

Reflection Friday Week 21 – St Augustine of Hippo 354 - 430

Augustine was born in Thagaste in North Africa. He was brought up a Christian but left the Church early spending his time seriously seeking the truth, first in the Manichaean heresy, which he abandoned on seeing how nonsensical it was, and then in Neoplatonism. Through the prayers of his mother, Monica, and the preaching of St Ambrose of Milan, he finally returned to Christianity and was baptized in 387, shortly before his mother's death. He had a brilliant legal and academic career, but, after his conversion, he returned to Africa and led an ascetic life. He was elected Bishop of Hippo and spent 34 years there, teaching the people, strengthening their faith and protecting them from the errors of the day. He wrote an enormous amount and left a permanent mark on both philosophy and theology. His *Confessions*, as dazzling in style as they are deep in content, are a landmark of world literature. He was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1308.

Augustine is our patron. We are called after him the Augustinians of the Assumption. We are inspired by his rule, encouraged by his teaching and strengthened by his commitment and perseverance. He was and is a leading theologian known as the Doctor of Love which becomes obvious if you read his *Confessions*. Having taken their rule, we also adopted the Augustinian habit. A major strength of his rule is his emphasis on the importance of community which was and is a greater strength and richer in blessings than individuality. He spent his whole life among friends who followed him wherever he went. At his conversion several of them followed him and, like him, became outstanding bishops in the Church. **Let us be inspired by his wisdom:**

- “Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity itself is the soul's beauty.”
 - What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear peoples' sighs and sorrows. That is what love looks like.”
 - “It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that turns people into angels.”
 - “For, if something is not diminished by being shared with others, it is not rightly owned unless it is shared.”
 - “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” . . . **and finally**
 - “Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient and ever new! Late have I loved you! And, behold, you were within me, and I away from myself where I searched for you. . . You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.”
- **Two Eskimos** sitting in a kayak were feeling chilly. But when they lit a fire in the craft, it sank, proving once and for all that you can't have your kayak and heat it.

- **The other day** I sent my friend a huge pile of snow. I rang him up and said "Did you get my drift?".'