The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine, by Greg Comiskey


During the chaos that was the fifth century decline and dissolution of the Western Roman Empire, Christianity remained the light in darkness. Most early fathers of the Church came from the eastern parts of the empire—Rome, Constantinople, even Alexandria—which were centers of knowledge and learning. The West had very few prospects until a young man by the name of Augustine came along. St. Augustine (as future generations would come to know him), born of a pagan father and a Christian mother, St. Monica (d. 387), would become one of the greatest Christian theologians, prolific authors, and authoritative preachers the Church had ever known.

St. Augustine, future Doctor of the Church, began his life like many of the Roman citizens with privilege of his day—he was pagan, well-educated, listless, a drunkard, and a womanizer. St. Augustine enjoyed all the freedoms that being a Roman male of status could provide in the port city of Hippo Regius, located west of Carthage in modern day Algeria. There was something missing, however, from St. Augustine’s life and he sensed it. His mother, St. Monica, prayed incessantly for her son’s conversion—her efforts would not be in vain. St. Augustine dallied in Gnosticism, along with other spiritual movements but nothing satisfied him. One day while (continued on page 2)
During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Meditations

From Pope Benedict XVI: Mary went to see her elderly cousin Elizabeth, she whom everyone said was sterile but who instead had reached the sixth month of a pregnancy given to her by God (cf. Lk 1:36), and Mary was carrying in her womb the recently conceived Jesus. She was a young girl, but she was not afraid, for God was with her, within her. In a certain way, we can say that her journey was... the first ‘Eucharistic procession’ in history. Mary, living Tabernacle of God made flesh, is the Ark of the Covenant in whom the Lord visited and redeemed his people. Jesus’ presence filled her with the Holy Spirit.

From Pope John Paul II in ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA: In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice, and makes her own the spirit of Mary. This truth can be understood more deeply by re-reading the Magnificat in a Eucharistic key. The Eucharist, like the Canticle of Mary, is first and foremost praise and thanksgiving. When Mary exclaims: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour”, she already bears Jesus in her womb. She praises God “through” Jesus, but she also praises him “in” Jesus and “with” Jesus. This is itself the true “Eucharistic attitude”.

(from page 1) in Milan to teach rhetoric, two future saints came together—Augustine met St. Ambrose and was converted after hearing a voice (an angel?) commanding him to read St. Paul.

A recent convert, St. Augustine was still not acting on his faith when he heard about pagans who dropped everything to be converted after reading St. Anthony of the Desert. This was too much for St. Augustine who cried out, “Unlearned people are taking Heaven by force, while we, with all our knowledge, are so cowardly that we keep rolling around in the mud with our sins!” He believed he was wholly unworthy of Christ but he would no longer deny the call. St. Augustine arrived back at Hippo where the town immediately and spontaneously declared him their bishop. There, St. Augustine would remain and serve as their bishop from 395 until 430, when the Vandals destroyed the town. He contracted a fever and died during the siege on August 28, 430.

St. Augustine was a prodigious author. Some of his works include: On Christian Doctrine, The Confessions, The City of God, biblical exegesis, and numerous sermons. St. Augustine once famously said, “Do not understand so that you might believe; believe so that you can understand!” This incredibly intelligent and learned man never forgot who his gifts were from nor did he forgive himself for his youthful indiscretions. St. Augustine considered lust and sins of the flesh to be the worst to overcome, perhaps because of his struggles. He defended the Faith vigorously against the heresies of Pelagianism and Donatism.

We would do well to remember this Saint and Doctor of the Church. Saint Augustine of Hippo grew up in a mixed family, struggled with his faith early on—even to the point of trying others in order to avoid the logic of The Cross. Saint Augustine’s struggles with sex, alcohol, and faith in a world turned upside down by violence and heresies—the Fall, Vandal raiders, and martyrdom—are eerily similar to our struggles and our world. We would do well to remember him because Saint Augustine is relatable, his sins and struggles are human and personal. Families in the twenty-first century are often divorced, of mixed faith, or led by a single parent. Many of us struggle with addiction, lack of faith, or other internal issues that cloud our path to God. We would do well to remember him because the twenty-first century is eerily reminiscent of the fifth century. Our Church is still being assailed by heresies, nations are still seeing raiders, and Christ’s Church has new martyrs every single day whether in Iraq, Syria, China, Africa, the Philippines, the United States, or France. Saint Augustine is a relatable Saint from a relatable time.

Advisors Corner

From Dr. Mark Bowles:
I would like to welcome all the new members to the AMU & APU Newman Center. I know that you will find this to be a rewarding Catholic community within the university. I look forward to learning more about all of you, as well as continuing to work with all of our existing members.

If I can ever be of assistance, you can reach me at mark.bowles@mycampus.apus.edu. I hope you all have a terrific fall!
Introducing Volunteer Coordinator Corey Falo-Fatafehi

Corey Falo-Fatafehi has graciously agreed to act as the Volunteer Coordinator for the AMU & APU Newman Center. Corey is in her sophomore year at APUS and working toward a degree in Information Technology. She works for Ubiquiti Networks, and has been working in IT for five years. Corey has certifications in Wireless and Routing and Switching. She is passionate about learning. Corey presently lives in Provo, Utah. She is moving to Ohio in October, which will be a new area of the country for her. Corey’s home parish is St. Francis of Assisi. She converted to the Catholic faith in 2012, and since then, has tried to learn all she can about her newfound faith. Corey loves everything about being Catholic, and says that it has changed her life for the better in every way. She has a wonderful husband who played football for a couple of teams but who unfortunately suffers from the concussions that he experience during play, as do so many football players. Corey has a six-year-old stepdaughter who is the light of her life. She is involved with mentoring on ClearPath and loves to help others in any way that she can. In her spare time, Corey is learning Chinese. She loves to read. Corey is very happy to be a part of this group of wonderful people.

Corporal Works of Mercy-Shout out for Stephanie King

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the teachings of Jesus and give us a model for how we should treat all others, as if they were Christ in disguise.

Member Stephanie King recently put into action her plan to help feed the hungry. As she describes her efforts: "After watching a compilation of videos of bikers riding around inner cities handing out food, I decided I could do something similar during my stay in Baltimore at the beginning of August. As a full-time student, I have little money to spare for charity, and hoped to reach more than just half a dozen people with what money I could scrounge together, so I decided to take donations from friends and family, and reached out on social media, ultimately raising $200 in two weeks. With that money, I bought groceries and toiletries to make up sixty bags to be handed out. During the ten days I was in the city, I carried the bags and drinks around in a rucksack and cooler, or drove around with bags at the ready in my truck, and managed to hand out nearly all of them. I stopped to talk with many of them, and feel blessed to have met such amazing people. The experience has led me to better appreciate what good can be done with very little."

Stephanie, thank you for your example and generosity!

Randy Pifher, Director of Outreach, Newman Connection

The Newman Connection continues to work diligently to keep our youth connected to the faith, and we are pleased to announce that we have connected 70,000 high school graduates to their chosen Campus Ministry. We are so humbled to have the support of so many Catholic High Schools and Parishes around the US, who work hard to assist us in this effort.

As you start your new year on college campuses around the US, know of our continued prayers.

Blessings,
Randy
Service Project Updates

Gregory Comiskey—Seneca Choices for Life

For Gregory, defending life is a family affair. He actively sponsors Seneca Choices for Life. His wife, Crystal, works for this pro-life ministry, and their daughter, Shelby Lynn joins in to aid in volunteering. Greg stated it simply: “Saving Babies. Helping Mothers. Protecting Families. Seneca Choices for Life—my family’s cause.”

Anne Midgley—MiraVia

For the first AMU & APU Newman Center service project, the choice to sponsor pro-life women’s shelters seemed a natural. It also provided an opportunity to Anne Midgley and her husband, Bill, to rally the Our Lady of the Assumption (their parish) Youth Group to make a difference for a local shelter, MiraVia. The Youth Group members gladly participated to create signs and generate awareness for the effort within the parish. Thanks to the generous donations of the OLA parish family, and especially the OLA Ladies Guild, over $500 was raised and numerous baby donations were collected for delivery to MiraVia.

Check out YOUCAT!

Exploring YOUCAT is a course based on YOUCAT, the new Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church. Fr. John Sims Baker of Vanderbilt, Fr. Tony Stephens of the Fathers of Mercy, and Fr. Jim Kelleher will guide you through the inner workings of YOUCAT, expanding upon, and preaching upon some of the most important questions and topics posed.
Member Accomplishments & Updates

Let’s congratulate our members on their recent accomplishments!

- The AMU & APU Newman Center reached APUS Chapter Standards Gold standing.
- Ben Sorensen recently received a job promotion. He also published a feature article in an academic journal.
- Stephanie King made the Dean’s List.
- Corey Falo recently married and began a new career.
- Anne Midgley welcomed her first grandchild.

Featured Member—Lynn McAfee

After earning a Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education from the UMASS - Amherst in 1991 and working in this field for six years, Lynn McAfee decided it wasn’t where her heart lay. She “sort of fell into” her current job and has been happy there ever since. Lynn completed her Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Studies at AMU in August 2015. After completing that feat she figured that if she could get through those six classes, then she could definitely take the other six she would need to complete a MA in Intelligence Studies with a concentration in Terrorism. She is hoping to begin her Capstone in January 2018 focusing on the role of women in terrorism.

Lynn first learned about AMU through her current position. The agency she works for co-sponsored a training seminar on Islam for local law enforcement officers. Lynn currently works for the New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN), part of the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS). It is one of six regional information-sharing centers funded by a grant through Bureau of Justice Assistance. Her official title is Criminal Intelligence Information Specialist where her primary responsibilities involve assisting local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies with their cases through research, publications, or postings on the NESPIN website. She has been with NESPIN for nineteen years in various positions. Lynn says, “My position allows me to indulge my love of research.”

Lynn lives in North Attleboro, MA (seven miles south of Gillette Stadium, home of the five-time Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots) and is an aunt to four amazing kids who range in age from sixteen to twenty. Lynn wanted to share a “Brag Moment:” “On January 1, 2018, my oldest nephew will be marching in the 2018 Rose Parade, with the Power & Class of New England, the University of Massachusetts Minuteman Marching Band in Pasadena. My sister, brother-in-law, niece, and I will proudly be sitting in the stands.” Outside of family events, Lynn is heavily involved in her parish’s Faith Formation program, where she has taught for twenty-five years. Lynn is also an active participant in her parish’s Saint Vincent de Paul Society and volunteers in their food pantry. For the last three years, she has volunteered with the Wreaths Across America program at the National Cemetery in Bourne, MA. Lynn is coordinating a family outing to lay wreaths in Bourne this December. She loves the Boston Bruins, the Boston Red Sox, the New England Patriots, as well as reading, sitting on the beach (particularly the beaches in Dennisport, MA), all types of music (with the exception of rap), and driving her brother and sister nuts (“I am the middle child”). As of February, she became a member of the APUS University Ambassadors. Lynn’s invitation came from a friend she made through the AMU community of volunteers. She was recently admitted into the Golden Key International Honor Society and invited to the Kappa Kappa chapter of Alpha Phi Sigma Criminal Justice Honor society.
Upcoming Events

Members recently voted on a variety of service projects for the remainder of 2017. The two winning projects are **Wreaths Across America** and **Corporal Works of Mercy**. This year, the national Wreaths Across America event will occur on December 16, 2017. The AMU/APU Wreaths Across America registration site will be open soon.

Our fall service event, **Corporal Works of Mercy**, will kick off on October 1. There are many ways members can answer the call to serve our brothers and sisters. For a list of the seven Corporal Works of Mercy and suggestions regarding each, please visit [The Corporal Works of Mercy](#) on the USCCB site.

Advisors Corner

From Dr. Robert Smith:

Monday starts a new cycle of classes here at AMU. We also celebrate Labor Day, the fruits and efforts of the American working spirit that has contributed so much to our nation, from the Erie Canal, to the Hoover Dam, to the Man on the Moon.

I wish you the best possible start for those starting new classes—or those faculty and peers coming off a time of vacation. Labor Day for me is always a time for reflection that we gear up for a new life cycle of the year, as we put summer behind us.

For us here in the Newman Center, let us focus on the blessings we have shared this year, and perhaps share some of those with those in distress from Hurricane Harvey.

I ask each of you to find some way to further help our group grow by bringing in a new member, enabling us to spread not only the Good Word, but the overall cheer that is evident in this group.

Resources

- **Bible**
- **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition**
- **Rich Gift of Love** (Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body)
- **Daily Mass Readings**
- **Catholic Social Teaching**
- St. Thomas Aquinas *The Summa Theologica*
- *The Confessions of St. Augustine*
- Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia
- The Fathers of the Church and their Writings
- US Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Vatican Radio
- Vatican News Service
- EWTN
- Word on Fire

**Documents from Vatican II:**

- Dei Verbum
- Lumen Gentium
- Sacrosanctum Concilium
- Gaudium et Spes

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