

FRIENDS OF AUGUSTINE

AUGUSTINE FOR TODAY



KEEP ON SEARCHING

THE WORD

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. "It is nearly evening" they said "and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"
Lk.24:28-32

Mary stayed outside the tomb, weeping. Then, still weeping, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" "they have taken my Lord away" she replied "and I don't know where they have put him." As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not recognise him. Jesus said, "Woman, why are you weeping" "Who are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him". Jesus said, "Mary!" She knew him then said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbuni!" - which means Master. Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father."

Jn.20:11-17

POINTS TO PONDER

- What connections to you see between these two passages?
- Do they have any echoes in your own life?

FROM AUGUSTINE

Let us seek him out in order to find him,
and when we find him,
let us continue searching for him.
We must search for him,
because he is hidden from us.
And when we have found him,
we go on searching because he is without bounds . . .
He fills those who seek him,
insofar as their capacity permits;
and he increases the capacity in those who find him,
so that they might again seek to be filled.

On John's Gospel 63,1

REFLECTION

While we live, the journey to God will never be ended. While we live, the search for God will never be ended. The infinite God will always be beyond our comprehension. Every time we think that we have arrived, we find that we have only reached another point on the journey.

The two disciples walked with the Risen Lord but it was only when they looked back on what had happened that they realised that their hearts had been “burning” within them. Then, at the very moment when “their eyes were opened”, the Lord disappeared! Yes, there had been a meeting, there had been a realisation and a recognition but the Lord could not be captured or pinned down. The two disciples now knew in an amazingly powerful way that Jesus had risen from the dead but there would be much more to grapple with, there would be much more to know, there would be much more to understand.

Mary’s heart and eyes were blinded by her tears. The Lord she had come to know and love had been taken from her and she did not know where he was. It is perhaps quite a common feeling for those who take the search for God seriously. There are times when the God we thought we knew seems to disappear from us or, indeed, has been taken from us and we feel bewildered and lost. We no longer know where our God is.

Jesus spoke Mary’s name. (He actually used a version of her name, a nickname, which tells us so much about the depth and closeness of their relationship.) Then Mary could see, see with her heart, and she wanted to cling to the Lord but he would not let her. Mary had to learn, as we all have to learn that we cannot cling to God. We can only touch God with an open hand. Once we try to close our fist on God, there is no room left for God. Once we close our fist on the outpouring of God’s love, there is no room left for love.

Augustine knew this. We seek for God and, once we have found God, the search begins all over again but, as Augustine reminds us, our hearts have been changed by each meeting, each realisation, each recognition. It will only be at the end of the pilgrimage of life that we will rest in the fullness of the Godhead.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Have you ever been able to look back over a period of your life and only at that point been able to say, “Was not my heart burning within me?”
- Have there been times in your life when you could have repeated Mary’s word, “They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put him.”?
- “Do not cling to me.” Do we have to hear this same command of Jesus?

- What do you think all this has to say about the way we treat the teachings of the Christian community?

SONG OF THE SOUL AND THE BRIDEGROOM

*Where have You hidden Yourself,
And abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved?
You have fled like the hart,
Having wounded me.
I ran after You, crying; but You were gone.*

*O shepherds, you who go
Through the sheepcots up the hill,
If you shall see Him
Whom I love the most,*

*Tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.
In search of my Love
I will go over mountains and strands;
I will gather no flowers,
I will fear no wild beasts;
And pass by the mighty and the frontiers.*

*O groves and thickets
Planted by the hand of the Beloved;
O verdant meads
Enameled with flowers,
Tell me, has He passed by you?*

St John of the Cross

A prayer from Augustine

O Lord my God, my only hope,
hear me in your goodness:
grant that I may not stop seeking you when I am weary,
but seek your presence ever more fervently

A Final Thought

There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise.
Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if
not to reach the kingdom which has no end.
City of God 22

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