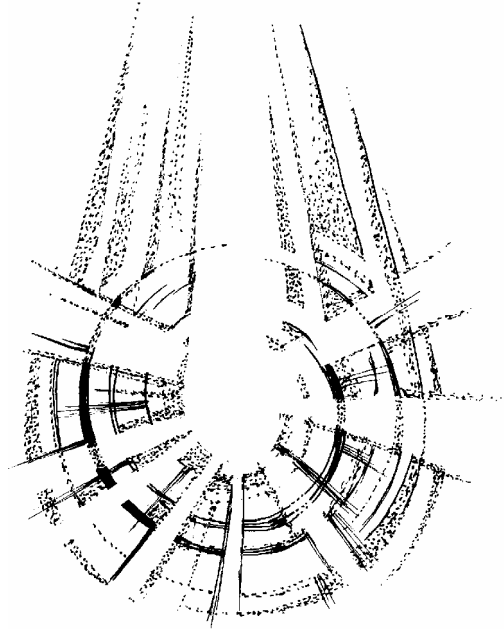


FRIENDS OF AUGUSTINE

AUGUSTINE FOR TODAY



RETURN TO YOUR HEART

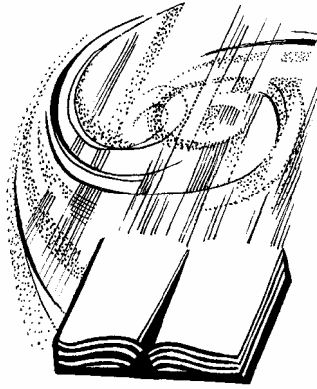
THE WORD

Jesus said to them, “Truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.

Jn. 5:19

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.”

Jn. 7:37-38



FROM AUGUSTINE

At the last supper John rested his head on the Lord’s breast. Thus, says Augustine, John drank deep secrets from the Lord’s inmost heart. For us to drink at this deep source of life we need to return to our own hearts, for it is there that we find the Lord.

So Augustine has this message for us.

Return to yourself! Return to your own heart! Why have you run away from your self? In running away you have lost yourself. (The farther you run the more you lose yourself.) Come back from your wandering! Come back! Where do you need to return to? To the Lord. He is near. First return to your heart. You will have become a stranger to yourself. You do not know yourself. Come back to your heart. There you will find God, because you are formed in his likeness.

In the inner depths of your heart Christ lives. In the inner depths of your being you will be renewed in the likeness of God. And in that likeness you will recognise your God.

REFLECTION

Augustine had spent many years wandering. Losing himself in the good things of life. In study, in sport, in pleasure, in sex, in career, in friendship. Yet he never found the truth, or the the happiness he was seeking. Because he was looking outside. Only when he entered into his own heart did he find rest and happiness. He found himself. And he found God. In the depths of his own being.

His invitation to us is to return to ourselves. To come back from our wandering. To come home. Home to ourselves. Home to God.

In returning to ourselves we too, like John, rest in Christ, and learn from him the deep secrets of life. In finding the “sweet hidden place within” we drink from the deep source of life which is within us.

How do we return to the heart?

By being still. By entering into silence. By stilling the body, the mind, the feelings. "God speaks to us in the great silence of the heart" says Augustine. We too can encounter God, if we enter deeply into silence.

Enter into yourself, leave behind all noise and confusion. Look within yourself and see whether there be some sweet hidden place within where you can be free of noise and argument, where you need not be carrying your disputes and planning to have your own stubborn way.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Aren't we just running away from the world when we enter into our hearts?
- Have you ever experienced God in silence?
- How does this finding God in our own inner depths relate to the reading of the scriptures, to the eucharist, to the sacraments?
- What happens to intercessory prayer if we abandon ourselves to silence?

WHAT OTHERS SAY . . .

The longest journey is the journey inwards. Between you and him is distance. Uncertainty - care
Dag Hammarskjöld

The very best and noblest attainment in this life is to be silent and let God work and speak within. When the powers have been completely withdrawn from all their works and images, their word is spoken. Therefore he said: "In the midst of silence the secret word was spoken unto me." And so, the more completely you are able to draw in your powers to a unity and forget all those things and their images which you have absorbed, the nearer you are to this and the readier to receive it.

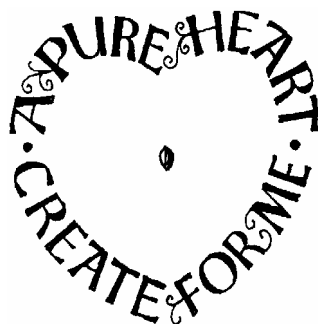
Eckhart

Unless we discover this deep self, which is hidden with Christ in God, we will never know ourselves as persons. Nor will we know God. For it is by the door of this deep self that we enter into the spiritual knowledge of God.

Thomas Merton

The fact is that if you descend into the depths of your spirit . . . and arrive somewhere near the centre of what you are, you are confronted by the inescapable truth that, at the very root of you existence, you are in constant and immediate and inescapable contact with the infinite power of God.

Thomas Merton.



A FINAL THOUGHT FROM AUGUSTINE

Whisper words of truth in my heart, for you alone speak truth.
I will leave outside those who do not believe, letting them stir
up the dust into their own eyes, while I withdraw to my secret
cell and sing to you hymns of love.

Compiled by Benignus O'Rourke OSA