saint. This is not the arrogance of the conceited but a confession by the grateful. If you were to claim to be a saint for your own sake, you would be arrogant. As a follower and member of Christ, if you claimed not to be a saint, you would be ungrateful."* (Expositions of the Psalms 85, 4)

Being like Him, sharing His Spirit, means sharing His generative power. It means becoming mothers of Christ, capable of engendering Him in our fellows in the same way as the Church. *"Through the Word of the Lord we see the Church as brothers, sisters and mother of the Lord... because Christ Himself dwells in Christians who are daily engendered by the Church through Baptism. In them you may comprehend that the Church is spouse, mother, and child."* (Expositions of the Psalms 127, 12)

## - BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM

**20.** Being with Him is similar to the experience of spouses (See, Expositions of the Psalms 127, 12) who become a single flesh. This same flesh was assumed by the Word and, as a consequence, the Church's earthly experience becomes Christ's own experience except, of course, in her sin. In this way, the experience of the whole Christ carries the Church to the limits of time and space where she lives the time of God, beyond the confusion of this world.

The nature of matrimony underscores our impatience as we await the intensity of love. In this love, we are invited to the wedding and we ourselves form part of the nuptials. Guest and bride are *"a tremendous mystery. We have been invited to the wedding and we ourselves are the wedding. With ordinary human weddings, the bride is one person, the invited guests are others. We ourselves are the bride, as well as being invited. After all, we are the Church and we have been invited in the Church."* (Sermon 265E, 5). We are in the Church and we are the Church: *"I urge you, I beg and beseech you... love this Church, continue to be in such a Church, be such a Church yourselves."* (Sermon 138, 10)

### III. AUGUSTINIAN LAY SPIRITUALITY

#### 3.1. LAY SPIRITUALITY AND AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY

**21.** Christian spirituality consists in living according to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Following Jesus, which all the baptised have in common, is the foundation of spirituality. It is the single programme that all Christians follow. The individual personalities of certain men and women and the various ways in which they seek to embody the Gospel have given rise to a vast range of different types of spirituality. So, to the phrase Christian spirituality we add the adjective Augustinian, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite etc. These are different models, but all the fruit of the abundance of the Spirit, with their common denominator being the following Jesus Christ. *“We, therefore, who are called and are Christians, do not believe in Peter, but in Him whom Peter believed... Christ Himself, who was Peter's teacher in the doctrine which leads to eternal life, is our teacher too.”* (City of God 18, 54, 1)

To speak of lay spirituality does not mean to present one type of spirituality and place it in competition with others. Theology has demonstrated how secularity is characteristic of all the Church and not an exclusive feature of the laity. The secular or lay character of the Church is to be understood in the context of an ecclesiology of communion (See, *Lumen gentium* 4; *Ad gentes* 2). It is possible to talk of specific tasks within the single mission, which all the baptised share within the Church; however, there are many more common tasks than individual ones.

**22.** To limit the following of Jesus Christ to one group within the Church would mean undervaluing Baptism, the very foundation of our incorporation into Jesus Christ. *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself”* (Mt. 16, 24). *“This is not something for virgins to pay heed to, which married women do not have to; or which widows ought to, and wedded women not; or which monks ought to, and married men not; or which clergy ought, and lay people not. On the contrary, the whole Church, the whole body, all its members, distinguished from each other by the various offices they have been properly allotted, they all ought to follow Christ.”* (Sermon 96, 7, 9) Never losing sight of this common theme – following Christ – we can talk of a specifically lay spirituality. In the same way, fixing our attention on St. Augustine's own journey of faith, it is legitimate to speak of Augustinian spirituality. In this way, Augustinian spirituality becomes another sign post on the Christian journey.

We know that life is a journey, a path, but frequently we do not know how to follow it. So, spiritual teachers or guides emerge helping us to create a space for God in our lives, to bring ourselves into a relationship with Him and to discover the presence of Jesus in the most destitute forms of humanity (see, Mt. 25, 40). The field of spirituality not only extends to the realities associated with God but also stretches out to all that which is human.

**23.** No form of spirituality is the prerogative of one group, rather the different forms of spirituality form part of the heritage of the entire Church. As lay people and religious, we can all share a single spirituality and establish a rapport that mutually enriches us all. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, the expression *“exchange of gifts”* appears six times. (47, 54, 62, 82, 85, 101)

Turning now to consider Augustinian spirituality, we may see that it is a concept of the human being as mirror and reflection of God. The human being, mystery (Confessions 4, 14, 22) and abyss (Expositions of the Psalms 41, 13), boisterously swelling and restlessly moving like the sea (Confessions 13, 20, 28), is vulnerable and



in need as he discovers that he carries the mark of his sin. (See, Confessions 1, 1) The confession of this innate poverty is translated into a search “*You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You.*” (Confessions 1, 1) This journey, this search for God, is conceived by St. Augustine in community. In choosing the community model, he considers the community of Jerusalem as the ideal for Christian life (See, Sermon 77, 4): “*They were of one heart and one mind*” (Acts 4, 32-35).

### 3.2. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY IN THE SECULAR ARENA

**24.** The specific traits of Augustinian spirituality must be sought in the figure of St. Augustine himself and in his experience as a human being and a believer. St. Augustine, Christian-man, is a companion on the journey, a fellow disciple (See, Sermon 134, 1), a worker in the vineyard who, like us, labours according to the strength that God gives him. (See, Sermon 49, 2)

The vocation and mission of all the baptised are the same (See, *Christifideles laici* 16) but the lay state has its own particular features and its own, though not exclusive, field of evangelising activity. For example, secular life embraces “*the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, the sciences and the arts, international life, the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering*” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 70). Furthermore “*the lay apostolate, in all its many aspects, is exercised both in the Church and in the world. In either case different fields of apostolic action are open to the laity. We propose to mention here the chief among them: Church communities, the family, the young, the social environment, national and international spheres. Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that their participation in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate should likewise develop.*” (*Apostolicam actuositatem* 9)

**25.** However, a lay spirituality and a definition of the laity exclusively based on their being in the world would serve no purpose since this would give a one-sided emphasis to the setting in which the laity operate – a setting which they share with all members of the Church – and would raise barriers between the Church and the world. The foundation of all lay spirituality is Christian spirituality. This is also so, when we speak of Augustinian spirituality in a secular context. It is a spirituality that is part of the broad context of discipleship of Christ and that views Christian identity and temporal realities with Augustinian eyes. In other words, it is a spirituality that finds in charity its centre and its fixed reference point by which it becomes human through certain well-known characteristics and launches itself into the evangelising mission from within the world.

### 3.3. THE CONTENT OF AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY

**26.** St. Augustine is the father of a spirituality or a cosmic Christian vision that even though it is not organically arranged in any one of his works, nonetheless has a framework which can be assembled by considering the fundamental concepts of his thought. It is possible to follow the Christian guidance of Augustinian spirituality because St. Augustine left us an account of his human-religious journey, of his encounter with himself, with others, with nature and with God. His life was marked by great experiences: the human experience and the experience of God. God and

man are the two themes that both alternate and come together throughout his thought. God cannot be seriously considered without fully evaluating the human being and vice versa. This unitary vision constitutes a challenging belief in the face of humanistic views that present God-man as a dilemma.

**27.** The complete process goes from the encounter with oneself to the encounter with God; *“if you find your nature is changeable, transcend yourself.”* (On True Religion 39, 72) Because human beings are inhabited by God, they are hungry for transcendence and, challenging the laws of gravity, they feel an inclination towards heaven. (See, City of God XXII, 24, 4) We are like a coin on one side of which is stamped the face of God and on the other our own image (See, Explanations of the Psalms 66,4). In no way does affirming transcendence mean renouncing what is human.

One of St. Augustine’s most illuminating intuitions is to see God from the viewpoint of man and man from that of God. The journey begins with oneself. *“Here, then, is the order of studies: the soul that commits itself to philosophy must begin by contemplating itself.”* (The Order 2, 18, 48)

#### - GREATNESS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE HUMAN BEING: LIFE AS A SEARCH

**28.** St. Augustine looks with admiring eyes at the human being as well as the whole of creation. *“When we consider the Creator, who is understood through the things that He made, we need to understand the Trinity of whom, as it is fitting, traces appear in the creature.”* (On the Holy Trinity 6, 10, 12) The human being is the most beautiful adornment of the whole earth. (See, City of God 19, 13, 2) *“As it is written, God made man upright and consequently with a good will”* (City of God 14, 11, 1). Every human being is open to immense possibilities and gifted with the seeds of intelligence that God has sown in all souls. (See, Sermon 117, 11) At the same time, St. Augustine perceives the frailty of human existence as locked in miserable conflict with itself, (See, City of God 21, 15) and sees its abysmal, contradictory and mysterious aspects. The human soul is the place where the most profound questions arise and where rival wills clash *“Thus did my two wills, one old and the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual, struggle within me; and through their discord tore my soul apart.”* (Confessions 8, 10) This is the mystery of freedom, the deception of trying to fulfil oneself while keeping God on the margins. Will was created by God as naturally good but also changeable. It can abandon good and accomplish evil and, with God’s help, abandon evil and accomplish good. (See, City of God 15, 21) This awareness of being the bearers of weakness (See, City of God 14, 9, 4) gives life its tragic character. The vocation of truth and happiness is completely fulfilled in the figure of Jesus Christ, Teacher, Physician and Model. *“For there is but one Son of God by nature, who in His compassion became Son of man for our sakes, so that we, who are by nature children of men, might by grace become through Him children of God”* (City of God 21, 15).

**29.** St. Augustine uses the Bible to construct his theory of the human being, because the Bible sets the standard for all research: teacher of truth and love, rule of Christian life. (See, Christian Doctrine 2, 7, 10; Sermon 46, 11, 24) He gives particular attention to Genesis where it is written that we were made in the image and likeness of God but, we are limited and fragmented within through the presence of sin, because we were created from nothing. (See, Confessions 8, 10, 22) Jesus Christ, Mediator between God and man, (See, City of God 10, 22) offers Himself as a new

experience and as hope of life transformed. *“Holding fast to His own divinity, He became partaker of our infirmity, that we, being changed into some better thing, might, by participating in His righteousness and immortality, lose our own sin and mortality.”* (City of God 21, 15) Jesus Christ *“fountain of life, was clothed with flesh (and) stirred our longing and our desire.”* (Sermon 142, 9)

**30.** God dwells and truth lies in the depths of the human being. (See, On True Religion 39, 72) As Augustine writes in Sermon 126, 3, 4, man admires all things and is himself worthy of admiration. A prerequisite for such admiration is a passion for all that is human, for truth and for life. The entire creation is an immense spectacle that speaks to us of God. (See, Sermon 313D, 2-3; Sermon 293, 5; Sermon 241, 2) As a result, it is possible to follow a process of ascending to God from our own interior life and from creation. The stages of this process move from exterior to interior and from lower to higher.

The Augustinian method emphasises interior life and transcendence. If we set our hearts on the things of the world we run the risk of admiring the works and despising the Creator. (See, Sermon 313A, 2). Human beings lose their focus and become restless when the order of love within them is upset and no longer responds to their attraction toward God. (See, Confessions 1, 1, 1 and 6, 16, 26) Alongside human greatness lies the condition of profound poverty. This is the twofold abyss of those who, as human beings, suffer the misery of being beggars (See, On Order 1, 2, 3) yet discover within something through which they transcend themselves. (See, Confessions 10, 8, 15)

This contemplation of the unknown and the profound converts human life into a restless search. To eradicate wonder and free ourselves from the enchantment of nature is to take the first step on the road to dehumanisation. All human beings' philosophical and mystical dimension may be stifled by the whirlwind of activity. A human being opens himself to a truth that is greater than any offered by science by experiencing the fullness of his own heart and the questions that surround it. Thus, the signs of life and the presence of the Spirit emerge. *“Let us therefore seek in ways that lead to finding, and find in ways to keep on seeking. For when a human being is done, then he begins.”* (On the Holy Trinity 9, 1, 1) This is the Augustinian call to those who would live outside the confines of the immediate and the horizontal.

An earthly paradise can only bring dissatisfaction and disenchantment because it completely ignores the deep human abyss. We cannot close our eyes to what we may call the final questions, the question of ultimate meeting.

#### - INTERIOR LIFE

**31.** Interior life and communion represent the basic categories of Augustinian thought. A human being's poise and happiness depend upon the relationship that a human being has with himself and with others. These are, without doubt, the fundamental values of Augustinian anthropology and spirituality. Whoever has an agitated and scattered exterior life will find it difficult to enter into interior life (See, On Order 2, 11, 30). Only when one enters into oneself (See, On True Religion 39, 72, 73), when one distances oneself from the world of the senses (See, On Order 1, 1, 3) and returns to his own heart (See, Homily on the Gospel of St. John 18, 10) will one be able of know others and oneself.

The window of the senses enables us to experience only the exterior. We can admire a landscape and, at the same time, not know ourselves (See, Confessions 10, 8). For this reason, the person without an interior life is a being without an identity,

without mystery, without curiosity. The interior is the place of questions and of certainties.

The feeling of identity: who I am, and of religiosity: who God is, both arise in the interior life. Self-knowledge identifies me. Religiosity exposes the fact that my life surpasses me because I can go beyond my own limits. This profound human dimension of interior life is a privileged place for full humanisation and for discerning God. *“Go back to your heart and from there to God. You are going back to God, you see, from the nearest possible place, if you have gone back to your heart. If you take offence at these things we have been talking about, it means you have gone out even from yourself; you have become an exile from your own bosom. You are upset by things outside you, and you lose sight of your own self.”* (Sermon 311, 13)

**32.** St. Augustine cultivated his interior life and experienced its joys: *“You are the never-failing light whom I consulted throughout my search, I questioned you about each thing, asking whether it existed, what it was, how highly it should be regarded; and all the while I listened to you teaching me and commanding me. It is still my constant delight to reflect like this; in such meditation I take refuge from the demands of necessary business, insofar as I can free myself.”* (Confessions 10, 40, 65) The interior was not an escape but a root of his life, the house of truth, (See, The Teacher 11, 38) a space in which to listen to the inner teacher and to recognise the truth that human beings carry forged within them. (See, Letter 19, 1)

St. Augustine’s religious experience is of a God within him, more intimate to him than he is to himself. (See, Confessions 3, 6, 11) This God who gives rise to questions made us for Himself and sowed restlessness in our hearts until we can find rest in our encounter with Him (See, Confessions 1, 1, 1). Withdrawal, returning to the heart, minding one’s own subjectivity, this is the Augustinian response to the culture of the exterior.

#### - LOVE AND COMMUNION

**33.** Interior life and communion complement one another. St. Augustine discovered, in the course of his interior journey, space to speak with God in prayer, love as the primary human vocation and the call to conversion.

Yet, St. Augustine the speculative thinker is an incomplete St. Augustine. Life and experience are the inexhaustible sources of his reflections. His gaze ranges over his own life history, over society, over his surroundings and reaches the conclusion that love is what drives life: *“Everyone lives according to what he loves.”* (On the Holy Trinity 13, 20, 26) Even peoples are defined by what they love. To understand the nature of a people we must examine what they love. (See, City of God 19, 24) If love is atrophied, life becomes paralysed. (See, Expositions of the Psalms 85, 24)

**34.** St. Augustine’s life is the story of a man in love. He speaks with emotion *“that a friend is half one’s own soul”* (Confessions 4, 4,7 - 7,12) and confesses that without friends he could feel no happiness (See, Confessions 6, 16, 26). Friendship was such a vital necessity for St. Augustine that, when he was alone, he did not even feel he had the strength to serve God. (See, On the Morals of the Catholic Church 31, 67) He lived happily with a woman (See, Confessions 4, 2, 2) who bore him a child (See, Confessions 6, 15, 25) and, with exemplary filial love, wept for the death of his mother, Monica. (See, Confessions 9, 29 ff.)

With the fervour of his conversion, it may be thought that St. Augustine came to live love exclusively in a vertical direction. Nothing could be further from the truth. He

was always surrounded by friends. *“To love and to be loved”* (Confessions 3, 1, 1) was his daily task. In Sermon 311, 11 he writes, *“It is only good loving that makes good living”*. Elsewhere he affirms that *“their one concern in determining how they ought to live should only be to choose what they should love.”* (Sermon 96, 1, 1) *“Is not the unfeigned confidence and mutual love of true and good friends our one solace in human society, filled as it is with misunderstandings and calamities?”* (City of God 19, 8)

**35.** It is important to love but also, when loving, to know how to choose. *“Do you perhaps say that you love nothing? Never! If you love nothing you will be lazy, dead, despicable, wretched. Love, but take note of what it is that you love.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 31, 2, 5) Love, as in all Augustinian anthropology, has a religious character: *“A good and honest life is not produced in any other way than by loving, in the way they should be loved, the proper objects of our love, namely, God and our neighbour.”* (Letter 137, 5, 17) *“Your feet are your love. You must have two feet so as not to be lame. What are these two feet? The two commandments of love: love for God and love for others. Run to God with these two feet.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 33, 2, 10)

#### - CONVERSION

**36.** The word conversion is strongly associated with the life of St. Augustine. Many people have a rather particular view of conversion, feeling it is something that has taken place in the lives of a few men and women of outstanding spiritual calibre. Erroneously, conversion then becomes a synonym for the heroic and the extraordinary.

Some personal factor always lies at the heart of all conversion: God who calls in different ways and the human being who responds freely. This meeting takes place in the union of faith and life. Consequently, conversion unifies and makes our lives whole. It is *“a strong and full loving.”* (Confessions 8, 8, 19)

Both faith and conversion are part of the broader context of searching and here interior life is also the key. All human beings who wish to examine the depths of their own being must face the ultimate questions. They must concentrate on the triangle of God-life-world and make various digressions through evil, pain, death and love. To get to the bottom of this we need to trace back through our activities to the source and transform ourselves through questioning, as St. Augustine so expressively said: *“I became a great puzzle to myself, and asked my soul why she was so sad.”* (Confessions 4, 4, 9)

**37.** Although conversion comes through grace and is not the result of any individual effort, approaching the most profound elements of the human world has always been one of the paths to God. No one of these paths leads necessarily and inevitably to God yet it is also clear that God’s presence dims when a human being abandons the search for that intimacy and thus ceases to be truly human.

Conversion always presupposes the exercise of faith. The human ‘yes’ to faith can be seen in the image of a journey. The great believers of the Bible – Abraham, Jonah, Ruth, Jacob, Mary – are travellers, though not necessarily in the geographical sense. In the dynamism of each movement, these believers are the protagonists of great changes which include two essential elements: bonding and rupture. Conversion-bonding means placing the Lord Jesus Christ at the centre of our lives, living with Him (See, 2 Tim. 2, 11; Rom. 6, 8) and carrying the person of Christ within us. (See, Commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans 2, 25, 38)

A pastoral process that does not lead to Jesus Christ is not Christian. Conversion-rupture means abandoning all comfortable conventions and multiple forms of idolatry. *“Is it possible to live without these things?”* asks St. Augustine in his Confessions. (8, 11, 26)

Conversion must not be understood as a goal but as a journey and as a principle that unifies while we are busy tilling the impoverished earth of our own lives (See, Confessions 2, 10, 18). To believe is to convert and to convert is to believe. Faith and conversion are interior events and encompass all of life. *“From you, God does not want words, but your heart.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 134, 11)

#### - PRAYER

**38.** The sphere of prayer is the interior life and its nature is dialogue. *“Prayer is your conversation with God. When you read, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 85, 7) The first thing involves listening to God, withdrawing and finding ourselves. By turning to the interior life we find the inner teacher who sits and waits. That is where God is, where He dwells, from where He guides us. (See, Expositions of the Psalms 41, 1-9; Homily on the Gospel of St. John 20, 11-21)

St. Augustine has a well-known doctrine concerning the inner teacher who is Christ. *“Go back, therefore to the heart, and if you are believers, you will find Christ there. He himself is speaking to you there. Yes, here I am shouting my head off, but He, in silence, is doing more teaching. I am speaking through the sound of these words; He is speaking inwardly by the dread of your thoughts.”* (Sermon 102, 2) One of these simple and essential prayers that must characterise our constant dialogue with God is expressed in these terms by St. Augustine: *“Give what You command, and then command whatever You will.”* (Confessions 10, 37, 60) This is the certainty of a “beggar of God” who recognises his limits and, at the same time, who knows what he can do with the presence and help of the Lord.

**39.** If God is the end towards which the human heart is attracted, (Confessions 1, 1, 1) the only petition that must be included in prayer is God Himself. From this dialogue with God, we must seek traces of Him in history, read the daily passage of events with the eyes of those who believe, hope and love. The criterion that substantiates Christian life is love; love for God and love for neighbour as God loves him *“But where must we practice? - In brotherly love. You can tell me, ‘I have not seen God.’ Can you tell me, I have not seen a human being?”* (Homily on the First Epistle of St. John 5, 7)

A discussion on prayer cannot be separated from the interior life. We cannot pray without turning to the interior and interior life is not possible without withdrawal, without the silence that liberates us from the noise that surrounds us and from our sometimes turbulent world.

In order that it is not just words but also actions that give praise (See, Expositions of the Psalms 149, 8) – for God places His ear to the heart of those who praise Him (See, Expositions of the Psalms 146, 1-3; Expositions of the Psalms 118 5, 1; Expositions of the Psalms 102, 2) – human beings must always be attentive. God is a person’s dialogue partner and prayer may be defined as a dialogue that moves the heart and the roots of life to change. *“Prayer brings about a turning of the heart to Him, who is ever ready to give, if we will only take what He gives.”* (The Sermon on the Mount 2, 3, 14)

**40.** This invigorating aspect of Christian prayer is one of St. Augustine's favourite thoughts: "*In reality, every kind of excessive speaking comes from the Gentiles, who endeavour to exercise the tongue rather than to cleanse the heart.*" (The Sermon on the Mount 2, 3, 12) We come to understand that prayer cannot be reduced to an external experience, to a kind of gust of emotion; rather it is a cry of the heart. "*When people pray, they cry out to the Lord. If their cry is only a sound made by the voice, while the heart is not intent upon God, the cry is futile.*" (Expositions of the Psalms 118, 29, 1)

When life is not mediated by prayer, people's attitudes become twisted and the way is blocked to interpretations of the Spirit. In this case, prayer becomes, not a life-giving experience of conversion but a jumble of words: "*I say this, my friends, in case we should be making noise with our voices and remaining silent in our actions.*" (Sermon 88, 13, 12)

#### - THE WHOLE CHRIST, FOUNDATION OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

**41.** At its peak, the human vocation for communion reaches union with Jesus Christ and all humanity. St. Augustine presents this in the image of the whole Christ. The human body as the image of a community has great force because we are all aware of the close relationship between the limbs and functions of our own bodies. St. Augustine uses the Pauline text of 1 Corinthians 12, 12-27 to support his ideas on the whole Christ.

It is not that Christ is the head and we are the body, rather Christ is, at the same time, both head and body. "*Our Lord Jesus Christ consists of head and body, as a perfect man. We recognize the head in the man who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven and is seated at the Father's right hand, from where we expect Him to come again as judge of the living and the dead. He is the head of the Church (Eph 5, 23). The Church is the body that belongs to the head. By this we do not mean just the church present in this place, but the Church both here and throughout the whole world; and not the Church of our own day alone, but that which began with Abel and extends to all who will be born and believe in Christ to the very end, the whole people of the saints who belong to the one city. That city is the body of Christ and Christ is its head... We know Him thus as the whole Christ, which means Christ in this universal sense, Christ with his Church. But He alone was born of the Virgin, and He alone is the Church's head, He who is the mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus.*" (Expositions of the Psalms 90, 2, 1)

**42.** St. Augustine carries the idea of God incarnate in Christ to its ultimate conclusion. Separation between God and man is not Christian. God must be served in man. "*Christ is in need here, Christ is a stranger here, Christ is ill here, and Christ is confined to prison here.*" (Expositions of the Psalms 86, 5) This Augustinian vision of the whole Christ has a theological and humanising value of immeasurable worth and is the most profound reason for true solidarity. In a world of constant aggression and sophisticated violence, faith in human beings is as difficult as faith in God.

Another application of this idea involves the make-up of the Christian community. Pastors also form part of the flock. Jesus upset the existing model of authority and installed a circular one in its place: "*Just as we call all believers Christians because of the mystical chrism, we also call them all priests because they are members of the one Priest. The Apostle Peter calls them, 'a holy people, a royal priesthood.'*" (City of God 20, 10)

**43.** Finally, Jesus' humanity surpasses the barrier of His death, prolonging itself and establishing a presence wherever there is human breath. *"Do not be disappointed; do not grumble because you were born at a time when you could not see the Lord in the flesh. He has not, in fact, deprived you of this privilege and honour: 'When you did it,' he says, 'to one of the least of mine, you did it to me.'"* (Sermon 103, 2)

This understanding of the whole Christ results in an unconditional pledge for humanity. No-one is excluded for *"you are one person and your fellows are many; because, first, you must not consider your fellows as brothers, kinsmen or legal relatives. Because everyone is in fellowship with every other person... nothing is closer than one person to another."* (On Christian Discipline 3, 3) Mercy and compassion must reach wherever anyone has touched the lowest depths of poverty: *"Carry out, O Christian judge, the duty of a loving father; be angry at wickedness in such a way that you remember to be humane."* (Letter 133, 2)

#### - THE CHURCH

**44.** The historical continuation of Christ is the Church. Christ cannot be understood without the Church and the Church cannot be understood without Christ. The passage of the centuries and the imprints of so many human hands have darkened the clear and true image of the Church. Only from a position of faith in Jesus Christ can the reality of the Church be understood. As an expression of the whole Christ, the Church relates to both the head and body. Consequently, the real Church we see, and which we are a part of today, is one in which there is both chaff and grain. *"We have often said, and continue to repeat it, that there are both chaff and grain in the Church. Nobody must expect all the chaff to disappear before the threshing time. Even if tired of putting up with sinners, nobody should abandon the threshing floor before the threshing is done... Anyone who looks at the threshing floor from a distance thinks that there is nothing there but chaff. Unless we look more carefully, and stretch out a hand, and blow on it so that our breath separates them, it is difficult to distinguish the grains"* (Expositions of the Psalms 25, 2, 5).

The Church in heaven and the Church on earth are one and the same Church. In her development in this world, she is the mother who embraces and who, in the face of all manner of sin, never forgets her roots of mercy; (Sermon 352, 9) she is a lodging house for the wayfarer where the injured may be healed (See, Homily on the Gospel of St. John 41, 13).

**45.** Modern theology, in keeping with ancient theology, emphasises the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church. *"What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the body of Christ, which is the Church. The Holy Spirit does in the whole Church what the soul does in all the parts of one body."* (Sermon 267, 4) This view of the Church does not exclude the possibility of an institutional framework. The convictions of faith cannot be maintained without a minimum of institutionalisation but all organisational aspects must be constantly enlivened by the power of the Spirit. This relationship, charism-institution, is a twofold vision that is of vital necessity.

Many modern-day men and women, especially the young, stumble over the Church as if she were an obstacle to their faith. Nobody with any knowledge of history could say that in St. Augustine's time it was easy to love the Church because of the exemplary nature of all her members. Yet, St. Augustine accepts and loves the Church of his day. *"Let us love the Lord our God and let us love the Church; Him as a Father and her as a mother."* (Expositions of the Psalms 88, 2, 14) *"Love the*



*Church, as she engenders you for eternal life.*" (Sermon 344, 2) *"We too, then, receive the Holy Spirit if we love the Church."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 32, 8) In the whole Christ, the head cannot be separated from the limbs. *"The body of Christ is whole and complete on the cross in the hands of his persecutors but in the hands of Christians his body, the Church, is not whole."* (Expositions of the Psalms 33, 2, 7) *"The Church speaks in Christ and Christ in the Church; the body speaks in the Head and the Head in the body."* (Expositions of the Psalms 30, 2, 1, 4)

**46.** The Church of history is the pilgrim Church, the Church walking on the earth, even though her gaze and heart are fixed on the Lord Jesus. This Church is visible, above all, in the community and the face of the Church is the community that shares a single heart and a single mind.

An exemplary model for the Church may be found in the Acts of the Apostles. The followers of Jesus *"had everything in common...and distribution was made to each as anyone had need."* (Acts 4, 32.35) All felt united as children and brothers in a single family. *"And they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."* (Acts 2, 42) The opening and closing greetings of the Pauline letters enable us to catch a glimpse of those primitive communities. Differences do not count, all participate (See, 1 Corinthians 14, 24-31) in accordance with the gifts that each has received. (See, 1 Corinthians 14, 26)

**47.** The experience of communities is inseparable from the Church, communities with open doors and centred on Christ, where the radical and many-faceted reality of the children of God is lived, where faith in Jesus is shared, where the Word of God is welcomed and where concrete gestures of service bear witness to love. These communities are the human and visible face of the Church. The presence of Jesus Christ is ensured; *"for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."* (Mt. 18, 20)

Community occupies a preferential place in St. Augustine's life and thought. It is one of his passions. The journey of Augustinian spirituality is a journey to be followed with our brothers and sisters, where the final goal is the common encounter with God. In the meantime we work with others and for others in the world. There the City of God is built.

#### - COMMITMENT IN THE WORLD: JUSTICE, PEACE AND SOLIDARITY

**48.** For all their nobility, social and political actions do not mark the limit of the lay faithful's essential or characteristic nature. St. Augustine proposes to all Christians the utopia of the City of God, a project that embraces, at one and the same time, history and eschatology.

Christians must recognise their own citizenship. *"We must know what Babylon is, this city by which we are enslaved and also be aware of Jerusalem, to where we long to return."* (Expositions of the Psalms 64, 1) This is an idea that is strongly rooted in Augustinian teaching, even though today we must ignore the geographical place names (See, Sermon 214, 11; On the Catechising of the Uninstructed 19, 31; On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis 11, 15; Expositions of the Psalms 9, 1, 8). The builders of the two cities are egotism and the love of God (See, Expositions of the Psalms 64, 2).

Human beings and cities are defined by their loves, *"Love of God creates the city of Jerusalem and love of the world, the city of Babylon. All of us must ask ourselves what we love and we shall discover to which city we belong."* (Expositions of the Psalms 64, 2) An opposition exists between the two forms of love that define the two cities. *"These two loves, of which one is good and the other bad, one social and the*

*other private, one that looks to the common good...and the other that subordinates the collective to the individual through an excessive desire to dominate, one faithful to God and the other an enemy of God, one calm and the other agitated, one peaceful and the other belligerent...These two loves serve as emblems of the two cities between which the human race is divided.”* (On The Literal Interpretation of Genesis 11, 15, 20)

**49.** Of course, the concept of the City of God goes beyond the organisation of the human city. The City of God comes from God. It walks in God and moves towards God. *“In regard to humankind I have made a division, on the one side there are those who live according to human desires, on the other those who live according to God. I have said that, in a deeper sense, we may speak of two cities, or two human societies.”* (City of God 15, 1, 1)

The Church and the City of God are not identical but St. Augustine places this city in the Church. *“We know that Zion is the City of God. The city of Jerusalem is called Zion. ... However, it is clear that Zion is the City of God; and what is the City of God if not holy Church?”* (Expositions of the Psalms 98, 4) So, to speak of the Church presupposes a here and a beyond, a today and a final tomorrow. This city is both a divine and a human construction; a city that is raised in a world of contrasts because the infinite manoeuvring of two contrasting loves infuses human history with drama.

The great aspiration of the City of God is the unification of human and social values, the recovery – by humanity and by nature – of their inexhaustible mystery, the affirmation of a loving presence that embraces and supports us. In other words, it is the formation of the whole Christ, head and body united in faith and love, the reconciliation of human beings with God, with themselves and with the world which, at one and the same time, is present commitment and future hope.

**50.** Placed in a secular context, the shining utopia of the City of God gives rise to political theology in its widest and truest sense. Attempts to create a more just social order and dreams of creating a new society inevitably collide with the disordered love of those who feel the world belongs to them. We cannot escape from this circle of poverty by our own efforts. The solution is not to be found in a widespread spirituality that seeks to escape the problems of our society. For this reason in their desire for freedom and a better future, human beings transcend the social dimension and seek salvation in God.

From the viewpoint of the City of God history – however turbulent it may appear – may be read providentially. In this way, Christian life becomes a pilgrimage of people with Christ at its head, a commitment to the world and a path of hope: *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* (Romans 5, 5)

The mission of the Christian in the world is to sow the seeds of the hope that does not fail to build the City of God with the strength of His love that abides within us and that is the grace of the Spirit. Without help, we cannot decisively choose the side of justice or cure the sickness that prevents us being ourselves and that makes us slaves of our own egotism and of the workings of a world based on falsehood.

Yet, it is our good fortune that Jesus Christ, the divine physician, has cured us and continues to heal our sickness with His love. He has not left us orphans. He gave us *“another who consoles”* who renews with us the face of the earth (Psalm 103) and who is the true foundation of the new justice and of peace. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can believe in the development of the City of God,

here and now: *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship.... We are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”* (Romans 8, 15-17) Thus, strengthened by this grace we become builders, not of utopian dreams but of a Kingdom without end.

**51.** The clash between the two loves that attempt to build two different cities – which is the great drama of history – is unchained in the human heart. This is the complex theme of freedom in the face of continual conflict between contrasting desires. Lying as it does at the root of mistaken decisions; some people consider freedom with suspicion as the root of much evil.

Nevertheless, St. Augustine sees freedom as a great human good (See, *On Grace and Free Will* 1, 15, 31), it is a gift of God (See, *On Grace and Free Will* 3, 18, 52), and he defines it as the will’s capacity to decide because it is its own master (See, *On Grace and Free Will* 3, 3, 8). Given that we as human beings were made for good, we are not equally free when we incline toward evil. The choice of good signifies true freedom while the choice of evil is frustration and slavery. *“Slavery is always bitter.... Do not be afraid of slavery to this Lord of ours.... Slavery to the Lord is freedom: where we serve in love, not under coercion, this is free servitude.”* (*Expositions of the Psalms* 99, 7) Thus, maximum freedom will be achieved through a blessed life, for *“it was proper, through divine endowment, the first step should be a freedom not to sin, and the last a freedom even from the power of sin.”* (*City of God* 22, 30, 3)

St. Augustine’s ideas on freedom arise from his own experience. He feels himself to be hounded by an evil that presents itself in many attractive guises and at the same time he senses the weakness of his own will and the frailty of his freedom. He experiences the contradiction between the incapacity to do good that pushes him towards despondency and the peace that comes from accomplishing God’s will (See, *Confessions* 13, 9, 10) because it coincides with our deepest aspirations. This is the harmony and unity we experience within ourselves when we are borne by love (See, *Confessions* 13, 9, 10).

**52.** On the world stage, which is God’s work and the human home, justice, solidarity and peace are three Christian imperatives – of a marked Augustinian character – that are also a call to all men and women of good will, The more we walk in the ways of the Spirit the greater is the urgency to transform material reality according to the Kingdom of God. We must not confuse the distancing of Christian life from the world – i.e., the contrast between the Spirit and everything that is opposed to God (See, 1 Corinthians 2, 12) – with the dehumanisation of Christian life. St. Augustine always felt himself to be a human being, one of many. (See, *Sermon* 232, 2)

Participating in the human condition is incompatible with ignoring the deepest cries of the poor and of so many people who suffer the effects of war and underdevelopment. The fight for justice, peace and solidarity is part of the evangelising mission of the Church, of the whole Church, with no distinction among her various members because she is a single historical subject and the lay faithful are not the only ones who are responsible for the world.

**53.** There has been talk of a culture of solidarity, of dialogue and of peace as prerequisites of the Christian conscience, but interventions in the field of social policy are wavering. In St. Augustine’s day, the bishop was in direct contact with the

daily throng on the streets because he also acted as judge in addition to his ministerial functions. Where can we locate St. Augustine's attraction to justice? His idea of a justice is one that encompasses mercy: *"There can be no completion of justice if we have been backward and miserly in paying out mercy."* (Sermon 144, 4) *"Do not allow truth to hinder you from acting with mercy, or mercy to stand in the way of truth."* (Expositions of the Psalms 88, 1, 25) Or, more clearly, *"If justice is pronounced without mercy, it will find matter for condemnation in everyone."* (Expositions of the Psalms 147, 12) St. Augustine's realism brings him to state that *"the one who becomes 'overly righteous,' by such excess becomes unrighteous."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 95, 2)

Justice and peace are inseparable friends. *"Act justly and you will have peace, so that justice and peace will kiss. If you do not love justice you will not have peace. For these two virtues, justice and peace, love each other and they embrace, so that anyone who does justice finds peace kissing justice. These two are friends. You may perhaps want one without practising the other, for there is no one who does not want peace, though not everyone wants to act justly."* (Expositions of the Psalms 84, 12) Peace is broken when unity fails. *"It is those who tear our unity apart who do not love peace."* (Expositions of the Psalms 124, 10) For St. Augustine, peace is a synonym of harmony and order. *"Peace, in its final sense, is the calm of order. Order is an arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each of them is set in its proper place."* (City of God 19, 13, 1)

**54.** Solidarity is a fundamental aspect of Christian love; it is not possible to lack solidarity and to love Jesus Christ. This is the underlying motivation that gives consistency to the Augustinian concept of the communion of goods. St. Augustine confesses that he was particularly impressed by the text of Matthew 25, 31-46. *"I have sometimes reminded you of something, which I confess, has impressed me a lot in God's Scriptures and which I should regularly remind you about. I am asking you to think hard about what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself will say at the end of the world, when He comes in judgement. He will gather all the nations together in His presence, and divide humankind into two parts, placing some on the right hand, others on the left...."*

*My recommendation to you, my brothers and sisters; is to give earthly bread, and knock at the door of the heavenly bread. The Lord is bread. He said, 'I am the bread of life.' (Jn. 6, 35) How will He be able to give to you, if you do not give to the person in need? ...So while He is the Lord, the real Lord, and does not need our goods, all the same, He was ready to be hungry in His poor so that we could do something for Him. He said, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat. Lord, when did we see you hungry? Whenever you did it for one of these least of mine, you did it for me.. Again, to the others, 'When you failed to do it for one of the least of mine, you failed to do it for me.'" (Sermon 389, 5-6)*

**55.** In speaking of the communion of goods, St. Augustine shows himself to be radical, to the point that he affirms that *"it is like a fraud when you do not give to the needy what you do not need yourself."* (Sermon 206, 2) The practice of fasting, far from being privation, is sharing. *"First and foremost... remember the poor, so that what you withhold from yourselves by living more sparingly, you may deposit in the treasury of heaven. Let the hungry Christ receive what the fasting Christian receives less of. Let the self-denial of one who does it willingly become the support of the one who has nothing. Let the voluntary want of one who has plenty become the needed plenty of the person in want."* (Sermon 210, 10, 12) However poor he may be, nobody

can feel they are exempt from sharing what they have. *“Because you brought nothing here with you, you not are going to take anything away. Send above what you have acquired, and it will not be tossed away. Give it to Christ, because Christ wanted to get something from you here. If you give something to Christ, are you throwing it away?... He has put the kingdom of heaven up for sale, and fixed its price at a cup of cold water. When it is a poor person giving alms - then his alms should be a cup of cold water. If you have more you should give more.”* (Sermon 39, 6)

#### - DIALOGUE WITH CREATION

**56.** God, nature and humanity are not objects of passive contemplation; rather they represent, for all people, a call to communion. This is where the Augustinian vision of ecology or the relationship with the environment comes in. Above all in his Expositions of the Psalms, St. Augustine shows himself to be an acute observer of nature. He makes repeated references to creation and to agriculture. His are the subtle observations of one who captures the beauty of reality from the knowledge he has of himself. (See, On Order 1, 2, 3; Sermon 52, 17)

Creation is a great spectacle of light, beauty and harmony that speaks of God. (See, Sermon 241, 2; Sermon 293, 5) It is the work of the Trinity (See, Sermon 223A, 3; Sermon 52, 17) and no one can dispose of it arbitrarily or, still less, destroy it as if he were its all-powerful master. According to St. Augustine, the relationship between the dialogue of nature and human work means that the things that surround us cannot be alien from us. Some things must be enjoyed, others exist to be used and, finally, some things must be used and enjoyed. *“Using things, after all, appears to be one thing, enjoying them another. I mean we use things out of necessity, we enjoy them for fun. So He has given us these temporal things to use and Himself to enjoy. ... So set your heart there for enjoyment. He alone, quite rightly, suffices.”* (Sermon 177, 8, 9; See, Christian Doctrine 1, 3, 3-5 and 1, 4, 4)

This does not mean that we must despise objects or renounce the goods of the earth, rather it means giving them their just value. *“Let us use them as needed, not let our emotions cling to them. Treat them like a tavern for a traveller, rather than a mansion for a landowner. Stop for refreshment and then go on your way. You are on a journey.... and need board and lodging. Simply spend what is sufficient for this journey. Why weigh yourself down? Why carry too much on a short trip, things that do not help you reach the end so that, in fact, they become an even heavier burden for you at the road’s end?”* (Sermon 177, 2-3)

**57.** The world has traditionally been considered a negative reality. This concept leaves the laity without an abode of their own. This condemning judgement is the result of a partial vision – the hostility of evil, the prince of this world – that has given rise to the temptation to reduce confession of faith to a cultural context. The new concept of the world – a concept that also includes the human family and the surroundings of creation – leaves no room for a condemning judgement. Seen in this way, the world is essentially good, (Genesis 1, 31) made according to God’s wishes and left in our hands so that we might transform and enjoy it. The ever-present risk of being caught up by the beauty and delight of reality or by its torment and inexplicable contradictions still exist.

Following a philosophical digression, St. Augustine arrives at the conclusion that all created beings are good: *“It was made clearer to me that things prone to destruction are good, since this destructibility would be out of the question if they were supremely good or not good at all; because if they were supremely good they would be indestructible, whereas if they were not good at all, there would be nothing*

*in them that could be destroyed. Destruction is obviously harmful, and yet it can do harm only by diminishing the good.”* (Confessions 7, 12, 18)

A positive understanding of the world abandons the schism between matter and spirit and makes it possible for Christian spirituality to achieve convergence between the great themes that form daily life: human relations, work and political commitment. The impact of this new mentality has come to influence the most recent texts of the Church’s Magisterium: *“The world becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfil their Christian vocation.... Thus for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well”* (Christifideles laici 15).

In secular spirituality, existence, being and acceptance of the world establish a positive relationship of gratitude and responsibility. Gratitude arises, because the world is our home, a pleasurable theatre of life and a place of sanctity. Responsibility arises because taking part in the transformation of the world with the lucidity of faith, at times, requires a certain withdrawal.

#### IV. FOUNDATIONAL PROPOSITIONS OF AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY

The descriptions of the contents and imperatives of Augustinian spirituality that we have written about thus far may be summarized in several fundamental propositions:

4.1. THE PRIMACY OF JESUS CHRIST IN AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY (See, Confessions, book 7)

**58.** Christ is the one and only true teacher (See, Sermon 134, 1; The Teacher 14, 46). He is the Truth that dwells within human beings (See, Expositions of the Psalms 109, 36), the Lord of history (See, City of God 8), the homeland we are travelling toward (See, Sermon 92, 3), the physician capable of curing the sickness of sin (See, Sermon 63A, 2) and sustenance in the Word and the Eucharist (See, Sermon 56, 10; Sermon 227, 1). From this centrality of the figure of Jesus Christ may infer that Augustinian Fraternities, nourished by St. Augustine's own spirituality, have no other aim than to follow the path of the Christ of the Gospel together.

4.2. THE SOUL OF AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY IS CHARITY

**59.** *"Once for all, then, a brief precept is given to you: Love and do what you want.... Nothing but good can come from the root of love."* (Homily on the First Epistle of St. John 7, 8) *"Always be thinking the whole time, that one must love God and neighbour - God with the whole heart, with the whole soul and with the whole mind; and one's neighbour as oneself. Always think about them, reflect on them, observe them, practice them, and fulfil them. In terms of precept, the love of God comes first, but, in terms of practice the love of neighbour comes first."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 17, 8) Charity unites us to Christ and becomes a strong bond of fraternity: *"Your soul belongs not just to you but to all the brothers and sisters, whose souls are yours. Or rather whose souls are not souls along with yours but are one soul, the single soul of Christ."* (Letter 243 4) Charity draws us into a single love with differing shades, for God and for our neighbours. From this fountain of love, true justice, peace and solidarity spring forth.

4.3. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY FINDS NOURISHMENT IN THE BIBLE

**60.** The Word of God is both starting point and goal. Sacred Scripture is the book of spirituality, the mirror that enables us to become aware of our own reality. It is *"the voice that speaks every day."* (Sermon 45, 3) *"We would remind students of this venerable literature of what we said... But much more important than that, and supremely necessary, is that they pray for understanding."* (Christian Doctrine 3, 37, 56) *"How amazing is the profundity of your words! ...O my God, how amazingly deep they are. To look into that depth makes me shudder, but it is the shudder of awe, the trembling of love."* (Confessions 12, 14, 17)

As profound as it is enthralling (See, Confessions 12, 14, 17), the Word of God is spiritual nourishment and proclamation of good news that lays the foundations for the Kingdom of God in history. What God communicates through the Word is not His mystery, rather in revealing Himself he offers His communion and His life.

When St. Augustine underwent the process of conversion, an encounter took place with the Word of God that revealed to him a new form of life. Later, and especially as bishop, Scripture became the word he reflected upon and preached. St. Augustine did not hide the fact that understanding the message of the Bible can, at times, be difficult: *"But none should think they are cheated, where the divinely inspired text speaks obscurely. Where you are being shown the will of God, is where*

*it is speaking clearly - so cherish it there. Love it where it is advising you clearly. It is exactly the same in the obscure passages as it is in the open ones; exactly the same in the shadow as it is in the sun.*" (Sermon 45, 3)

#### 4.4. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY IS A CALL TO CONVERSION

**61.** We cannot overlook the wound of sin. We share in the misery of the beggar (See, On Order 1, 2, 3) but faith, hope and charity rebuild the Trinitarian image of God within the human being. The image is imperfect but it is, nonetheless, an image (See, The Trinity 10, 12, 19) that makes the search for a God a constant theme of life. (See, Soliloquies 1, 1-6; Confessions 1, 1, 1; Confessions 6, 16, 26)

This fragility of the human condition manifests itself in a ceaseless inner conflict that turns human existence into a permanent struggle, an uninterrupted path of conversion. The transformation of the world begins with the change of individual hearts. There is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. (See, *Evangelii nuntiandi* 18)

Today in many environments, the horizon of evangelisation is a world of indifference towards religion. Repetitive religious expression is rejected and, we can apply the apt phrase of St. Augustine to modern society, *"there is no one who does not want to understand, but not everyone wants to believe."* (Sermon 43, 4)

Evangelisation does not require special expertise in preaching techniques. It does not require one to be an expert communicator. It means announcing that *"which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched."* (1 Jn. 1, 1) The light of his or her message depends on the evangeliser's way of life. (See, Homily on the Gospel of St. John 19, 12)

#### 4.5. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY PROMOTES PRAYER

**62.** For St. Augustine, the supreme good is life with God and of God. (See, Letter 130, 7, 14) A happy life consists in loving God for His own sake and in loving ourselves and our neighbours for Him (See, Letter 130, 7, 14). This life with God calls for space and time dedicated to prayer.

We cannot conceive of a loving relationship that does not have time exclusively dedicated to the object of our love. We *"ought always to pray"* (Luke 18, 1). St. Augustine offers a reasonable and human interpretation of the words of Christ; one that may have particular impact in the lay environment because of the inevitable constraints of its varied and complex activity. He introduces the idea of identifying prayer and desire. Prayer is a dialogue of the heart, identified with desire or with love.

Constant prayer is continual desire, continual love. *"But can we be on our knees all the time, or prostrate ourselves continuously, or be holding up our hands uninterruptedly, that he bids us, 'Pray without ceasing'? If we say that these things constitute prayer, I do not think we can pray without ceasing. But, there is another kind of prayer that never ceases, an interior prayer that is desire.... If you do not want to interrupt your prayer, let your desire be uninterrupted. Your continuous desire is your continuous voice. You will only fall silent if you stop loving.... The chilling of charity is the silence of the heart and the blazing of love is the clamour of the heart."* (Expositions of the Psalms 37, 14)

**63.** All of life can be converted into continual praise of God: *"When you come to church to join others in singing a hymn, your voice must chant the praises of God. When you have sung as long as your strength allows, you go home; but then let*



*your soul continue to sing the praises of God. Perhaps you are busy with business: Let your soul praise God. Perhaps you are eating: Listen to the words of the Apostle, 'Whether you are eating or drinking, do everything for the glory God.' I even dare to say: When you are sleeping, let your soul bless the Lord. Let no memory of an evil deed awaken you, no planning of theft disturb you, no commitment to bribery trouble your rest."* (Expositions of the Psalms 102, 2)

Yet, nothing is further from Augustinian thought than undervaluing the time that needs to be dedicated to an explicit relationship with God: long, repetitive and profound periods dedicated exclusively to prayer and in the whole of life to live the equation, prayer = desire.

#### 4.6. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY IS AT THE SERVICE OF EVANGELISATION

**64.** *"If I did not pay out (the Word of God) but kept the money, the Gospel would terrify me."* (Sermon 339, 4) An interior life and reflection are preparation for receiving the nourishment of the Word, so that it may then be offered to others. *"I must have the greatest concern for the Church which has placed its trust in me. I am here to serve in whatever way that may benefit her, and I do not desire so much to preside over as to benefit her."* (Letter 134, 1)

Charity, the vital theoretic and practical focus of Christian spirituality and, as a consequence, of Augustinian spirituality, is translated into justice and solidarity. In this way charity is united to a new way of looking at reality and to a commitment to transform that reality according to God's design. (See, On Nature and Grace 69, 83; Sermon 142, 8, 9)

Evangelisation – the *fundamental duty of the People of God* (see, Vatican Council II, Decree *Ad gentes* 35) – is a clear Augustinian imperative. Concern for the mystical dimension or interior life should result in evangelising activity, according to the gifts that each individual has received from the Holy Spirit. *"Do not keep wisdom to yourselves. Receive the Spirit. It should be a spring within you, not a purse; something to be spent, not something to be shut up tight."* (Sermon 101, 6)

#### 4.7. AUGUSTINIAN SPIRITUALITY HAS A DEFINITE ECCLESIAL SIGNIFICANCE

**65.** The Church is the model for the new world renewed in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ, we can understand and evaluate the Church, which is His body. (Sermon 267, 4) To be the Church, to feel with the Church and to serve the Church are well-known foundations of Augustinian spirituality. *"We are servants of His Church, most of all of the weaker members, whatever members we join with in the same body."* (On the Work of Monks 29, 37) However, it is sometimes forgotten that the universal Church is present in particular Churches or dioceses; and if the Eucharist and announcing the Gospel are the two pillars upon which particular Churches are built, then this means participating in evangelising activity and not focusing more on group or individual interests than on the *"needs of Mother Church."* (Letter 48, 2-3)

To speak of the local Church is to speak of the whole diocesan community whose visible sign of unity is the bishop. In unity and collaboration with the hierarchy, as well as openness and dialogue with other communities within a wide-ranging joint pastoral ministry – the Augustinian Fraternity should never be seen as an alternative to the local Church, rather as a living cell of service, as yeast of renewal and as a public presence of that Church.

## V. BASIC ELEMENTS OF AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES

### 5.1. CHRISTIAN VOCATION

**66.** *“We are followers of Christ, not followers of Peter”* (Expositions of the Psalms 44, 23) is our primary vocation and comes before any other title. Put another way, we are first of all Christians, not Augustinians. God calls us, as men and women in a specific historical world, to integrate ourselves as a community into the Church and carry out a mission which is none other than evangelisation. *“Having been born consequently out of being sent, the Church in her turn is sent by Jesus. The Church remains in the world when the Lord of glory returns to the Father. She remains as a sign – simultaneously obscure and luminous – of a new presence of Jesus, of His departure and of His permanent presence. She prolongs and continues Him. And it is above all His mission and His condition of being an evangeliser that she is called upon to continue. For the Christian, community is never closed in upon itself.”* (Evangelii nuntiandi 15)

To become part of the People of God is a free choice. It is an undeserved and, in a certain way, surprising choice because we are neither the best nor the most capable. We share the helplessness and frailty of all human beings. Our most precious claim is that of having been chosen and, through Baptism, *“rooted and built up in Him.”* (Colossians 2, 6-7) As a result of our Baptism we feel attracted by the Spirit of love that pushes us to emerge from ourselves and open up to our neighbours by serving in community.

**67.** We cannot contemplate an Augustinian way of life without reference to the baptismal font and we cannot think of a Christian life that excludes community. St. Augustine presents us with the combinations: Christian faith – community and Christian faith – Church where we are pilgrims in the world and future inhabitants of a homeland *“where a friend is not lost, an enemy is not feared;... where no one is born, because no one dies; where no one makes greater progress, and no one falls away; where there is no hunger, no thirst, but fulfilment is immortality, and food is truth.”* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 30, 7)

Augustinian spirituality calls us to be men and women of the world in the heart of the Church, men and women of the Church in the heart of the world. A Church, home and mother (See, Expositions of the Psalms 85, 14; Homily on the Gospel of St. John 3, 1; Sermon 57, 2; Sermon 56, 14; Sermon 192, 2), that *“never loses her tenderness of heart.”* (Sermon 352, 3, 9) We wish to experience this Church as a place of communion and participation and, in her, to be the new people of the Beatitudes with no guarantee other than that of knowing ourselves to be loved and called by Jesus Christ. With a simple heart, we wish to be contemplative to discover the mystery and message of life, attentive to reading and interpreting the signs of the times, builders of peace and bearers of happiness and hope, because rebirth is always possible.

**68.** The lay faithful’s responsibility is to commit themselves to temporal reality in order to place that reality at the service of establishing the Kingdom of God. The world is the place where we work and where we must build the Kingdom. St. Augustine left us the blueprint for a city, the City of God, built on foundations of peace, justice and co-operation. Our faith is not an afterthought. It is the living and working presence of God in the political, social and family environments in which we move. To be Gospel leaven, we know that we must occupy our place in the world, patiently teach mercy and hold the firm conviction that people do not change when

they think they are condemned, but only when they feel themselves to be freely loved.

## 5.2. COMMUNITY VOCATION

**69.** In an environment where views supporting the private and intimate character of faith abound, Christian communities of lay faithful represent a place to develop alternative models of life. In the face of a society built upon functional and commercial relationships, Christian communities represent a new sensibility, a different way to relate to our fellow human beings.

The term community no longer belongs exclusively to religious language. It is now associated with both cultural and economic projects, even though in many cases we can see that people seem to be forgotten and minds are not always fixed on the Augustinian criterion of placing common interests before individual ones.

To speak of community is not to keep up with some fashion, or to be an artificial creation. From birth, human beings are drawn towards socialisation. The fullness of our being consists in loving. *“For by his innermost nature man is a social being; and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts”* (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 1, 12). In this way, the community responds to one of the deepest human aspirations and comes to embrace the whole of life. This applies to the matrimonial community and the lay community. It is a journey, a goal that can only be reached with a clear sense of belonging and by having sure attitudes of understanding, dialogue and participation. Thus, it is a dynamic and creative apprenticeship that never reaches its end.

**70.** Community is constructed on the basis of the individuals who compose it. *“We are not all gathered at once into a single city, the one people of God, but little by little and one by one as we come to believe. But as these things that are written take place in each of us individually they take place also in God’s people, for the people is made up of individual persons, not the other way around. Does a single human come into being from the people? No; but the people comes into being from the individual persons.”* (Expositions of the Psalms 106, 3) This means that the concept of community presupposes that each individual is the community itself and that, from their individuality, they live a common project.

Thanks to individuals the community can exist. The community results not from some marvellous design nor from cordial and friendly relations, but from the spirit of communion. *“We have indeed been called to harmony...this is what we should be striving to do.”* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 34, 10)

Structural and organisational human characteristics (especially the psychological) are important but it should not be forgotten that the great reason for creating interpersonal relations is to live *“intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.”* (Rule 1, 2) Vatican Council II also suggests a spiritual bonding in the family, *“what might be seen as the domestic Church,”* (*Lumen gentium* 2, 11) in addition to the ties of blood.

**71.** The ties of friendship are not sufficient to guarantee consistency and stability in community. Nor can we ignore that acceptance of others – that mutual exchange of freedom for us to be ourselves – and communication with a certain degree of depth, require a serious effort on everyone’s part.

Augustinian lay people do not simply seek friends in community, nor do they seek to create just another separate grouping, tailored to their own preferences and religious sensibilities. We form a community because that is where we can truly live

the spirituality of St. Augustine as a privileged means to know and express the Christian vocation. Yet we do this without forgetting that the point of reference for a community inspired in Augustinian thought is the Church-communion. This leads to openness and shared responsibility in the mission of the Church.

One of the laity's principal pastoral concerns is to avoid creating groups cloistered in a form of intimate and exclusive spirituality that distances them from temporal reality. The caution expressed by bishops meeting in Santo Domingo remains relevant: "*Ensure the laity do not reduce their activity to the inter-ecclesial sphere, encourage them to penetrate socio-cultural environments and to become there prime movers in the transformation of society in the light of the Gospel and of the Church's Social Doctrine.*" (IV General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Santo Domingo 1992, 98)

### 5.3. MISSIONARY VOCATION

**72.** If the Augustinian Fraternity is a cell within the Church, it must also necessarily be missionary in its character. "*In fact, evangelisation is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.*" (*Evangelii nuntiandi* 14) Apart from bringing itself closer to extinction, the community that closes on itself is not Christian.

Although the particular group which we belong to may be an Augustinian Fraternity, the point of reference remains the Church, the Kingdom of God, the world. This universal dimension makes the perspective broader and causes the community to take its place on the horizon of mission.

The self-understanding of faith as mission brings us to define the Christian community – and thus the Augustinian community – as a sign that expresses the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ. To move explicitly in the direction of the Church and of openness to the world is a true Augustinian commandment: "*So, proclaim Christ wherever you can, to whoever you can, however you can. What is demanded of you is faith, not eloquence; let faith speak through your mouth and Christ is speaking. You see, if there is faith in you, Christ is living in you. You heard the psalm: 'I have believed, therefore have I spoken.' It was impossible for him both to believe and to remain dumb. It is being ungrateful to the one who fills you, if you do not pour out; so the fuller you are, the more you ought to pour out*" (Sermon 260E, 2).

Consideration for missionary activity is a continual theme in the works of St. Augustine, especially in his sermons. "*However many people you can persuade, however many you can invite, summon, compel them to love God, He is fully there for all of them, and fully there for each of them*" (Sermon 179A, 4). For this reason – commenting on the prophet Ezekiel who felt urged by God to speak also to those who did not want to hear his voice (See, Ezek. 3, 5-7 and 33, 8-9) – he proclaims before the faithful of Hippo that he does not want to save himself without them: "*I shall be in a position, not of great danger but of certain ruin, if I have kept quiet. ... What do I live for, if not with this intention that we should all live together with Christ? This is my desire, this is my honour, this is my most treasured possession, this is my joy, and this is my pride and glory. But if you do not listen to me even though I have not kept quiet, then I will deliver my soul. But I do not want to be saved without you.*" (Sermon 17, 2)

**73.** Evangelisation is a result of an encounter with Jesus Christ. "*An encounter with the Lord brings about a profound transformation in all who do not close themselves off from Him. The first impulse coming from this transformation is to*

*communicate to others the richness discovered in the experience of the encounter.*" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, 1999, 68) Thus, *"If He does not pour anything into you, you will be bone dry."* (Sermon 284, 1)

In St. Augustine's time, the Catholic Church lived moments of confrontation with other, openly belligerent, groups. Proclamation of the evangelical message always comes across new and different obstacles. The assignment is clear: *"We must not despair; pray, proclaim the truth, love."* (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 6, 24)

## VI. I SIGNS OF THE AUGUSTINIAN IDENTITY OF A SECULAR FRATERNITY

**74.** The Acts of the Apostles and Augustinian spirituality are the sources that inspire the Secular Augustinian Fraternity. The basic model for St. Augustine as he thought out his ideal community was the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, especially verses 32 through 35. His dream was to recreate the style of life of those first Christians. The Church of Jerusalem was formed by men and women of faith who had a single heart and a single soul; a particular characteristic of the group was that they had everything in common (See, Acts of the Apostles 4, 32-35).

The other source of our inspiration is, of course, Augustinian spirituality. The Bible and St. Augustine are the points of reference for the Augustinian Fraternity. This twofold view must never be forgotten for fear that the group might lose its identity.

Regarding Augustinian spirituality, some indication has already been given of a programme outlining the Augustinian way of living the experience of Christian faith. In what follows, we will limit ourselves to highlighting certain points that, on the basis of that spirituality, characterise an Augustinian Fraternity.

### 6.1. A COMMUNITY CENTRED ON CHRIST

**75.** Christians, and therefore all Christian communities, are identified as followers of Jesus Christ. He is the “*salvation sent by God*” (Expositions of the Psalms 49, 31) who reveals us to the Father and calls us to fraternity. “*He is the fountain of life, approach, drink. He is light, approach, receive it, and see. If He does not pour anything into you, you will be bone dry.*” (Sermon 284, 1)

Faith and following Jesus Christ are the result of our Baptism. To return Christ to His central place in evangelisation and catechesis is nothing other than to return to the true dimension of Christian proclamation. Spirituality must follow this same programme. (See, John Paul II’s Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990; Final Document of the IV General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Santo Domingo 1992; Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 1994)

In speaking of the need for Christ, St. Augustine is clarity itself: “*Whoever imagines that he is bearing fruit by himself is not on the vine, and whoever is not on the vine is not in Christ, and whoever is not in Christ is not a Christian*” (Homily on the Gospel of St. John 81, 2). “*With a steadfastly persevering love cling to Christ, who has been manifested to Jews and Gentiles as the cornerstone.*” (Sermon 200, 3, 4)

A truly original name which St. Augustine gives to the evangeliser is mother of Christ: “*You became children, become mothers too. You were the mother’s children when you were baptised, then you were born as members of Christ. Bring whomever you can along to the bath of Baptism, so that just as you became children when you were born, you may likewise be able to become mothers of Christ as well by bringing others along to be born.*” (Sermon 72A, 8). Like Mary, we carry Christ in our hearts (See, On Holy Virginity 3, 3) and so we experience God’s salvation. “*There is no other name under heaven by which we are to be saved.*” (Acts 4:12)

**76.** Jesus Christ Himself is man as God conceived him, the perfect man who proclaims universal love and announces the Father and His Kingdom as the only thing that has any importance. “*He has done all things well,*” (Mark 7, 37) and so His life represents an unblemished page for humanity. In a phrase that went beyond the meaning of his words, Pilate cried “*Ecce homo*” – here is the man – (John 19, 5). Apart from being gospel and revelation of God, Jesus Christ is also revelation of man. God gives human beings their destiny: Jesus Christ, centre of history and

exemplary model for all humanity, to use an Augustinian expression: “*All people are Adam... all people are Christ.*” (Expositions of the Psalms 70, 2, 1)

## 6.2. A COMMUNITY THAT STUDIES THE BIBLE

**77.** Mistaken attempts have been made to distance faith from thought. Those who do not dare to think about their own creed run the risk of living their religion childishly and irresponsibly. St. Augustine reflected ceaselessly on the contents of his faith, constantly studying Sacred Scripture in the conviction that “*those things which our faith holds and which reason in whatever way has traced out are fortified by the testimonies of the divine Scriptures.*” (On the Nature of Good 24) So, “*a man speaks with more or less wisdom just as he has made more or less progress in the knowledge of Scripture.*” (On Christian Doctrine 4, 5, 7)

An ecclesial community must remain attentive to knowledge of the true message of the Word of God. “*Love understanding very much, because even the holy scriptures themselves, which exhort us to have faith before the understanding of important realities, cannot be useful to you unless you correctly understand them.*” (Letter 120, 3, 13)

To marginalise biblical studies would mean forgetting that the Bible is the fundamental sustenance of Christian spirituality and ignoring St. Augustine’s own testimony that “*there lies hidden so great a depth of wisdom, not only in the words by which they are stated in that way but also in the realities that are to be understood, that those who are the oldest, the most intelligent, and the most ardent with the desire to learn, experience what the same scripture says in another passage, ‘When a human being has come to the end, he is then at the beginning’.*” (Letter 137, 1, 3) This may still have validity for justifying and encouraging continual formation.

One of the most pressing pastoral duties of the Church – one that must stimulate all her members – is a serious study of the contents of Christian faith. The dialogue between faith and culture and the incarnation of faith in different cultural models are tasks that cannot be delayed. Formation is the nutritional source of spirituality. It brings people to live according to the Spirit and qualifies them for the mission.

## 6.3. A PRAYERFUL AND CELEBRATORY COMMUNITY

**78.** Overlooking prayer and celebration has caused some communities to turn into dialogue and discussion groups. The whole remains incomplete if a community does not have time for contemplation and celebration. The Bible, studied in depth day after day, is celebrated in the liturgy, especially in the sacraments.

St. Augustine was one of the greatest men of prayer of all time. The Confessions are the prayer of a man who recognises with gratitude the saving action of God in his life. “*Late have I loved You, Beauty, so ancient, and so new, late have I loved You! Lo, You were within, but I was outside, seeking there for You.... You were with me, but I was not with You.... You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; You flared, blazed, banished my blindness; You lavished your fragrance, I gasped, and now I pant for You; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst; You touched me, and I burned for Your peace.*” (Confessions 10, 27, 38)

**79.** The great men and women of prayer in the Bible – Moses, Abraham, Samuel, Mary, etc. – held history in their hands. Their prayer formed part of life. It blossomed from everyday existence and responded to real-life situations.

It is dangerous to speak of prayer-contemplation on the one hand and action-commitment on the other. If it lacks a contemplative dimension, the best missionary activity is no more than a human project. In the same way, contemplation that is not embodied in a historical reality, because it lacks incarnation, is not Christian either.

Prayer is the heart and soul of the community. It creates a climate in which God is present, a climate of equality, of forgiveness and of gratitude that draws interpersonal bonds tighter. Prayer must give priority to the needs of others over our own. "*Prayer for a brother is more pleasing to God when it is offered as a sacrifice of love.*" (Letter 20, 2)

**80.** Apart from being a group of people, an Augustinian Fraternity is also a liturgical assembly. The liturgy summons us to live the Gospel, to take it into the world and to find in celebration the strength and motivation for this. The focus of the liturgical and pastoral activity of the Church is the Eucharist.

Just as the Eucharist represents and builds up the Church, it also represents and constructs the community. Above all, the Eucharist is a sign of unity - unity of the Church and, thus, unity of the community. "*How is bread made? It is ground, mixed into dough, baked.... Just as bread is made with many grains brought together and mixed by using water, in the same way the single body of Christ is created bread by harmony and love.... Notice how the combination of many grains has become a single loaf of bread, in the same way, you must be one body by loving one another, holding one and the same faith, one and the same hope, an undivided love.*" (Sermon 229A, 2)

Eucharistic communion also creates a human community that breaks down barriers and integrates legitimate differences in love. The great sacrament of love is the Eucharist; yet true love is not separate from justice, love for God always walks hand in hand with love for others. (See, Expositions of the Psalms 25, 1, 12) "*Great charity is great justice and perfect charity is perfect justice.*" (On Nature and Grace 70, 84)

#### 6.4. A FRATERNAL AND UNITED COMMUNITY

**81.** In the Church, the way has slowly been opened to the hope-giving notion of small communities. One of the risks of the community is closing around the circle of its immediate acquaintances. In order to be able to speak of a fraternity – in addition to the bonds of friendship and communion – Jesus Christ must be present. The community is not the result of the commitment of certain individuals who take the firm decision to come together; rather it is a gift from God that stands above all human efforts.

**82.** A community may call itself Christian, and especially Augustinian, if it manages to stand up to the test of solidarity, a solidarity that translates into a significant preference for the poor and the marginalised. St. Augustine is quite clear when he says "*The overabundance of the rich is necessary to the poor. If you hold onto overabundance, then, you are keeping what belongs to someone else.*" (Expositions of the Psalms 147, 12)

In a communion of goods, those who receive and give are both beneficiaries. "*Rich and poor are two things opposed to each other. But they are also two things needed by each other ... The rich were made for the poor, and the poor were made for the rich.... The poor are the way to heaven, by which one comes to the Father. So begin to provide for them, if you do not want to lose the way. Start in this life to unshackle the chains by which your inheritance restrains you. To ensure free access*



*to heaven, throw away your burden of wealth, throw away your voluntary chains, and throw away all the annoying business and the anxieties that have been leaving you no peace all these years.... Give something on earth to Christ for him to pay you back in heaven.... The present life is fragile and always on the edge of death. Nobody can stay here and we are all obliged to continue on. We come without wanting to and we go against our will.... Yet, if we send something along in advance, we will not find a chilly reception or poor hospitality. You see, what we give to the poor, we are sending on ahead of us; but whatever we snatch at or grab, we leave behind here.” (Sermon 367, 3)*

It is no excuse to say that we live in a privileged area, far from the poor areas that are part of all our cities. *“You will discover poverty in many servants of God, as long as you really want to discover it. But you do not, of course. You eagerly seize on the excuse, ‘We did not know.’ That is why you fail to discover it.” (Expositions of the Psalms 103, 3, 10)*

St. Augustine’s marked sense of community and the ideal of the first Christian community in Jerusalem led him to criticise private property. *“Many people have no interest in making a place for the Lord; they seek their own interests, love their own possessions, rejoice in their own power, and are greedy for private property. Anyone who wants to make a place for the Lord must take the opposite line. He or she should rejoice not in what is privately owned but in what is common to all.... Brothers and sisters, let us keep clear of private possessions; or, if we cannot renounce possession, let us beware of our attachment to them. Then we shall make a place for the Lord.” (Expositions of the Psalms 131, 5-6)*

## 6.5. AUGUSTINIAN COMMUNITY

**83.** At first glance, it may seem redundant to say that one of the signs of the identity of an Augustinian Fraternity is the fact that it is Augustinian; yet such precision is by no means superfluous if interpreted in a twofold sense: It means, on the one hand, that the fraternity finds inspiration in Augustinian spirituality and aims to live it with sincerity and, on the other hand, that it is part of the Augustinian family and maintains a close relationship with the nearest Augustinian religious community.

Augustinian inspiration is both a starting point and, at the same time, a perennially unfinished project. The relationship with the Augustinian community as a whole may be placed in the framework of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (John Paul II, 1996): *“We may say that... a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.” (54)* The religious community and the lay community are concrete expressions of ecclesial communion in which each state of life, and each individual, complements one another in the fraternity generated by a single Baptism, a Baptism in which religious consecration also has as its roots.

**84.** Rooted in the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II, the present commitment, to create a living and shared ecclesial community, has led to the discovery of the lay vocation. This vocation is opening new paths of consecration and, above all, of following Jesus Christ by meditating on the different forms of Christian spirituality that are the patrimony of the whole Church, and not just of a particular group.

Different charisms can come together in a single form of spirituality; for example, the participation of religious and lay faithful in Augustinian spirituality. This same spirituality – which in no way means appropriating the life of the laity, but rather offering the evangelical potential of Augustinian spirituality as a gift of the Spirit that

enriches the whole Church – constitutes a strong bond, one that is called to make itself visible through concrete signs.

**85.** The works entrusted to Augustinians – parishes, sanctuaries, schools, missions, residences, etc. – are means of relating with many persons. Some of these are involved directly in those institutions and others at one point in their lives encounter St. Augustine and feel attracted to his teaching or life-giving discoveries. The appeal of friendship, interiority, or search for truth evokes, oftentimes, interest in the Augustinian world.

The following are the individuals who, through different routes, may manifest their desire, or accept the invitation, to enter into the orbit of Augustinian spirituality. First, there are those who perform tasks within territories managed by the Augustinians (educators, catechists, co-workers in the various parish activities). Here the sharing of work results in the sharing of spirituality and mission. Secondly, there are the persons who are the beneficiaries of such work. While in parish work the evidence of this desire is difficult to prove, in the education field, on the contrary, this is easily noticeable among the parents, alumni, etc.

**86.** New and different relationships inevitably arise between lay faithful and religious. In this way, religious come to be present in Augustinian Fraternities and lay faithful come to be present in religious communities. (See, *Vita consecrata* 56) On the basis of our two contrasting vocations we, religious and laity, can live our single baptism, our identical mission and our one spirituality. The forms participation take – in coexistence and in the celebration of faith – will respond to the particular circumstances of each case. We are facing a triple challenge of communion, difference and shared responsibility, and we should not forget that a single spirituality – Augustinian spirituality – exists in different forms of living the single Christian vocation.

We are starting down a path that will bring us face to face with the challenge of new relationships within the Church. In order for communion and shared responsibility to become living realities, a path of true conversion must be followed. The result will be the achievement of a more complete and coherent image of the Church and answers to the great questions of our time, through the combined offering of different gifts. (See, *Vita consecrata* 54).

For the Feast of Pentecost of the Jubilee Year 2000, the Prior General of the Order, Miguel Ángel Orcasitas published a letter entitled: *“We are a community of brothers and sisters who live with the People of God”* (Rome, 11 June 2000, Prot. No. 211/2000). He wrote: *“All of us, religious and laity, must open ourselves to the process of change that is stirring in the Church. Augustinian spirituality creates an atmosphere of communion, of participation, of freedom. Out of fear of losing these gifts in hazardous operations, we could start to gather prejudices and become unfaithful to our spirit”*.

In the same letter he said: *“In no community should the integration of the laity into its activities come about through necessity; still less so for an Augustinian community, although it is true that sociology accelerates the time for reflection and operational decisions. The image of the Church handed down to us by Vatican II as ‘People of God’ re-establishes the ministry of the hierarchy as a service and invites lay faithful to participate in the triple function of Christ: prophetic, priestly and royal”*.

## VII. LAY FAITHFUL IN THE AUGUSTINIAN FAMILY

87. Belonging to an *Augustinian Lay Fraternity* presupposes knowledge of the laity's place in the Augustinian family. It is, then, worth our while to bear certain historical criteria faithfully in mind. That each member has his or her place does not mean the existence of a hierarchy, rather it is a clarification of vocation and ministries. "*The whole Augustinian Family is, in accordance with the Apostolic See, composed of four branches or parts: Brothers under the jurisdiction of the Prior General, Sisters of contemplative life, Religious congregations of apostolic life and secular fraternities, Societies that bear the name and follow the Magisterium of St. Augustine*" (OSA Constitutions, 44).

### **RELIGIOUS**

**AUGUSTINIANS.** (Identified by the letters OSA, Order of St. Augustine).

They consider St. Augustine as spiritual Father, teacher and guide. From him they receive not only their Rule and their name but also their doctrine and spirituality (See, Orcasitas, M.A., 750 Years of Service to the Church. Rome, 16 December 1993).

The Order of St. Augustine exists within the Church as an *apostolic fraternity* (OSA Constitutions 7). It receives from St. Augustine the model of fraternity that the Apostles themselves lived, and from the Church the mission of the apostolate. These two complementary aspects, one interior the other exterior, define the Augustinians.

Their apostolic presence has many different aspects and emphasises, in particular, the world of culture, parochial activity and missions.

**AUGUSTINIAN NUNS.** (Sisters of contemplative life).

They hold a special place in the Augustinian Order. Their identifying characteristic – the one that gives them their name – is contemplation. This contemplative dimension is expressed through the liturgy, communion in fraternal love, prayer, reading the Scriptures and work, both manual and intellectual. With their lives and mission, they bear witness to God's dominion over history and contribute through a mysterious apostolic fruitfulness, to the growth of the People of God (See, *Vita consecrata* 8).

### **ASSOCIATED CONGREGATIONS**

There are many congregations, mostly of nuns, associated with the Order. Each of them has its own founder and its own special charism and each has its own Constitutions. They follow the Rule of St. Augustine and also consider him to be their spiritual Father. They constitute a treasure for the whole Augustinian family and they themselves benefit from the spiritual wealth of the Order.

### **LAITY**

#### **FRATERNITY OF CONSECRATED LIFE "COMMUNIO"**

Their members are lay people but are consecrated by virtue of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

#### **AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES**

These are composed of secular Augustinians and, as the term secular suggests, they are lay people. They represent the most numerous and most flexible grouping.

Their organisation has been purposely given less space in the text of this guidebook. We have given preference to highlighting – as a common factor of Lay Augustinian Fraternities – spirituality, and not the development of a fully defined legal framework.

#### 7.1. *COMMUNIO*: A LAY AUGUSTINIAN FRATERNITY OF CONSECRATED LIFE

**88.** This forms part of the Augustinian Order according to the norms of the Constitutions of the Order (48) and has its own Statutes and structures (See, OSA Prior General's Decree, 31 July 1991, Prot. N. 261/91). The name "*COMMUNIO*" (communion) expresses the fundamental objective of being an instrument of communion, of fraternity and of solidarity within the Church and within society, in accordance with the Augustinian ideal of being "*intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.*" (Rule 1, 2)

It follows the guidelines for *new forms of consecrated life* laid down by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata, with new characteristics compared to those of traditional foundations* (62).

The members of *COMMUNIO* are consecrated lay people who follow Jesus Christ, with St. Augustine as their guide. As laity, they live their secular state in their own social and ecclesial environment. They consecrate themselves to God and the cause of the Kingdom through the evangelical counsels to follow Jesus Christ more closely and to become a leaven that contributes to the sanctification of earthly reality.

**89.** The *COMMUNIO* Fraternity is divided into three sections:

1) *Male and female Consecrated Augustinians*

Men and women who consecrate themselves through perfect chastity. They may live alone, in their families or in small communities. Establishing these communities and approving the appropriate norms is the duty of the Prior General of the Order of St. Augustine.

2) *Augustinian Families*

Married couples who wish to live their family life according to the evangelical counsels. Both spouses must be members simultaneously.

3) *Young people for Christ*

They live a consecrated evangelical life temporarily as a preparation for future commitments in their lives. They must be over 18 and under 25 years of age.

**90.** *COMMUNIO* is structured as local Fraternities that are formed, wherever possible, alongside an existing Augustinian religious community (of monks, nuns or religious who are active in the world). Each of these Fraternities has a leader, a council and a religious assistant appointed by the Prior General.

The path towards consecration includes various stages of formation and scrutiny until perpetual vows are made. It also defines a canonical framework for withdrawal from the Fraternity.

In the same way, the rites and formulas of consecration are stipulated, as are the form of government of the Fraternity, the frequency of meetings, moments of community prayer, spiritual exercises etc. (See, Statutes of the Lay Augustinian Fraternity of Consecrated Life *COMMUNIO*).

*COMMUNIO* can also have “*associated*” members. In other words, men and women who, for whatever reason, cannot make vows but who still wish to live in the spirit of the Fraternity and, as far as possible, to participate in its life and activities.

## 7.2. AUGUSTINIAN LAY FRATERNITIES: SECULAR AUGUSTINIANS

**91.** Composed of lay people – men and women – who, called to live the community dimension of Christian faith, choose to make the Gospel incarnate in their lives, following the inspiration of Augustinian spirituality.

They do this as Christians who are committed to the project God has for history and for the human race, as upholders of the heritage of St. Augustine, united to the Augustinian family with its world-wide following, and as witnesses to the values that constitute the Augustinian vision of man and of Christian life.

The arena in which they live and evangelise is none other than the world itself: the family, the workplace and culture, the world in which the history of salvation is created, the place of human and divine freedom.

They have their own Statutes which are approved by the Prior General and which are consistent with each group’s particular cultural, social or geographic circumstances.

## VIII. FACTORS COMMON TO AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES AND SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

### 8.1. THE CALL AND THE FIRST STEPS

**92.** The initiative may arise from an Augustinian religious community or from a group of lay faithful. Wherever there is an Augustinian religious community, there exists a cell of Augustinian spirituality that manifests itself through liturgy, work, common life etc., and which should be seen as an opportunity of introducing into the human environment in which the community is located the possibility of sharing in the same spirituality beyond the confines of consecrated life.

The idea of forming a community can also arise from the laity. In both cases, there are a number of important basic points: 1) Defining, clearly from the outset, the nature of the group. 2) Linking it to an Augustinian religious community. 3) Appointing an Augustinian to oversee the welfare of the group. 4) Ensuring the presence of a number of mature and responsible individuals to direct the formation of the community and its structures.

**93.** Why do some community projects fail? There are many reasons, but they can be summed up in three points: Lack of definition of the group itself, Heterogeneity among its members (in terms of age, ideas, expectations etc.) and a Lack of commitment to building up the community.

Patience should be exercised with people, but we should not forget that growth and participation processes must be stimulated. The community is neither a personal therapy group nor a refuge, and an attitude of permanent passivity must be uncompromisingly rejected.

Large groups must be avoided because the intention is not to organise conferences on the Bible or on St. Augustine or dialogues on truth and the possibility of experiencing it. The group's purpose is to know and live the sacrament of Baptism from the perspective of Augustinian spirituality. We meet in order to share the best part of life: faith and friendship. Faith is the great gift given to us by God. Friendship is the most precious thing we ourselves can give.

**94.** Faith and its community expression also require an atmosphere of trust, of friendship and of freedom. This can be blocked if the size of the group surpasses certain limits.

There are groups that, following an enthusiastic start, soon fall prey to the disorientation and fatigue of seeking to advance without a planned programme. Just as it would be foolish to construct a house without a plan, it also would be foolish to start a group project without establishing an agenda, objectives and activities. The difficulties are greater when there is no program to define the different stages. People ask themselves: What will the next step be? Are we leading a truly Christian life?

### 8.2. CONTENTS OF A MODEL STATUTE

#### I. NATURE OR IDENTITY

**95.** Augustinian Fraternities are made up of faithful Christian men and women of the world in the heart of the Church and men and women of the Church in the heart of the world. "*Intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart*", (Rule 1, 1) they live their baptismal vocation together, committed to sharing their Christian calling from

the perspective of Augustinian spirituality and united in a special way to the Order of St. Augustine.

Each Fraternity must be linked to a religious community of the Order of St. Augustine. This will constitute the visible sign of connection with the Order and communion with the Augustinian family. When no Augustinian religious community exists in the place where a Fraternity is established, it will be associated with the nearest community.

## II. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITY

**96.** The Prior General establishes a Fraternity by issuing the corresponding Decree.

For the canonical erection of an Augustinian Fraternity, the following are required:

- a) A written petition from a Major Superior of the Order.
- b) The consent of the local Ordinary if there is no canonically erected Augustinian religious community in the diocese concerned (CIC 312, 2).
- c) Approval from the Prior General who must also approve, directly or by delegation, the particular Statutes of each Fraternity.
- d) Each Fraternity may be legally recognised in civil law, in accordance with the legislation of the country concerned.

Sharing a single spirit and a single mission, though from different specific vocations, requires mutual understanding, a relationship of trust and the fundamental belief that unity and communion are the basic elements of Augustinian spirituality.

## III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

**97.**

- A personal response to the vocation of Christian faith.
- The evangelising mission.
- The joint search for God.
- Fraternal relations with all.
- Association with the Order of St. Augustine.
- Simplicity of life in keeping with the spirit of the Beatitudes.
- A prophetic orientation which translates in practise into defence of human rights and a militant commitment to peace, justice and solidarity.
- Permanent formation with particular emphasis given to studying the Word of God, the Magisterium of the Church – particularly social doctrine – and the thought of St. Augustine.

## IV. METHODS

**98.**

- Periodic meetings (biweekly, monthly etc.).
- Formation programme.
- Liturgical celebrations and prayer.
- Joint missionary and social activities.
- Celebrations with Augustinian religious communities.
- Participation in the life of the local Church.
- Exchange of information and collaboration with the Order of St. Augustine.

## V. LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

**99.**

- Co-ordinator of the Fraternity (convenes meetings, represents the Fraternity, etc.).
- Secretary (draws up the agenda and keeps minutes for each meeting, attends to correspondence, etc.).
- Administrator (oversees material and economic matters).
- Religious assistant (wherever possible, an Augustinian).

The method for electing individuals to these posts and the time period between one election and another must be indicated in the Statutes of each Fraternity. The list is not inclusive of all possibilities. The activities of different Fraternities may require the creation of new roles or commissions.

## VI. ADMISSION

**100.** Joining is an individual decision and each group, for its part, must remain open to the incorporation of new members. Candidates should be presented by members of the group concerned or of another Fraternity. Apart from ensuring some initial familiarity with the newcomers, this also provides a guarantee for their early guidance.

Following a petition from the person concerned and his or her presentation to the group in accordance with the method indicated above, the Fraternity itself, along with the Religious Assistant, makes the decision to admit the candidate.

The Statutes will indicate the age for admission (allowing a suitable period of time to elapse for formation and mutual acquaintance) as well as the reasons for which an individual may cease to be a member of the Fraternity.

## VII. FORMATION

**101.** Prerequisites for entering a group are information and formation. The initial period of membership in an Augustinian Fraternity is to be marked by a study of the basic contents of Christian faith and by an initial introduction to the thought of St. Augustine. Additionally, ongoing education in the faith (See, General Directory for Catechesis 51) constitutes a prerequisite for the fidelity and search for truth that must always accompany believers.

Catechesis of adults may be considered as a response to contemporary religious and moral questions and as a way to promote the maturity of Christian life. Such catechesis must give *“attention to the lay state of adults who, through their Baptism, have the mission ‘to seek the Kingdom of God, occupying themselves with worldly reality and organising it according to God’s plan’, and who at the same time are called to sanctity”* (General Directory for Catechesis 174).

## VIII. PROMISES

**102.** The rites of admission to any institution are always significant. Therefore, careful attention must be given to the religious ceremony of admission to a Fraternity, and – following a trial period – to the renewal of baptismal promises and the public display of commitment to achieve the fullness of Christian life by following the spirit of the Rule of St. Augustine. The celebrant, in the name of the Prior General, incorporates new members into the Augustinian family and brings them in to share in its spiritual treasures.

The Ritual of the Order of St. Augustine stipulates a Rite of Admission and a Rite of Promise for members of Augustinian Fraternities. Also, the Statutes of a particular Fraternity may lay down other concrete commitments to which all members must



adhere. For example, attendance at meetings, payment of dues (if they exist), participation in activities organised by the group etc.

Alongside the individual promises, it is important that Fraternities assume – either permanently or temporarily depending on circumstances – a concrete commitment to an apostolic project of the Church. This should fall, if possible, within the sphere of the services the Order renders to the Church.

## IX. OPERATION AND ACTIVITIES

**103.** Spirituality animates the life and internal dynamic of the group, giving it meaning and substance. One essential element is the study of Augustinian spirituality, a deeper knowledge of which nourishes members and causes them to grow.

Apart from being fundamental aspects that support a group, dialogue and communication also represent the Augustinian way to discover the truth. The truth is within us (See, *On True Religion* 39, 72) and among us. (See, *Confessions* 12, 25, 34)

These premises give rise to a *modus operandi* and a form of feedback that guarantee freedom and participation. The interaction of differing needs calls for the possibility of reciprocity – giving and receiving – in a horizontal exercise of shared discipleship.

The timetable for meetings and other organisational details must be laid down by the group itself. The existence of a guideline Statute does not mean that each group cannot have its own, adapted to its own circumstances.

Ordinarily, the Fraternity should be linked to a name of importance in an Augustinian sense (a saint or blessed of the Augustinian family, a place name, etc.). Meetings may take place, initially on a biweekly basis.

It may also be helpful to draft some kind of organisation schedule laying down the various functions and the people responsible for them (Co-ordinator of the Fraternity, Treasurer, person in charge of relations with other Augustinian Fraternities, with lay projects of the diocesan Church, with social institutions, with NGOs etc.). The needs of each group will be decisive in its internal organisational structure.

## X. RELIGIOUS ASSISTANT

**104.** Based on a request from the members of a Fraternity, the religious assistant is directly appointed by the Major Superior and presented by the Prior of the religious community with which the Fraternity is associated. His mission is – whenever necessary and possible – to preside at liturgical celebrations, to promote the Augustinian spirit in all the Fraternity's activities and to accompany the spiritual growth of individuals and of the group.

## XI. RELATIONS WITH OTHER AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITIES

**105.** Different Fraternities may exist in the same place, many more in the same country. The primary testimony of Augustinian Fraternities must be communion and unity among themselves. So, some kind of co-ordinating body should be established to encourage mutual relations. In areas where there are a number of Fraternities, it is suggested that a local co-ordinating body be set up, along with a provincial and national co-ordinating body or federation with its own Statutes and organisational structure.

Annual meetings and the joint participation in other activities may serve to strengthen the sense of identity, the feeling of belonging and the ties of unity among the groups.

Members of the national co-ordinating body or federation may be elected at the national meetings and, in their turn, come together in an international co-ordinating body that represents all the Augustinian Fraternities.

## IX. A MODEL FOR AN AUGUSTINIAN SECULAR FRATERNITY

**106.** An Augustinian Fraternity is founded on three pillars: *study, interior life, mission*. These give rise to:

### I. COMMUNION OF FAITH

The search for truth through *study*.

(Formative-cultural dimension of the assimilation of the Christian message).

- Analysing reality through the eyes of faith (seeing, judging, acting).
- Knowledge of the contents of one's own faith.
- Study of the Bible and of morality.
- Knowledge of St. Augustine and his message.
- Knowledge of the Augustinian world.

### II. COMMUNITY OF PRAYER

Prayer and celebration founded on *interior life*.

(Liturgical-celebratory dimension for a personal and community dialogue with God).

- Expression of faith.
- Knowledge and celebration of the liturgy.
- Time for community prayer and celebration.
- Celebration of faith with one's own family and with the religious community (Augustinian feast days etc.).
- Monthly and annual timetable of retreats, etc.

### III. COMMUNITY OF LIFE AND MISSION

Living for others through the *evangelising mission*.

(Missionary-social dimension for construction of the Kingdom God).

- Internal climate of friendship, welcome and understanding.
- Personal witness within one's own life and work environment.
- Communion with and commitment to the local Church.
- Time dedicated to others through volunteer work.
- Knowledge of the Church's social doctrine and practical exercise of solidarity.
- Collaboration with other institutions (ecclesial, civil, NGOs, etc.).

## 9.1. FORMATIVE PATH OF AN AUGUSTINIAN FRATERNITY

FIRST STAGE (Initiation period)

Duration: Two years.

At the end of this period, a symbol of belonging to the Augustinian family is conferred.

- *Called by Baptism to conversion.*
  - Christian faith. The Creed.
  - The sacraments of Christian initiation.
- *The Augustinian path towards Jesus Christ or Augustinian spirituality (I):*
  - Life as restlessness and searching.
  - Love, the primary human vocation.
  - "Loving" the world and constructing the City of God.
  - Interior life: the place for great encounters.

## SECOND STAGE (Period of integration into the Augustinian family)

Duration: Two years.

At the end of this period, the individual is welcomed into the Order by means of a liturgical entry rite (Ritual of the Order). In some cases, lay ministries are conferred.

– *Conversion: To whom?*

- Jesus Christ: Goal and horizon of all conversion (Christology, morality, etc.).
- Mary, a model for believers.

– *The Augustinian path towards Jesus Christ or Augustinian spirituality (II):*

- Determined assent to God's project: conversion.
- Fulfilment of Christian life in prayer.
- Membership of one body: the whole Christ.
- Augustinian justice, peace and solidarity
- Loving the Church through the Augustinian community.

## 9.2. POSSIBLE GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS

### 1. PRAYER

**107.** Meetings should always begin with a moment of prayer. We profess our faith and express the wish that our fraternal encounter may also be an encounter with God. We may begin with some simple prayers, a reading from the Word of God, a moment for reflection and comment on a text of St. Augustine, the liturgy of the hours, etc.

### 2. STUDY OR FORMATION

**108.** Simply as an illustrative guide, it is suggested that various themes be put forward for each of the two stages mentioned above. The religious culture of the people who form the group and other circumstances will give rise to further themes and indicate to what depth they should be considered. This does not mean that, beyond the confines of a particular stage, these themes have no application. All formative processes have recurring themes.

A theme being considered must be studied in advance by each member of the Fraternity. One member presents it from a personal point of view. A discussion takes place. Specialists may be invited. It is important to follow the agenda, but it is equally important that there should be a flexibility to modify that agenda when there are reasons to justify doing so.

### 3. REVISION OF COMMITMENTS AND PLANNING

**109.** The meeting should conclude with concrete suggestions for either internal or external application. Someone must prepare the theme for the following meeting, prayer or celebration for a feast day or a particular liturgical event etc. In the same way, specific tasks in the family, professional or parochial spheres may be identified.

The whole Fraternity, or some of its members, should regularly collaborate in diocesan pastoral ministry of parishes and of schools, in voluntary social work, etc. What are we doing and how are we doing it? Can we get involved in other forms of shared activity with the local Church, the Augustinian Order, etc?

Revision and evaluation of common commitments contributes to promoting shared responsibility.

It is recommended that each Fraternity should set monetary dues. This gesture has various purposes: Sharing something of our wealth, relying on a common fund that may have different beneficiaries (solidarity fund, activities of the Fraternity, common expenses, etc.), a material sign of our belonging to the group.

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