Celebration of the Year of Paul: “What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus?”

Pope Benedict declared a special Jubilee year to the Apostle Paul, which began June 29, 2008, and will last until June 28, 2009. This celebration is intended to renew dedication to the Gospel and to honor the 2,000th year of Paul’s birth. To support the yearlong celebration, Villanova University has scheduled various lectures and events in collaboration with the Year of Paul.

On, April 22, 2009, at 4:00pm, on the university’s campus, listen to David Aune, Ph.D., and Professor of New Testament, give a lecture entitled, “What Happened to Paul on the road to Damascus?”

APRIL 22, 2009
4:00pm, Connolly Center, Cinema Villanova University 800 Lancaster Avenue Villanova, PA 19085

In every Ancient, Ever New: Naming One’s Spirituality

Attend a retreat lead by Fr. Robert Durweke, O.S.A., which is inspired by post Vatican II era Augustinian Spirituality. On the beautiful grounds of Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center, come identity different aspects of your own spirituality. The retreat will include time for meditation, conferences and reflection.

MONDAY, JUNE 15 – SUNDAY, JUNE 21
Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center 103 Living Waters Lane Maggie Valley, NC 28751
PHONE 828-926-3833
WEB www.catholicretreat.org

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IN THIS ISSUE

Being in South Africa: Reflections from an Augustinian Volunteer

In January 2008, Brian Strassburger boarded a plane headed into the unknown- Durban, South Africa. He had finished up a year as an Augustinian Volunteer in the Bronx, NY, but had the itch for something more. He signed onto the international program in South Africa looking for a challenge and a way to experience service at its toughest.

P. 4

Tuscan Origins of the Order of Saint Augustine

The international Augustinian community of San Gimignano resides in the Convento Sant’Agostino, founded in 1280 within the territory where the order saw its beginnings. Some of the order’s original sites, where the stones speak without words, are nearby and can be easily visited.

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Convocation 2009: A Historic Gathering of the Four North American Provinces

The Augustinian North American Convocation 2009 will be a historic gathering of the North American Provinces to discuss Augustinian spirituality and mission, and to reflect on the history of Augustinians in North America.

P. 12
Dear Friends,

Welcome to the pleasant change of spring! Nature signals the difference in seasons, powerful changes, influencing how we relate to one another and the world around us. We find ourselves needing to get out of the house, to bask in the sun, to embrace life. Deeper, we recall in the Easter gift of redemption, the historical fact that God came to us in humanity and conquered our fear of death.

Augustinians are called to take note of changes in nature and the ways we are nurtured. These shifts of seasons and of self, help us sustain our commitment to one another. There is a constant’ newness in our relationships because we respond to opportunities to create ourselves anew, like shifts of seasons and of self, help us sustain our commitment to one another. There is a constant redemption, the historical fact that God came to us in humanity and conquered our fear of death.

You have an integral role. We are merely spinning around in a smaller world disconnected from the real universe unless people like you affirm our call, guide our mission and collaborate with us as we mutually live Christ and preach the gospel in our daily lives.

The pages of this issue of The Augustinian are filled with letters for the friars. You will read that our brother Michael Scuderi was ordained to the deaconate at St. Rita’s Church to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and other religious communities, and the church. You will read that our brother Michael Scuderi was ordained to the deaconate at St. Rita’s Church. You may find yourself searching for the Augustinians of the Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova. You may be looking for a story about one of the friars who serve in the community. You may be looking for a story about one of the friars who serve in the community.

Very Reverend
Donald F. Reilly, O.S.A.
PRIOR PROVINCIAL
PROVINCE OF SAINT THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

Letters

The Bronx, NY

Defining Courage

I’d be a safe bet to say that at least ¼ of the time I tell people that I am volunteering in the Bronx I get some rendition of “THE BRONX???”

The Bronx is so scary with so many dangerous people!!!! And more often than not it is followed with ↔ “That’s so courageous…”

Me! Courageous! I’d say signing up I certainly had a desire to serve. A hunger for adventure, definitively. I was unpreparedly in need of a break from writing terms papers. You could even blame my flat

for spontaneity. But courage is not a word I would use to describe how I got here, especially after meeting some of my favorite New York City residents. Janice, Angel and Johnny Five have become the ultimate definition of courage.

Janice, a 21 year old resident of Siena House. The shelter where I work provided me with my first definition of courage. She, unfortunately like so many others, does not have any family members who support her. Her baby’s father is in the picture when he feel like it and when we met she was about to go through her first labor and delivery alone. Typically in situations such as Janice’s, one of the Sisters who work at Siena will go to the hospital with the woman. However, this time, I was asked. I have never been so flattered and yet incredibly scared in my entire life.

Janice is my definition of courage with just the clothes on her back, her newborn baby and the paperwork saying she is eligible to remain in the shelter system. My second definition is reaffirmed every single morning on my walk to work as I am greeted with the familiar “Hello! Hello! Blue-eyes!” (an accidental fumbling of the words “blue eyes” which turned into our own inside joke). Angel, a middle aged homeless man brings me a smile and more often than not, a full belly laugh each and every morning. He is always asking me how I am doing, telling me over and over and over how much he likes my eyes, proposing to me, letting me pet his dog Quero, or showing me his latest dance move.

He is a very educated former school teacher who is down on his luck. He gets turned down from housing opportunities because he refuses to leave behind his beloved best friend Qurenie. He has been asked to move out of friends’ houses because each time he moves in he also brings his entire entourage of homeless friends to the house because “If he’s got a place to stay, everyone else should, too.” Angel is my definition of courage.

Johnny Five, my third definition, exudes courage. He is a gentleman who has struggled with homelessness much of his adult life. In a city that glows, Johnny has called a dark cave under a roadway “home”. He has had his bout with drugs and alcohol and unfortunately, still slips into his old habits. Although his lifestyle is one which I can’t even begin to imagine or understand, he has proven that he is one of the most sincere, to the point, wild, courageous individuals I have ever met.

His story is so hard to believe, as in his friendly demeanor and upbeat attitude considering his struggles. I am in awe of his spirit and his pure determination. He falters between wanting to have an apartment and design clothing and dipping back under the streets to the place he calls home. He has nothing. Literally nothing and yet he is so giving. Johnny Five is my definition of courage.

Through Janice, Angel and Johnny Five I have learned that oftentimes courage comes with great sacrifice. It is formed out of necessity; commitment; anguish and, most importantly, love.

I now laugh when people call the Bronx “scary”. The hustle and bustle of the New York streets manages to muffle me to sleep each night. The tram lines that overwhelmed me initially have become routine, gracing me with independence. Even the greeting from the #11 bus driver who picks me up each morning has become familiar. This big city has become my home and I am thankful for Janice, Angel and Johnny Five for sharing their story with me, showering me with love and friendship and giving the word courage a whole new meaning.

MEGHAN MCKENNA
Augustinian Volunteer, Bronx 2008-2009

Augustinian Volunteers

Volume III . Issue I

2008-09

LETTERS

by the augustinian

20nine design Studios

natalie agraz

augustinian

Volunteer letters

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Dear friends,

Prior Provincial

Very Reverend

Donald F. Reilly, O.S.A.

PRIOR PROVINCIAL

Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova

Director of Missions

Anthony P. Burrascano, O.S.A.

Director of Justice and Peace

John e. Deegan, O.S.A.

Director of Development

Natalie Agraz

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2008-09

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Volume iii . Issue i

2008-09

LETTERS FROM THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL

volunteer letters
“SO HOW WAS AFRICA?” THE QUESTION IS INNOCENT ENOUGH: I DID JUST RETURN FROM A YEAR LIVING ABROAD. BUT HOW BROAD CAN YOU GET?

IN JANUARY 2008, I BOARDED A PLANE HEADED INTO THE UNKNOWN- DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA. I HAD FINISHED UP A STINT AS AN AUGUSTINIAN VOLUNTEER IN THE BRONX, NY, BUT HAD THE ITCH FOR SOMETHING MORE. I SIGNED ONTO THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM IN SOUTH AFRICA LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE AND A WAY TO EXPERIENCE SERVICE AT ITS TOUGHEST.
During my time in South Africa, I committed three days a week to a grade school working with the sports and reading programs, and spent those afternoons mentoring children at a boys’ home run by Augustinian sisters. The other two workdays I helped patients at a local AIDS hospice. Between the chaos of dealing with overcrowded classrooms of 50 students to the emotional toll of dealing with overcrowded classrooms, I encountered some the challenges. More than I can count! As my year began to reach its close, I started looking back at my time to find ways to measure the successes I achieved. It was not as easy as I had hoped. It was tough to measure, and the more that I tried, the less those measures seemed to matter. Through this process, I came to realize something very important: my year was not about what I did or accomplished. It was about being. It was about being present in ways I never could have realized or comprehended before my year began.

In trying to evaluate my efforts, I realized that it was not appropriate to summarize my year based on how many patients I helped receive disability grants or who achieved higher grades because of my tutoring. These were not the defining moments or experiences. The defining moments of my year could not be quantified like that: they were moments that I simply lived.

When Nomphilo, a young girl born with AIDS, through no fault or act of her own, was dehydrated and unable to take food or liquid and needed to spend a night in the lobby of a government hospital on a drip, writhing in pain, there was nothing I could do. But I was there.

When Keagan, an orphaned child at St. Theresa’s Boys’ Home, found out that his oldest brother had died by taking his own life, there was nothing I could do. But I was there.

When a terrible storm wiped out a section of the nearby rural township of Molweni and homes were destroyed and lives lost, and I traveled down there to see what had happened, there was nothing that I could do. So I gave up on that thinking and decided to just be present.

I encountered a little girl whose house had been demolished by the storm. Amid all the drama, she had no real concept of the devastation around her. She was not easily or quickly won over, but a few high-fives with some goofy faces, and a connection was made. We were not able to communicate in a verbal sense. But I was there. I was present to her; I was not distant. As my year began to reach its close, I started looking back at my time to find ways to measure the successes I achieved. It was not as easy as I had hoped. It was tough to measure, and the more that I tried, the less those measures seemed to matter. Through this process, I came to realize something very important: my year was not about what I did or accomplished. It was about being. It was about being present in ways I never could have realized or comprehended before my year began.

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“Sing a new song to the Lord” is a refrain that comes to mind whenever I think of the earliest days of the Order of Saint Augustine, which, living in this ancient convento, is often. It reflects what must have been a prevailing mood at that time. At different moments in the story of a religious family you can almost hear the music. Usually it comes from that first song, the one sung at the Order’s foundation. Every now and then the melody returns and wants to be sung again, perhaps in a new key or with updated lyrics. That is why we make so much of important anniversaries like the Grand Union of 1256. We still believe in that song.

St. Augustine once said that anyone who has learned to love the new life has learned to sing a new song (Sermon 34, 1). He added that the song is new because the people who sing it are new, and Christ made them new (ibid. 6; cf. Is Psalm 32 2, 3). What was it, then, that was so new about those men and their song back in the 13th century when they stood at the dawn of a new religious Order? And what was Christ working within them? A few thoughts suggest themselves. But first, a bit of history.

Actually there were two events within the space of twelve years that could be said to have made up the foundation of the Order of Saint Augustine. The first was the so-called Little Union of 1244, also called the “Hermit” union. The previous year Pope Innocent IV invited 61 eremitical communities from the areas of Lucca, Pisa and Siena in Tuscany to join together as a new religious order with the Rule and the monastic bent of St. Augustine. The first spirit of the new Order was clearly contemplative, as was the eremitical life that preceded it. But now there was a different slant, given by Augustine’s Rule. To the previous life of prayer and penance, Augustine added the distinguishing note of fraternal love: “Before all else, live together in harmony, being of one mind and heart on the way to God” (1,2). To the traditional ascetical practices, Augustine lent his sense of balance: “As far as your...
health allows, keep your bodily appetites in check by fasting and abstinence from food and drink” (3,2). “It is better to be able to make do with a little than to have plenty” (3,5). Within the framework of the common life, he highlighted: “The degree to which you are concerned for the interests of the community rather than for your own is the criterion by which you can judge how much progress you have made. Thus in all the fleeting necessities of human life something sublime and permanent reveals itself, namely love” (3,5).

At the same time something else new was happening. The Order began to move into urban settings. In the general catalogue of 2005 you can find the foundation dates of certain Augustinian houses within important cities: Santo Spirito in Florence (1250), Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (1250), Tolentino (1256) and Santa Trinita in Viterbo (1256).

The spiritual life was beginning to be understood less rigidly and to show signs of evolving toward a broader expression. The majority of the members, however, continued to live in outlying areas. To get an idea of just how outlying these areas were, you can find an amusing description of how to reach the remains of the hermitage of Valle Bona today by car and foot: “From Luca follow Provincial Highway # 145 along the right bank of the river. After about 9 km, pass Borgo a Mezzano and look on your left for the road for Fabbriate di Valico (7.7 km); outside the village after about 2 km take the dirt road, a few hundred meters later cross the stream and climb up the hill to a farm house. That is what is left of the hermitage with its little church but no longer with its bell tower.”

The second foundational event was the Grand Union of 1256. There are two theories regarding this later union. One speaks of the Holy See’s grafting four hermitical Orders – the John Bonites, the Williamites, the Brettino hermits and the Hermits of Monte Favale – onto the Augustinian Hermits of Tuscany, making it larger and stronger by the addition of new forces. The other speaks of a completely new Order freshly composed of the five previously existing Orders. According to the first theory, the foundation date of the Order of St. Augustine would be 1244, according to the second, 1256.

More important, however, was the new nature of the Order. With the promulgation of the papal bull, Ricet Eclesiastic catholicae, by Alexander IV, things changed radically. The Order of Hermits of Saint Augustine became a “Mendicant” Order: The Mendicant Movement, to which the Augustinians were being joined, was a revolutionary response to a revolutionary situation in Europe. Life had been evolving rapidly in commerce and in society. Urban centers were springing up and boiling over with activity. Populations were growing quickly, and there came the need for a new evangelization. Religious Orders like the Dominicans and the Franciscans were born, with a life style that was closer to the people and more adaptable to serving. Their “friars” – as their members came to be called – were sent to preach to the people of the cities, to educate on the faith, and to inspire the citizens to the Christian life. In 1256 a new Order entered their ranks. The Augustinian Hermits became the Augustinian “Friers”.

The image I have of those times is helped every time I visit nearby Siena with its crowded medieval streets, classy shops and important banking institutions. It was to centers like this that the new Augustinian friars moved from hermitages like Rosia along the road to the coast, Lecce and San Leonardo by Lake Varese, and Sant’Antonio near the hot springs of Valaspra. Within the city walls they began to build one “convento” – as they called their houses - after another with its adjacent urban church in most of the important cities of Italy. Beyond the Alps, houses grew up throughout the European capitals and commercial cities.

Back in Siena, if you have the energy to go up to the top of the Civic Tower, you can look down on the roofs of the city and see four very large churches emerge out of four sections of the city, all equalivant from each other. They are San Domenico, San Francesco, Sant’Agostino, and Santa Maria del Carmine, the homes of the four principal Mendicant Orders in Siena, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Augustinians and the Carmelites. This same pattern was repeated in many other medieval cities.

Within the history of the Augustinian Order there is no particular foundation of the myth. There are no charismatic figures to point to, no miraculous events, and no breath-taking manifestations of the will of God. It all seems rather matter-of-fact. After 40 years the Mendicant Movement was working well. Church authorities, with their good organizational sense, saw the value of uniting existing religious groups and placing them, each with its own originality, into the Movement for the common good of the Church. That is what we mean when we say that it was the Church herself who founded the Order.

With the event of the Grand Union the Order’s “new song to the Lord” definitely changed key, and its words were updated. The hermits were no longer hermits, but friars. The strictly contemplative life moved into a more flexible mode. Out of the woods! Off of the hilltops! Yet the original melody could still be heard. There was still the genius of Augustine and the harmony his Rule gave to the common life. The air of contemplation was still recognizable. Only now another one of Augustine’s great qualities went into play, his spirit as pastor of souls.
The Augustinian North American Convocation 2009 will be an historic gathering of the North American Provinces to discuss Augustinian spirituality and mission, and to reflect on the history of Augustinians in North America. The conference will be held June 8-12 at Pheasant Run Conference located in St. Charles, IL. This is also an opportunity for North America. The conference will be held June 8-12 at Pheasant Run gathering of the North American Provinces to discuss Augustinian

As the Augustinians of North America meet this summer, the Prior General of the Order, Very Rev. Robert Prevost, O.S.A., reflects on why this gathering is significant today and important for the future. Here are his responses to the questions:

When was the idea of a Convocation gathering of all North American provinces conceptualized and why?

Several years ago the Ordinary Provincial Chapters of two of the four provinces suggested that the friars of North America begin talking to one another about a common future which might or might not result in some type of federation of the provinces. The provincials, who have been meeting together annually over the course of many years, decided that if would be beneficial to invite the members of the Province Councils to take part in their annual meeting in February 2007. In discussing possible ways of promoting further dialogue among the Provinces, the decision was made to organize the Convocation. The idea was to promote a gathering of as many friars as possible so they could get to know one another better, become better acquainted with the living history of each Province, and to begin talking about our future as Augustinians in the United States and Canada.

What is the historical significance of this gathering?

In recent years, in various regions of the Order throughout the world, Augustinians are recognizing that there is much to be gained by working together, even across our traditional province lines. Latin America was a pioneer in many ways, with the creation of OALA, the Organization of Augustinians of Latin America, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. More recently, there have been movements occurring among the friars of North America in another instance of a desire for greater collaboration and of an openness to envisioning new and different ways of working together in the future. What will be occurring at the convocation in North America will be of interest to the entire Order which in various places has been examining and will continue to examine alternative ways of viewing ourselves and working together.

It is important to point out that there is already a great deal of collaboration going on among the four Provinces in North America. This includes the formation programs, Hispanic ministry, the education apostolate, and missions. It is therefore significant that many are looking for even greater cooperation, in sharing resources and working together to prepare for the future of the Order in Canada and the United States. As Augustinians we consider our identity and mission to be a great value, and it is an important part of our witness to the Church. When Augustinians come together, whether in small groups of two or three or in much larger gatherings, there is an immediate sense of familiarity that takes place without much need for introduction. So one result of the gathering will be a greater awareness and appreciation of our unity, our brotherhood, the values we share in common and the work we are doing in our various provinces. Another outcome, once again, will be the witness this offers to Augustinians in other provinces, and, we hope, to the people where we are serving throughout the world. In addition, I think that the younger members of the Order are asking important questions, and I hope that the Convocation will be a real source of hope and encouragement for them and for all who take part.

What specific goals would you like the four provinces to work toward at this meeting, if any?

The Provinces and province councils in their preparatory meetings during February of this year deliberately wished to leave a great deal of space for the work of the Holy Spirit in this gathering. While much planning and preparation has already gone into the general leading up to the Convocation, it has to do mainly with what is going on among the four Provinces during this past year in historic, and actually quite remarkable. They have already decided to request becoming one of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and it has been emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and it has been emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and it has been emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and it has been emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be), and it has been emphasized how important the celebration of the liturgy and common prayer will be). As an international Order, what outcomes would you like to see evolve from this gathering for North America Provinces and internationally?

Certainly the coming together for a week of conversation, prayer, renewal of friendship and the making of new acquaintances, in itself is of great value. As Augustinians we consider our identity as brothers who share life in common to be a great value, and it is an important part of our witness to the Church. When Augustinians come together, whether in small groups of two or three or in much larger gatherings, there is an immediate sense of familiarity that takes place without much need for introduction. So one result of the gathering will be a greater awareness and appreciation of our unity, our brotherhood, the values we share in common and the work we are doing in our various provinces. Another outcome, once again, will be the witness this offers to Augustinians in other provinces, and, we hope, to the people where we are serving throughout the world. In addition, I think that the younger members of the Order are asking important questions, and I hope that the Convocation will be a real source of hope and encouragement for them and for all who take part.

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St. Theresa’s Boys’ Home is run by the Augustinian Sisters in Durban, South Africa. It houses about 75 boys with ages between infancy-17 years old. Some of the boys are orphans, and the rest are referred to the home by social workers due to problems with abuse or neglect. Many have lost their parents to AIDS, some are infected themselves. In this photo, Minenhle stands in front of a wall of handprints from the boys.

A GLIMPSE
**THE AUGUSTINIAN FAMILY, A SERIES OF CONVERSATIONS BY NATALIE AGRAZ**

**PAUL IMBESI**

Paul Imbesi graduated from St. Augustine’s Prep, Richland, New Jersey in 1997 and Villanova University, your mother has served on the boards of both of those schools. Tell me about your personal history with the Augustinians.

**PI:** Well, I started at St. Augustine’s elementary school in Ocean City and from there went to St. Augustine’s Prep in Richland, NJ. That’s where I first met the Augustinians. We were one of the last small classes, my graduating class was only 42 students. Fr. Steve LaRosa was the head of the school then and my religion teacher. He was really quite a character. He really shaped the school, he saw the Prep through good times and bad. In Fr. Steve’s mind nobody ever really graduated, he always saw us as his kids. He had this tough guy facade to the students but he really had a caring fatherly heart. I ran into him five years after graduation and he told me to get a haircut. That kind of thing. And Fr. Paul Galetto is really carrying on in the same spirit; his heart and soul are in that school.

**NA:** You developed a special relationship with another Augustinian, Father Appicci, before he died, tell us about that.

**PI:** I get to know Fr. Appicci during a rough patch in my life. I was kind of at loose ends in a job that I didn’t like and thinking of getting back into journalism it was 2006 and he had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Just from talking to him I thought he would be a great interview. It was harder than I thought because he was such a humble man; he never wanted to talk about himself. He never told me about inviting Dr. Martin Luther King to Villanova during the civil rights movement, or speaking out against the Vietnam War or all the things he was responsible for in Chulucanas, Peru. I heard about most of these things in the eulogy at his funeral. Fr. Appicci was really a remarkable man he knew how to get things done, he knew how to change things and he did it by talking to everybody, working with everybody, bringing everybody to the table. I went to Chulucanas in November of 2007 with Fr. Scott Ness and Anthony Dellomo, it was great to see first hand, all the things he had talked about in the third world. It was great to see the things he cared so much about, the hospital, the seminary, the simple faith of these poor people. It made a big impression on me and I’m thankful I did it. It was also great to experience another culture. Problem solving in the third world is so much harder, they don’t have the white board, action plan type of mentality. It’s so much harder to get things done. You start spinning wheels you didn’t even know you had.

**NA:** You’re continuing a family tradition of service by filling a seat on the Board at St. Augustine’s Prep. What have you learned from the experience so far?

**PI:** I’ve learned I have big shoes to fill! I’m still learning. The board does many things and is broken down into committees, each dealing with a different aspect of the school. I’m involved with the alumni and fundraising arm. One of the things I’ve always liked about the Prep is the diversity of the student body, they try to keep the tuition as low as possible so they can attract students from all walks of life. You don’t have to come from a wealthy background to go to school there. That diversity is part of the soul of the school, they find great students everywhere and they have the same high expectations for everyone. Everybody feels included and accepted. To maintain this feeling we need to have scholarship money available and good facilities, resources are always a challenge.

**NA:** Did you see a common string going through the Augustinian institutions you have been associated with?

**PI:** Yes, it’s an environment of encouragement and a level playing field, usually working on teams and in small groups. Everybody’s out to work hard and do their best. On St. Augustine’s Board, Fr. Dan Reilly has said, we are a welcoming, supportive feeling. I felt the same spirit at St Augustine’s Prep and Villanova as a student.

**NA:** As the youngest Board member and an alum, your in a position to influence things now, what contributions do you hope to make to the Prep?

**PI:** First, I’d like to say I feel so honored to have been asked to continue our family’s tradition of service and support to St. Augustine’s. And yes, it’s different sitting on the other side, the decision making side. The Prep like every other private institution will be facing tough times. We need all the time, talent and treasure the alumni is indebted to all who serve on the **Development Council.**

**THE AUGUSTINIAN**  SPRING/SUMMER  2009

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**THE AUGUSTINIAN**  SPRING/SUMMER  2009
Amazing Grace
BY JOHN J. LYDON, O.S.A.

“This is the Good News of which I have become minister by a gift of God, a grace he gave me, when his power worked in me. This grace was given to me, the least among all the holy ones: to announce … the immeasurable riches of Christ.” St. Paul, (Letter to the Ephesians 3:6).

By Little they gave up either because their primary education was left to its own fate. The zone was considered to be a terrorist zone by the government and the streets of his small town. The police and army, in charge of security, did not dare enter that region because of the many valleys and mountains that made ambush a certain fate. So the zone was considered to be a terrorist zone by the government and left to its own fate.

In order to have men serve as terrorist it was very common for men to be recruited from the underbrush and hide until it seemed safe. Several of Elevi’s friends did not make it and were scrapped up in this evil strategy of terrorist recruiting. Most of them died in the years of guerrilla warfare that followed. However, Elevi did make it out of the town where he was old enough and headed to Lima to work and make a new life for himself. He had one aunt in Lima and headed there finding work as a cook in a restaurant in the area that surrounds the Augustinian house in Lima. In the parish where his aunt lives he participated in the youth group and there was told about different lives of the saints. He read about St. Augustine’s consecration and was immediately drawn to it. One day while working he mentioned to a friend about St. Augustine and the friend told him that the Augustinian friars were just around the corner from the restaurant. He decided to stop by and talk to the priest in the community and little by little wondered if he was also called to that lifestyle. He eventually decided to make the leap of faith and entered the Augustinian formation program. Finishing first in his class throughout his philosophy studies he continued on to the noviceate and made his profession of vows. To walk on the edge between a free life and a life of imposed terror, to go to the country’s capital city with no ties and look for work, and to mysteriously be brought into the Augustinian family, is surely a sign of the great victory of God’s grace in the life of Elevi.

Victory of God’s Grace
BY LUIS M. MADERA, O.S.A.

On January 25th, the liturgical feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, the paradigmatic Christian story of the victory of God’s grace, these three young men, overcoming obstacles that to many would have been insurmountable, made their profession as Augustinians.

Sabino was a deaf mother with neither education nor experiences. With Sabino was his deaf mother making the first trip in her life to Lima, accompanied by one of the Augustinian sisters. With Klever was his sister making the long trip to celebrate with her life to Lima, accompanied by one of the Augustinian sisters. With Elevi was his aunt who made the first trip to celebrate with her. With Elevi was his aunt whose welcome mat made his stay in Lima possible. They and the many Augustinians who participated in the mass were witnesses as each of the young men came up in front of the altar and knelt to profess their vows. All were witnesses once more of the grace of God overcoming darkness and inviting new Augustinians to follow his light.
Despite further disagreement, the exchange was friendly, otherwise, no progress toward the truth of the matter would have been possible. When winning is the only thing, then people don’t matter.

It is nice to see how a man well-versed in polemics and fully aware of the truth he stood for could recognize how truth-seeking takes us beyond this-or-that conversation, beyond some momentary “victory”, beyond which we can end up fighting about. It’s a community affair—or at least a matter of two or three. Getting those two or three to share ‘in His name’ doesn’t even seem to happen when the “I-am-right” attitude takes over. In the process, I think truth gets lost too.

“Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A.

“Let neither of us say that he has found the truth. Let us seek it in such a way as if neither of us knows it. For it is thus that we shall be able to seek it with diligence and harmony, if without any rash presumption we do not believe that we have found it and know it.” — Saint Augustine (Answer to the Letter of Mani Known as the Foundation, I, 4)

Religious, academic, scientific, and political arenas are places of debate and controversy. That is not a bad thing. Spirited discussion, airing of different points of view, the freedom to propose ideas that can be vetted, aired, dissected, and evaluated from all sides is a good way to seek truth and understanding. But these discussions can be violent. The quest for truth is not a contest to be won, a battle to be fought, or a competition with winners and losers, right and wrong. When it takes on the characteristics of battle, no matter how civil it may appear, the quest for truth loses the humility that is the condition for the possibility of truth. Where there is fear of dominance of one view over all others, fear of humiliation for expressing a point of view that others have, or fear of having a view dismissed outright because someone judges me as a person unqualified to express a point of view, then what is lost is the truth of self. We find truth when it possesses us—we have no power on our own to possess truth.

The spiritual and psychological maturity required to engage in the search for truth requires humility more than any other virtue or ability. This humility opens us to the awareness of our own limitations and the limitations of our experience and perspective without diminishing the fact that I have something of value to contribute to the search. This humility further opens me to the possibility that another who has experiences and therefore owns the exchange is a person unqualified to express a point of view, then what is lost is the truth of self. We find truth when it possesses us—we have no power on our own to possess truth.

“We are men made after the image of our Creator... We run among all the things beneath us—things which could not have been created, formed, or ordered without the hand of the most essential, wise and good God—and through all the works of creation. We gather from some things more manifest marks, from other things less apparent traces of His essence. And, beholding His image in ourselves, like the prodigal child we recall our thoughts homeward, and we return to Him from whom we have fallen. There our being shall have no end, our knowledge no error, our love no offence.” —Saint Augustine, “The City of God”, XI, 28

Patrick Laferty, O.S.A.

There are certain tenets of clericalism that fly in the face of Augustine’s humble quest for truth that his statement epitomizes. They might be put like this: “I have the truth.” Let me teach it to you. You must sit and listen and obey. To question me is to question truth. Your questions are not questions but statements emanating from your refusal to accept my legitimate, established authority. My office and position assure me and you of the authenticity of my claim. Do not question me!”

In his fight against the Donatists and other heresies of his day, Augustine did insist that his position was the truthful position — the position of the Church. But he labored to demonstrate it. He did not adopt the tenacious invulnerability of mere authoritative statements from on high. Augustine’s words serve as a warning that our fall back position in our struggle against modern fallacies is “to sit and listen and obey.” And, if you do, your own wisdom and potential for discerning the truth gets lost.

Augustinian Receives Award

Fr. Fritz Cerullo, O.S.A., the former pastor of St. Mary Church in Dover, NH, was awarded the first Wentworth Douglass Hospital Spiritual Care Award. In this first-time recognition of a spiritual leader, staff members honored Fritz for his devotion to the spiritual health of their patients.

Chaplain Julien Oliver presented Fr. Fritz Cerullo, O.S.A. the award.

Diconeate Ordination of Augustinian

The Ordination to the diaconate of Michael R. Scuderi, O.S.A. was held on Saturday, March 28, 2009 at the 3pm Mass at St. Rita of Cascia, Philadelphia, PA. After recently completed his theological studies in Chicago, IL, Michael is currently assigned to Saint Rita of Cascia Parish, Philadelphia, PA.

Stay on top of news and events from the Augustinian world — sign up for Augustinian eNews at www.augustinian.org.
Following the vow of obedience, friars find themselves called to where they are needed. Each issue of *The Augustinian* hopes to connect you with some familiar faces as we provide brief updates on friars serving throughout the Province. Watch here to track down that old classmate, pastor, chemistry teacher, chaplain, philosophy professor, coworker or friend.

**Luis A. Vera-Sanchez, O.S.A.**

Fr. Luis A. Vera-Sanchez, O.S.A., serves as Director of Students at the Saint Augustine Friary and the Catholic Theological Union, in Chicago, IL. In 2002, Fr. Vera-Sanchez was first assigned as prior and formation team member at the Augustinian college, Chicago, IL. In 2007, Fr. Vera-Sanchez transferred to Chicago, IL in 2007. Fr. Vera-Sanchez was first assigned as prior and formation team member at the Augustinian college, Washington, DC before the Province's theological and formation program was transferred to Chicago, IL, in 2007. Fr. Vera-Sanchez maintained the same positions until he was recently reassigned as the Director of Students. Fr. Vera-Sanchez first encountered Augustinian friars in 1987, when he moved to New York, NY, to work and improve his English-language skills. He entered the Hispanic vocation program, Casa Tolentino, at Saint Nicholas of Tolentino parish, Brooklyn, NY, in 1989. Fr. Vera-Sanchez was received into the Order as a novice in August 1990, and after a year at Good Counsel Novitiate, New Hamburg, NY, he professed first vows on September 10, 1990. He was ordained to the priesthood on August 20, 1991, at Saint Deus Church, Havertown, PA, by Bishop Peter Van Dienes, O.S.A., Bishop of Manokwari, Indonesia. Prior to his assignment at Merriam College, Fr. Vera-Sanchez served at Saint Rita of Cascia parish, Philadelphia, PA (1971-1977) where he founded the Saint Rita Community center, an intergenerational program for elderly and youth.

**Francis J. Cerullo, O.S.A.**

Fr. Fritz Cerullo, O.S.A, will be working with the Development Office of the Provincial Office, beginning in June and will be working out of Andover, MA. He recently had been pastor of Saint Mary parish in Dover, NH for eight and a half years. Fr. Fritz has been engaged in parochial ministry since 1994 when he was assigned to Saint Augustin Parish, Andover, MA. Since then he has offered consulting for development to various parishes, schools and agencies. Fr. Fritz gained his knowledge and experience in development when he served as Director of Development at Merrimack College for 12 years (1982-1994).

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Fr. John E. Bresnanahan, O.S.A., currently resides at Saint Thomas Monastery, Villanova, PA since 1955. Prior to his time at Saint Thomas Monastery, Fr. Bresnanahan spent many years providing service to the Augustinian community by teaching at colleges such as Merrimack College, North Andover, MA, Villanova University, Villanova, PA, and at Augustinian College, Washington, DC. Fr. Bresnanahan was received into the Order on September 9, 1929, and he professed his first vows on September 10, 1929. He attended Villanova College, (1929-1933), where he received his BA in philosophy. He professed solemn vows on September 10, 1932. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 6, 1936, at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, by Bishop John McNamara.

In 1968, Father became the librarian at Augustinian College, a position he held until 1995 when he came to serve at Saint Thomas Monastery. As librarian, Fr. Bresnanahan advised many theological students of our community and of many other communities, as they researched topics for their class projects and papers. You can read full biographies of these Augustinians, and post your own reflections or favorite memory, online at www.augustinian.org

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**IN PARADISUM**

The following Augustinian friars were called home to God in recent months. You can read full biographies of these Augustinians, and post your own reflections or favorite memory, online at www.augustinian.org

**FRANK P. CUCCINOTTA, O.S.A.**

Born: 8/31/1922
First Profession: 5/10/1962
Ordained: 11/19/1966
Died: 1/22/2009
“Then and now. Frank was a Man of God. I have the deepest respect for him, then and now. He, like so many Augustinians, then and now, reflect the life of Christ in unique and authentic ways. Requested in peace.”

**GEORGE R. MORGAN, O.S.A.**

Born: 8/19/1919
First Profession: 5/10/1962
Ordained: 11/19/1966
Died: 1/5/2009
“For thousands of Merrimack College alums, Fr. George was an embodiment of the College’s Catholic identity and Augustinian heritage. He brought the Augustinian mission of care and compassion to all he worked with.”

**GEORGE J. CALLAGHAN, O.S.A.**

Born: 12/29/1929
First Profession: 5/10/1950
Ordained: 3/26/1956
Died: 12/24/2008
“In the midst of his final years of offices, he sought to journey with other who were in pain and experienced fear. He offered encouragement to those around him.”

**THOMAS F. MARTIN, O.S.A.**

Born: 12/20/1943
First Profession: 5/10/1962
Ordained: 12/20/1969
Died: 2/20/2009
Thomas Martin, an Augustinian friar from the Midwest Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, taught for 14 years at our Province’s Villanova University.

“armoned as someone who was a friend and companion to those seeking to discover God’s living presence in the mystery of life”
Dear Friends,

I am writing to you today because I have a concern. My concern is probably similar to yours; how are families going to make it through this difficult time with an unstable economy and loss of jobs? Wherever we turn, bad news follows bad news. We Augustinians are living and working with those who are hurting. In this country and in our missions abroad, we witness first hand the consequences of loss and the stress that accompanies financial worry.

Companionship through difficult times is what we have done in our country for the past two hundred years. We inherited this perspective on life from those friars who brought it with them from Ireland. Our parishes, our schools, and our missions, place us in direct contact with those who need our support. In order to stand with those who rely on our presence, we have established The Augustinian Fund. The Fund has enabled us to sustain our commitments, support those in need and make a difference in the lives of our sick and elderly friars. This year’s Fund goal is $1,000,000. The brochure I sent you last fall describes why that amount is needed.

I am asking you to support this year’s Fund by giving what you can. I realize the boldness of my request. I also know your Augustinian heart and your generous spirit. You have been a gift to us with your generosity and friendship. I turn to you to ask for your support. My fellow friars are doing God’s work. My responsibility is to make sure they have what they need to do that work.

If you have already contributed to this year’s Augustinian Fund you have our deepest gratitude. If you have not yet had the opportunity, may I ask you to make a donation either online at www.augustinianfund.org or mail a gift to 214 Ashwood Road Villanova, PA 19085. I assure you, your gift will make a difference. Be assured of my prayers for you and your family. I ask for your prayers for my fellow friars and myself as we strive to live the gospel in our daily lives.

Sincerely,

Very Reverend
Donald F. Reilly, O.S.A.
Prior Provincial

A newly updated Augustinian Fund website.
Look for it soon at augustinianfund.org

Coming this May!

Key New Features Including:
• Great new look with improved navigation
• New and easier ways to donate including online donations
• New online Augustinian Fund store
• Updated photo gallery
• Blog and Videos
What do these men from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and the U.S. have in common?

Everything!

*Casa Agustin*
*(Hispanic Discernment)*

Province of
Saint Thomas of Villanova
*(Eastern U.S.)*

305.474.0576
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*(Midwestern U.S.)*

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