

Friday of the 21st Week of Ordinary Time & The Memorial of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church: Transferred to Sunday as A Solemnity for the Patronal Feast of the Parish

Reading 1 - [1 Corinthians 1:17-25](#)

Brothers and sisters: Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the learning of the learned I will set aside. Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11](#) R. (5) The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

(Sunday) Reading 2 - [2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-3](#)

Beloved: Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. My child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well. Bear your share of hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Gospel - [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

St. Augustine: A Guide for the Restless Heart

St. Augustine's life serves as a 1,600-year-old "map" for the human heart. Born to parents with competing values—worldly ambition versus persistent faith—his journey reveals that authentic identity is not invented by the self, but received through a "movement of conversion" and the surrender of the will to God.



Gemini Notebook

Summary

This week's homily examines the life, conversion, and enduring relevance of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD). Though a historical figure of the 4th and 5th centuries, Augustine's personal history—marked by a "restless heart," family dysfunction, and a search for identity through status and pleasure—serves as a contemporary map for navigating modern life. It explores how Augustine moved from a fragmented life of worldly ambition to a unified life of faith. Key takeaways include the concept of identity as something received from God rather than invented by the self, the necessity of reordering one's desires, and the understanding of conversion as a lifelong "movement of grace" rather than a singular, isolated event. Saint Augustine's enduring importance lies in his transparency regarding "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of his life. He did not become holy by avoiding human wounds but by allowing Christ to enter them. His life serves as a map for those who feel "fragmented, ambitious, or wounded," proclaiming that the search for identity is not hopeless because the human heart is ultimately "made for God" and remains restless until it rests in Him.

Part One: The Restless Heart and the Journey of St. Augustine

The election of the first Augustinian pope invites us to recognize, once again, how powerfully the Holy Spirit continues to work and that God desires to highlight the relevance of the life and thought of Saint Augustine, for our time. For more than sixteen centuries, Augustine has helped the Church think deeply about grace, truth, love, wisdom, the human person, the living Word of God, and all of this in the light of Christ. His importance is not only historical. He speaks with remarkable force to our own age because he understood from the inside what it means to have a restless heart—to want greatness, to search for happiness, to desire love, to chase success, and yet still feel incomplete. In a culture where many young people are asking, "Who am I?" "Where do I belong?" and "What will finally make me whole?" Augustine remains a trusted guide. His life shows that authentic identity is not invented by the self, achieved by status, or satisfied by pleasure, but received from God, who made the human heart for Himself.

It is important not only to admire Augustine after his conversion, but also to understand the early life that formed him. We can talk about all the reasons why he's a Doctor of the Church. He was a smart guy, deep faith, great insight, and open to the revelations of God for his understanding, full of wisdom from God. But that's what he became. We don't often look carefully at what shaped him, what helped him become who he was, the good, the bad, and the ugly, in his life. Before he became a saint, a Bishop, a Doctor of the Church, Augustine was a young man shaped by competing influences, intense desires, brilliant gifts, and deep confusion.

He grew up in a respectable but financially modest Roman African family in Thagaste. His father, Patricius, represented ambition, social advancement, and the values of the world; his mother, Monica, represented faith, prayer, perseverance, and trust in God. Between these two forces Augustine learned early the tension that many young people feel today: the desire to succeed and be admired, and the deeper desire to be known, loved, forgiven, and made whole. Augustine tells us that he did not come from a perfect family. His father, Patricius, was a passionate and ambitious man who cared deeply about his education and public success. However, he didn't really see his son, he just saw a brilliant future that would make himself look good. So, although they were not wealthy, his father sacrificed beyond his means so Augustine could be trained in grammar and rhetoric, the tools of advancement in Roman society. Augustine later recognized this generosity, but he also saw its limits: his father was more concerned that Augustine become eloquent and successful than that he become virtuous and holy. He also noted in his 'Confessions', that his father was temperamentally violent and that his life was marked by worldly habits and immoral behavior that included adultery. This kind of behavior was not uncommon at the time; in fact, it was socially acceptable as was violence against their wives. Augustine notes that his father was never physically violent, just loud and mean and psychologically violent. Yet, unknown to anyone, in his own slow movement of conversion he was being touched by grace, especially through his wife. Through Monica's patient witness and prayers, he eventually became a catechumen and was baptized shortly before his death. In Patricius, Augustine saw both the attraction and the emptiness of a life built mainly on ambition, image, and earthly achievement.¹

All of this sounds so familiar to life in our age, doesn't it? Family difficulties, cultural ideologies that strive to get our attention and convince us that this, that, or another thing is what will make us happy; selling us identities to inhabit and change as often as the sun rises; telling us how to dress, how to think. All of it in constant flux and demanding that we keep up, don't get left out, don't get left behind. But eventually we like Augustine discover that none of it ever really satisfies, not in any age and not in ours.

His mother gave him a very different inheritance. St. Monica, as we know, was a fervent Christian whose faith did not depend on comfort, approval, or quick results. She had him marked with the sign of the cross and enrolled among the catechumens as a child, and prayed without ceasing for her son as he grew and grew away from the faith she had taught him.² Her influence, and some of you may recognize this in the mothers you know, the mothers you have, the grandmothers you have; was not sentimental or passive; it was strong, persistent, and rooted in hope. She prayed for both her husband and her son, and the traditional account remembers Patricius's conversion before death as one of her consolations.³ Monica's witness shows that Augustine's holiness did not appear from nothing. Although he rejected it and ran hard in the other direction, that foundation was prepared by his mother's prayers, by a home touched by her faith even amid the difficulties and by grace quietly working long before Augustine understood it. God is always working in us, for us, around us. to bring us close.

¹ The Confessions - Book 2, page5; Butler's Lives of the Saints: Volume II, page 231; The Confessions - Book 9, page19.

² General Audience of 9 January 2008: Saint Augustine of Hippo (1), page1; The Confessions - Book 1, page17.

³ Catholic Encyclopedia, St. Augustine of Hippo.

Augustine's childhood and adolescence reveal why he remains so accessible to young people. I think as a parish, as a parish community, everybody should read the confessions of St. Augustine this year, this school year. It will speak to your hearts and the hearts of your friends and neighbors. He, like many of you, was intellectually gifted, deeply social, ambitious, and restless, but he was not yet free. He loved praise, wanted friendship, desired pleasure, and longed to belong. As a teenager he drifted from discipline, pursued sensual pleasures, and being a thief, later recognizing in these experiences not simply youthful mistakes but signs of a heart turned in on itself.⁴ At about seventeen, while studying rhetoric in Carthage, he entered a long-term relationship outside marriage and became the father of a son, Adeodatus. Augustine later spoke of this period with regret, not because he lacked love for both his girlfriend and his son, but because his loves were disordered and unable to give him the peace he sought.⁵

As he studied rhetoric and pursued a successful teaching career, Augustine kept searching for answers to questions about truth, evil, God, and happiness. Cicero's *Hortensius* awakened in him a burning desire for wisdom, but his search first led him into Manichaeism, where he thought he had found an explanation for the divided world and his divided heart. Over time, however, he became dissatisfied with its answers and recognized its errors. He left North Africa for Rome and then Milan, seeking greater professional success, but success did not quiet his longing. In Milan, he encountered Saint Ambrose, whose preaching helped him see that the Christian faith was intellectually serious and that Scripture could speak with a depth he had previously missed. Augustine was beginning to discover that the truth he desired was not merely an idea to understand, but a Person who was calling him.

Even then, Augustine's mind moved faster than his will. Neoplatonic writings helped him understand spiritual reality, but he still struggled to surrender his ambitions, his desires, and his divided heart. In 386, in a garden at Milan, that struggle reached its decisive moment. In *The Confessions*, Augustine recounts how, distressed and weeping, he heard a childlike voice saying, "take up and read, take up and read." Randomly opening the Scriptures, he read from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans: "*Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.*"⁶ In that moment, Augustine experienced grace not as an abstract doctrine but as the power of Christ to heal the will, reorder desire, and give rest to the restless heart.

Saint Augustine's conversion was not a single isolated instant, but a long movement of grace: from his mother's prayers, through his intellectual searching, through Ambrose's preaching and the Scriptures, to the surrender of his heart in Milan. After that decisive turning, he gave up the career and worldly future he had planned for himself. Together with his son, Adeodatus, he was baptized by Saint Ambrose at the Easter Vigil of 387. In 391 he was ordained a priest, and in 395, at about forty-one years of age, he became a bishop. This is why Augustine still matters so deeply. He did not become holy by avoiding the questions and wounds that trouble the human heart; he became holy because he allowed Christ to enter them. For young people today who feel restless, divided, ambitious, wounded, or uncertain of who they are, Augustine's life proclaims that the search for identity is not hopeless. The heart finds itself when it finds the One who made it.

Part Two: The Journey of St. Augustine and Our Restless Hearts

⁴ General Audience of 9 January 2008: Saint Augustine of Hippo (1), page1; The Confessions, 2.3.1.

⁵ Catholic Encyclopedia, St. Augustine of Hippo; The Confessions - Book 4, page 2

⁶ Romans 13:12-14

The movement of Augustine's conversion speaks to us of major themes in the readings today. It speaks of living life awake, not just sleepwalking through it, not just going through the motions, checking off the boxes, but living our lives fully awake to the real and abiding presence of God. It speaks of readiness to encounter Jesus who desires to be intimately united with us as a man and woman are so united in marriage. It speaks of the need to discern between the wisdom of the world that so enraptures us and the wisdom of God that sets us free to live authentically human lives of virtue and holiness. It speaks of the need, as exemplified in the words and actions of St. Monica and St. Paul, to *"take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. My child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well."* Share faith, spread the gospel and be the love of Christ for others.

Reflection on his life through the prism of these themes illuminates our own movement of conversion and lifelong pursuit of holiness. We are all in the throes of a movement of conversion. Whether we are at the beginning, whether we have just had a moment such as he had, or whether it's now continuing into deeper faith, into greater practice, into greater holiness. We are all experiencing a movement of conversion. If you're here right now, it is happening. And so, reflection on his movement of conversion can strengthen in us the desire and ability to live fully awake, ready and wise. It can strengthen in us the desire and ability to live fully awake, ready, and wise. His struggles are our struggles, which makes Augustine a relatable guide for we who live amidst the tensions that exist in every age between the City of Man and the City of God. His eventual conversion in a Milanese garden serves as a testament to the power of grace and the reordering of the human heart toward God. His life is a map for discovering our authentic selves through faith.

St. Ambrose, who's preaching and friendship was so important to Augustine's movement of conversion, was firmly rooted in the way of St. Paul. He did not teach the gospel message in the ways of the trained orator, although he was capable. He didn't use the techniques of influencing people by persuasive arguments, which Augustine held in such high esteem. Ambrose wasn't sharing human wisdom; he was sharing the wisdom of God. Of the Cross that speaks for itself and does not need the persuasive language of the orator. Augustine recognized the intellectual soundness of what he was hearing, but it was the grace of God revealing the person of Christ and the message of the Cross in his soul.

*"I sought a way to gain the strength which I needed to enjoy you. But I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who is above all, God blessed forever. He was calling me and saying: I am the way of truth, I am the life. He was offering the food which I lacked the strength to take, the food he had mingled with our flesh. For the Word became flesh, that your wisdom, by which you created all things, might provide milk for us children."*⁷

The Jews demanded miracles, signs as proofs of Jesus' claims about God's saving power among them. Several times in the Gospels, Jesus was asked for a 'sign' to prove his credentials, even though his whole public life was a succession of signs which ordinary people frequently recognized. The Greeks, on the other hand, indulged in endless philosophizing about 'truth' and 'wisdom' without ever coming to grips with the realities of life. These two dispositions represent the dispositions of the human heart throughout history. They are the perennial obstacles to faith, growth in faith, and living the faith. At the heart of the difficulty is the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, the human condition of inclination to choose ourselves over God. Augustine's life, his parents, his own woundedness speaks to us of this struggle and of the power of the redeeming love of God as known through the merciful light of Christ, to set us free.

⁷ Confessions of Saint Augustine, Bishop (Lib. 7, 10, 18; 10, 27: CSEL 33, 157-163, 255)

Clearly, as we learn from the life of St. Augustine, the best way to prepare is not to think anxiously of the future, but to concentrate on the here and now. To learn to live totally in the present, to seek and find God there in the mess of life. This is what it means to be awake, to seek and find God in all of it. Let God speak through the tragedies, through the traumas, through the challenges. Let God speak through the good things that happen. Seeking as Augustine did, to make sense of our lives, to understand ourselves, our relationships and our experiences; we will become increasingly aware that God has been constantly part of our everyday lives, and we will grow in trust. When you seek the truth, you are seeking God whether you know it or not. When you seek authentic love, you are seeking God whether you know it or not. When you have been found and received that amazing grace, when you hear with new ears and see with new eyes as Augustine did, then in that movement of conversion the Holy Spirit will move you deeper and deeper. The new creation wrought by God within you will emerge more and more and more, whereby, illuminated by the light of Christ within you, you bear that light into the world as Augustine did. God willing there will be those among us who become such great saints. Lights in the world for hundreds of years after we're gone. Imagine you. There is no reason that you are not called, able, or equipped by God to be a saint like so many of these that inspire us. Let God rock your world. Let God ruin your plans. Let God have all of you.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Adeodatus	The son of Saint Augustine, born of his long-term relationship outside of marriage; he was baptized alongside his father in 387.
Catechumen	A person receiving instruction in the Christian faith in preparation for baptism.
City of God vs. City of Man	A thematic tension describing the struggle between living for God's eternal values versus living for temporal, worldly ambitions.
Doctor of the Church	A title given to saints recognized for having made significant contributions to the Church's understanding of grace, truth, and scripture.
Manichaeism	A dualistic religious movement that Augustine followed for a time, which he eventually rejected as erroneous and intellectually unsatisfying.
Movement of Conversion	The ongoing process of spiritual change and reordering of desires toward God, encompassing intellectual searching and the work of grace.
Patricius	Augustine's father; a man of worldly ambition and temperament who eventually became a catechumen before his death.
Restless Heart	A central Augustinian concept describing the human condition of searching for fulfillment in things that cannot satisfy, ultimately finding peace only in God.
Rhetoric	The art of persuasive speaking and writing; the profession Augustine was trained in and taught before his conversion.
Saint Ambrose	The Bishop of Milan whose intellectually sound preaching and friendship were instrumental in Augustine's conversion.
Saint Monica	Augustine's mother; a fervent Christian known for her persistent prayer, patience, and hope for the salvation of her husband and son.
Tolle Lege	Latin for "take up and read"; the childlike command Augustine heard in the garden that led him to open the Scriptures.