

## Reflection Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Week Advent St Ambrose of Milan 2022

**St Ambrose of Milan** has a special place in Assumptionist hearts because he was the influence that led to the conversion of St Augustine whose rule we follow. Ambrose was born in Trier (Germany) between 337 and 340, to a Roman family: his father was praetorian prefect of Gaul. Ambrose was educated in Rome and trained as a Roman advocate and administrator, at Sirmium (capital of Illyria). About 372 he became prefect of Liguria and Emilia, whose capital was Milan.

In 374 the bishopric of Milan fell vacant. Ambrose tried to pacify the conflict between the Catholics and Arians over the appointment of a new bishop. The people turned on him and demanded that he become the bishop. Being an unbaptised layman was no defence. Coerced by the people and the emperor, he was baptized, ordained, and installed as bishop within a week, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 374.

He immediately gave his money to the poor and his land to the Church, and started learning theology. Knowing Greek, which few people did at that time, he was able to read the Eastern theologians and philosophers as well as those of the West.

He was assiduous in carrying out his office, acting with charity to all: a true shepherd and teacher of the faithful. He was unimpressed by status and when Emperor Theodosius ordered the massacre of 7,000 people in Thessalonica, Ambrose forced him to do public penance. He defended the rights of the Church and attacked the Arian heresy with learning, firmness and gentleness. He also wrote a number of hymns still in use today.

Ambrose was a key figure in the conversion of St Augustine to Catholicism, impressing Augustine (hitherto unimpressed by the Catholics he had met) by his intelligence and scholarship. He died on Holy Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 397.

- *A kindness received should be returned with a freer hand.*
- *It is not enough just to wish well; we must also do well.*
- *There is nothing evil save that which perverts the mind and shackles the conscience.*
- *Forget not, O Lord, that I am one of those who You created, and with Your own blood have redeemed. I repent me of my sins and will strive to amend my ways.*