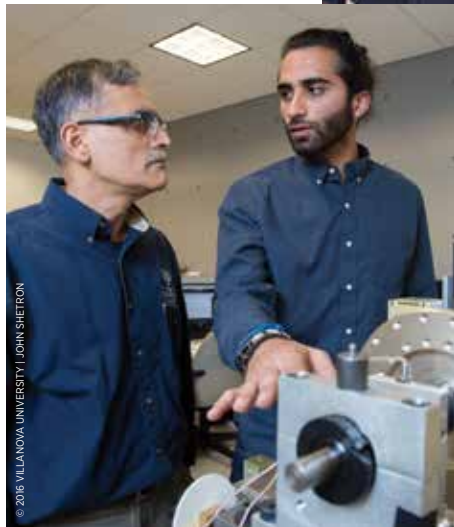




VILLANOVA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING



Teaching with Augustine: **A VITAL Conversation**



VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY



A publication of the
Office for Mission and Ministry
and the Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning

Teaching with Augustine: A VITAL Conversation

Dear faculty member:

The Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning (VITAL), in partnership with the Augustinian Institute and the Center for Faith and Learning, seeks to offer faculty diverse forums and ongoing opportunities for conversations about learning and teaching at Villanova University, and in particular the University’s distinctive identity as a Catholic and Augustinian institution.

St. Augustine, while engaged in extensive written exchange with others on God’s relation to humankind, has formulated his thinking about the role of a teacher and the task of teaching. His thoughts are captured in the term “Augustinian pedagogy” and they serve to shepherd our work as teacher-scholars at Villanova. They inform questions such as:

- How does being faculty at Villanova shape how we understand our roles and responsibilities?
- How are St. Augustine and his writings relevant to us?
- How might we incorporate principles of Augustinian pedagogy into our teaching?

This resource has been designed to engage you in a personal journey of discovery—reflection on and integration of Villanova’s mission and Augustinian pedagogy. This journey will take you to the intersections of:

- Villanova’s mission with your personal mission and vocation as teacher and scholar
- Augustinian pedagogy with your instructional work, continuous enrichment and fulfillment

The journey will be in community with colleagues across colleges and disciplines, as well as with those who know and embrace the wisdom of St. Augustine in their personal and professional lives.

I am especially grateful to the Office for Mission and Ministry, which provided content for this publication and to the Augustinian Institute, which provided funding for this initiative. We hope you will find this publication and the program on which it is based helpful, personally meaningful, and inspiring.

With kind regards,

Gabriele Bauer

Gabriele Bauer, PhD
Director
Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning
Fall, 2016



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Articles from *Heart of the Matter*, an annual publication of the Office for Mission and Ministry, have been selected and arranged for use for *Teaching with Augustine: A VITAL Conversation*. This professional enrichment program for faculty is jointly sponsored by the Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning and the Office for Mission and Ministry.

60 University Mission Statement

“**NEVER** be satisfied

with what you already are,
if you want to be what you are not yet.

For where you have become **pleased** with yourself,
there you will **REMAIN**.

And if you say, ‘*That is enough*,
then you are finished.

ALWAYS DO MORE.

ALWAYS KEEP MOVING.

ALWAYS GO FORWARD.

Do not get **stuck**.

Do not go **back**.

Do not get **lost**. ”

St. Augustine—Sermon 169, 18

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WHAT'S YOUR MISSION

Someone, sometime, when you least expect it, is going to ask you, "Why are you here?" First year students get asked the question during Orientation on the Freshman Survey. Sizable numbers say that they come "to get a degree" or "become financially well off." Thinking about the WHY of being here isn't the same as knowing WHAT you plan to do while here. Freshmen plan to "maintain a B average" and to "get involved" among other things. What about the rest of us? What motivates faculty, staff and administrators to be here? Some are attracted to our emphasis on the Liberal Arts and on undergraduate education. Others are interested in Villanova's religious affiliation or simply like the location, size and beauty of the campus.

DISCOVERING ONE'S TRUE MISSION REQUIRES UNLEARNING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT WE VALUE AND HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES.

Regardless, the questions “why” and “what” don’t quite add up to finding or having a mission. According to Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute?*, a mission is a religious concept that cannot be separated from God. A “mission is the continuing task or responsibility for which one is fitted or destined to do or is specially called to undertake.”² Bolles contends that finding one’s mission is not simply an intellectual task, but a spiritual one as well, that cannot be found in days or weeks, and involves a learning process with stages and steps.³

First, a person must reject the notion that one’s mission on earth involves DOING things. Instead, we must look to BEING someone. Next, we must reject the notion that a mission is unique and can be accomplished independently from others. Instead, we must acknowledge that some parts of a mission must be shared with and accomplished through others. According to Bolles, we have to be willing to move away from DOING, GETTING and HAVING to the deeper understanding that “we are sent here for BRINGING more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness and more love into the world.”⁴

For Bolles, a mission requires three things of each one of us. We must:

- stand hour by hour in the conscious presence of God, the one from whom our missions are derived;
- do what we can to make this world a better place, following the guidance of God’s spirit, which is within and around each of us; and
- exercise our greatest gifts, the ones in which we find most delight, in the places God has caused to appeal to us most, for the purposes that God needs most to have addressed in the world.⁵

FINDING AND CONTRIBUTING TO MISSION

The *University Mission Statement* is a good place start. Maybe you were drawn to Villanova University because of it. As a Catholic and Augustinian institution, we seek to reflect “the spirit of Augustine” in all things. But what is this “spirit”?

We know that for Augustine, the purpose of life was to search for God—the ultimate Truth—not alone, but in community, among friends, where love was to motivate everything. It’s in this context that Villanova “welcomes and respects those of all faiths who seek to nurture a concern for the common good.” Villanova invites its members to “discover, disseminate and apply” knowledge, while advancing a “deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason,” and to

“accept the challenge of responsible and productive citizenship, in order to build a just and peaceful world.”⁶

For both those who have just arrived and for those who have been here longer, the question might well be the same: How does one begin to find his or her own mission AND contribute to the mission of Villanova University at the same time? According to Bolles, the place to start is by “taking one step at a time”—even when not yet seeing where each step may lead, and by always choosing the step that will “lead to more gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, honesty and love.”⁷

When students accept admission here, when faculty and staff accept offers of employment at Villanova, many don’t give a lot of thought to Villanova’s religious identity. But as it turns out, church-affiliated colleges and indeed, this Catholic, Augustinian university represent significant resources for beginning the journey that Robert Bolles refers to as “finding your mission in life”—finding your “spiritual road.”

The Catholic Bishops of the United States suggest that a Catholic college offers EVERYONE unique opportunities to focus on ones “spiritual road” and provides resources that can assist every member of the community to discern “God’s guiding spirit,” identify “our greatest gifts” and find the purpose for which we each have been created.⁸ CMJ ♥

NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU’VE BEEN AT VILLANOVA, CONSIDER THESE SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS KEY ASPECTS OF FACULTY LIFE:

SET ASIDE TIME FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND PRAYER.

St. Augustine placed great emphasis on “interiority”—“finding the truth within.” Make this a priority in solitude or with others. Take a meditative walk. Try centering prayer or mindfulness. Look for ways to nurture your spiritual life while on campus. Take care of yourself. Take time to rejuvenate, to remain strong and productive through the year.

REFLECT ON THE CORE VALUES OF VILLANOVA.

As you spend time at Villanova you’ll hear about “Truth, Unity and Love” (*Veritas, Unitas, Caritas*)—powerful words that mean different things to different people. What do they mean to you? How might you be able to express these with colleagues and students?

LOOK FOR WAYS TO INTEGRATE THE MISSION.

Villanova’s hiring and feedback processes include discussions about the distinctive mission of the University, as well as expectations for supporting and contributing to it. Reflect on your response to the Mission Statement. What contributions can you make in your teaching and through your scholarship? How do you express mission through your syllabi and engagement with students?

ESTABLISH A TEACHING AND RESEARCH AGENDA.

Place the students’ learning at the center of your teaching practice. Contemplate strategies for establishing rapport with students. Implement methods to support their active participation in learning. Look for meaningful ways to integrate teaching with research. Consider identifying faculty mentors. Solicit feedback from students and colleagues on a regular basis.

GET CONNECTED AND STAY INVOLVED.

Affiliate with others who share your ideals, your journey. Branch out. Build friendships. Nurture professional relationships both here, with other institutions and associations. Find ways to contribute your talents and skills. Support mission-related lectures, programs and activities. Take advantage of intellectual, cultural and athletic life at Villanova.

Regardless of our reasons for coming to Villanova, let’s use our time here as an opportunity to find our true missions in life.

1. Higher Education Research Institute. *Freshman Survey*. Cooperative Institutional Research Program, UCLA.
2. Boles, R. *How to Find Your Mission in Life*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1991, p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.
6. Villanova University, *University Mission Statement*.
7. Boles, R. p.37.
8. USCCB, *Letter to College Students*. Washington, DC: USCCB, 1995.



THE SCHOLARLY VOCATION

More Than Dispensing
and Absorbing Knowledge

Even the youngest of us has had a JOB—a static task, done with regularity for compensation. All of us can relate to “summer jobs,” or “part-time employment,” taken to meet short-term financial goals. Most of us who have lived longer have had a CAREER. Derived from the Latin word *carraria*, meaning road, the term commonly refers to a dynamic series of jobs, usually of increasing complexity and responsibility in a particular industry. One refers to a career in sales or banking for instance. In the vocabulary of work, PROFESSION usually attaches to those jobs or careers associated with advanced education or specialized skills and usually higher socio-economic status. Doctors and lawyers are frequently described as participating in a profession. But who has a CALLING? Who has a VOCATION, and what are the implications for and responsibilities of those who claim to have them?

Contemporary usage suggests that these latter concepts simply relate to personal intent or mere effort. It's not uncommon to hear persons in a wide variety of settings, who feel motivated by a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action, claim a “calling.” “In its secularized form, calling often refers to what one loves to do” and equates to the degree of passion one has for any activity.¹ In this regard, who is not familiar with the emphatic refrain of the “Blues Brothers”—that they, themselves are “on a mission from God”?

Among those writing to distinguish the concept of vocation (from the Latin *vocātiō*—meaning call or summons) from career, profession and the rest, authors Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen suggest that “what makes something a vocation is not the specific activity but the way the activity is both understood in larger context and carried out in actual practice.” A vocation, they contend, includes “goals that transcend any one person’s ability to achieve.”² Others offer that

a vocation is “skilled activity undertaken in a thoughtful, responsible and creative manner with the aim of serving social needs, providing personal fulfillment and contributing to a better world.”³

Christian Understandings

For believers, the notion of calling or vocation emerges from scriptural, historical and theological foundations that are increasingly overlooked today. For Christians, “to speak of call is to

see themselves as participants in God’s providence” and through their callings, express faith as love for each other.⁵

Historically, the early Church was characterized by a “hierarchy of holiness” marked first by a divide between laity and clergy, and later among laity, clergy and monks, who became for Christians the “paradigm of sanctity.” “Solidification of this hierarchy according to states of life

work the status previously reserved to religious, Martin Luther emphasized the importance of loving others within one’s calling.⁷ In this way, according to Luther, “one’s station in life becomes an instrument through which God helps us do good.”⁸

Among notable Catholic voices of the day was Ignatius of Loyola, who taught that every person can come to know God’s particular will for his or her life,⁹ and Francis de Sales, who writing in

Trust in Christ issues forth gratitude that motivates Christians to see themselves as participants in God’s providence and through their callings, express faith as love for each other.

acknowledge a caller, to see that God’s gracious initiative precedes all of our plans and projects, and that our individual journeys have transcendent goals.”⁴ We are called “to lead a life worthy of God, who calls [us] into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). We are called “to fellowship with Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:9) and “to love one another” as He has loved us (John 13:34). “Trust in Christ issues forth gratitude that motivates Christians to

provided the context within which the biblical notion of calling was transformed and applied only to religious.”⁶ Not until the 16th century, with Marin Luther’s repudiation of monastic life and re-interpretation of Paul’s *Letter to the Corinthians* (1 Corinthians 7:17, 20), was the concept of “calling” extended to the ordinary occupations and stations of life held by laity. In addition to broadening the reach of God’s call, giving all Christians and everyday

the 17th century, came closest to affirming the religious significance of ordinary life in his seminal work *Introduction to the Devout Life*.¹⁰

But it was not until Vatican II and the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, (The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church) with its “universal call to holiness” that the Catholic Church broadened its own understanding of vocation to include the “ordinary life” of laity:

The lay faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God: They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the church and in the world.

... [T]he laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs, it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.¹¹

As a result, the post-Vatican II era “has been marked by a profound affirmation of the baptismal dignity of all believers and a deep recognition of the sanctity of ordinary, everyday life in the world.”¹²

Implications for an Academic Community

Properly understood, then, the concept of vocation implies an unending search for meaning, a deep coherence to life, a consistency in one’s commitments, as well as receptivity to God’s presence in one’s life and in all creation. Those involved with teaching and learning—those who aspire to a *scholarly vocation*, be they teacher or student must be ready to:



- Acknowledge and affirm the active presence of God in their own lives and in all creation. Consequently, they concern themselves with the intersection of faith and reason, with the integration of faith and learning at every opportunity.
- Become “servants of the truth,” placing instruction and learning in the disciplines at the service of development of intellect.¹³ Learning, the “cultivation of the mind,” is understood as more than the pursuit of “academic excellence” or of knowledge for its own sake, but more appropriately as the pursuit of wisdom, the capacity to understand one’s self, others and the

world in light of Ultimate reality, and this pursuit of wisdom coincides with the search for Truth, for which every person longs.¹⁴

- Let honesty and humility characterize “disciplined conversation”¹⁵ among all. Set love as the criterion for all that one says and does.¹⁶
- Carry out scholarly activity with concern for the ethical and moral implications of both its methods and its discoveries, assigning special priority to investigating and evaluating “serious contemporary problems,” having the “courage to speak uncomfortable truths ... necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society” and the dignity of the human person.¹⁷ CMJ

It’s certainly possible to approach academic life as a job—where teachers dispense knowledge from yellowed notes for pay and students absorb, then regurgitate facts for grades, but at Villanova, the Center for Faith and Learning makes a powerful contribution to our effort to integrate faith and learning. The Center engages faculty in regular discussions of “teaching as vocation” and encourages faculty to discuss their own efforts to bring expressions of lived faith into the classroom experience.

The four examples that follow illustrate the rich diversity of not only our faculty, but the academic disciplines where integration of faith and learning is taking place.

CATHERINE WILSON, PhD
Associate Professor
in Public Administration
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Catherine Wilson, PhD, is a self-described “cradle Catholic,” raised in a strong interfaith household with solid Midwest Presbyterian values. Schooled by a Spanish order of sisters at Ancillae Assumpta Academy in Wyncote, Pa., she also was greatly influenced by an uncle, who attended Divinity School at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, and currently serves as a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); her grandmother who is an elder in the Presbyterian Church; and a great-grandfather, who was the first non-Quaker president of a Quaker college in Southwestern Ohio, Wilmington College.

“My interfaith upbringing has been a source of inspiration to me in my professional career at Villanova University, a place where the Augustinian concern for community context is highly pronounced and revered. Given my family background, it shouldn’t be surprising that religion and politics is a main focus for my teaching, research and service. As a researcher, it is my firm belief, however, that in order to understand religion and study religious culture authentically, one must attempt to experience this culture from the viewpoint of the believer. I call this concept of striving to understand religion from the insider’s point of view as ‘religious identity politics.’



“Putting ‘religious identity politics’ into scholarly practice entails not only reading religious and spiritual works by multiple representatives of faith traditions but also making site visits to experience these faith traditions firsthand. In an effort to bring authenticity to the student experience, I have taken undergraduate and graduate students, as well as interested others to: Preah Buddha Rangsey Temple (a Cambodian Buddhist temple) in South Philadelphia; Mikveh Israel (Philadelphia’s oldest Jewish synagogue); the Arch Street Meeting House (Quaker) in Old City, Philadelphia; and to the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Norristown, Pa. Reading spiritual texts and personally experiencing faith lived out, I believe, are the greatest teachers of religion. These insights I owe to nothing more than to an upbringing, which underscored an appreciation for the depth and richness of religious tradition,” says Dr. Wilson.

1. D. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004) 3.
2. D. Jacobsen and R. Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 132.
3. H. Gardner, M. Csikszentmihalyi and W. Damon, *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001) 11–12.
4. E. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010) xiv.
5. Schuurman, 5.
6. Jacobsen and Jacobsen, 6–9.
7. *Ibid.*, 15.
8. G. Wingert, *Luther on Vocation*, Volume 44, James Atkinson (ed.) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) viii.
9. G. Ganss (ed.) *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 4.
10. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. John Ryan (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1950).
11. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, (1964) 31.
12. Hahnenberg, 232.
13. Richard Jacobs, “Augustine’s pedagogy of intellectual liberation: Turning students from the “truth of authority” to the “authority of truth.” In K. Panfienroth and K. Hughes (eds.) *Augustine and Liberal Education*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2000) 111–123.
14. Albert Esmeralda OSA, *The Augustinian Way*, (2000) 4.
15. Jacobs, 111–123.
16. St. Augustine, *The Instruction of Beginners*, 4,8.
17. John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, (1990) 18, 34.



RONALD HILL, PhD
Professor of Marketing
Villanova School of Business

Ronald Hill, PhD, was raised in a devout Catholic family in the Washington, D.C. area in the 1950s and 1960s, with both a mother and father who were dedicated to the Roman Catholic Church; who struggled mightily just to survive, especially during the Great Depression; and who turned to the church for every form of support possible.

“Living in Washington, D.C. as a young person had many advantages. So much was happening related to civil and human rights that our local news reflected national and global events. Frequently, my high school religion classes turned into discussions of Catholic social teaching and the responsibility of all Catholics to heed the call for justice.

“As I entered college and then graduate school, much of this enthusiasm waned as the realities of business school education began to dominate my time and attention. It was not until early in my career as a professor that I rededicated my efforts to serving my faith tradition. It was then that I decided to focus my attention on how the poor navigate the material world as a consumer, human behavior and public policy, in the business discipline of marketing. Many in the larger academic community thought this decision odd or foolish, but I wanted to live a passionate life that was more important than simply publishing to avoiding perishing. As a consequence, I have worked with people from throughout the world, seeking to understand and find meaningful ways to support the poor in all their manifestations.

“The most important result is that my relationships with students changed. I always loved teaching, but now my purpose is more than to advance their lives; but to help them enrich the lives of others. Together we have looked at globalization, materialism, religiosity, prison life and many more topics as they relate to impoverishment. They have changed and developed my sense of Christ as much as I have theirs, and we continue on this path with no end in sight. What we have discovered is profound; we can serve God in so many ways and in all parts of our lives. Faith and learning is a journey that has rewards beyond our imaginations!” Dr. Hill says.

SARA REEDER, PhD, RN

Associate Professor of Nursing College of Nursing

Sara Reeder, PhD, RN, was raised in the same inner-city United Methodist Church that her mother, father and grandparents attended. Even though the church was in a very impoverished area, its motto was “To whom much is given, much is required.” Dr. Reeder with her family and others of the community served in a soup kitchen that the church sponsored. This and other experiences remain deeply rooted in her heart, as she continues in her church’s missionary activities. She tries to instill the same sense of responsibility and compassion in her family and sees nursing as a ministry as well.

“Because nurses are charged with the responsibility of caring for people from the beginning to the end of life, at all stages of existence, with every quality of experience, reflecting every type of human diversity and encompassing every possible quality of relationship, it is incumbent upon me to teach students that each patient has inviolable worth and dignity. By definition then, the nature of the profession provides a variety of opportunities to integrate faith and learning.

“Through discussion of human understandings of illness, I encourage students to reflect on the patient in a way that acknowledges our shared humanity. We discuss and practice developing a cultural humility that enhances patient care. I teach students that caring is always specific and relational, that involvement and caring reside together, resulting in common meanings between nurse and patient. My students learn that caring is an act of faith.



“Caring is a patient-centered, physical, psychosocial and spiritual intervention to meet the needs of others. We discuss how to respond with compassion to the patients’ infirmities and we reflect on suffering, disability and the hope of relieving suffering. We discuss that in spite of our differences, each of us desires ‘a good quality of life.’ I encourage students to try and understand what it is like to live in poverty, to be sensitive to the feeling of having no control over life, to appreciate what it must be like to attempt navigating through a complex health care system with few or no resources. I encourage students to see the world through the eyes of their patients and to focus always upon the need for justice and kindness. This hermeneutic of empathy breaks down our tendency toward arrogance, and opens the door to a kind and compassionate nurse, who strives to improve access to health care and meet the needs of underserved populations,” says Dr. Reeder.



CRYSTAL LUCKY, PhD

Associate Professor of English College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Crystal Lucky, PhD, was raised in a conservative African American Baptist church in Philadelphia’s University-City area. She began life as a faithful Sunday-school student and choir member, eventually becoming a Sunday-school teacher and choir director. Her life has always revolved around church, both locally and throughout the region. It remains central to her, as well as the world of her extended family and friends.

“It is a challenge to think objectively about one’s faith tradition, to teach what one is, to serve one’s community faithfully and to resist the impulse to separate one’s interests from one’s self. In the late 1980s, there was, and continues to be, an accepted divide between the intellect and the workings of the spirit. This made it difficult for me to envision an academic space where the reconciliation of the two could take place. At that time, as well, scholars of African American literature and culture were still in the throes of arguing for the legitimacy of the discipline. So in the mid-1990s, when I became

such a teacher-scholar at the predominantly white, Roman Catholic Villanova University, I was surprised to find a uniquely welcoming home and comfortable fit for my teaching, research, service and identity as a black woman preacher in the Pentecostal tradition.

“I don’t get to focus on the lives of black preaching women and their autobiographical narratives as often as I’d like. Both undergraduate and graduate students need a bit more. So, I teach a wide range of 19th and 20th century African American literature courses, all of which consider broader, challenging and multilayered questions of humanity, identity, citizenship, freedom and equality. From the works of Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison to the plays of August Wilson, to the concerns of Harlem Renaissance writers, to the founders of an African American literary tradition, the texts provide lenses through which students can consider the very act of ‘being’ in America. And while I am particularly interested in the ways African American writers present Christian piety, whether scornfully or sympathetically, as a means of hindering or achieving the fulfillment of personal destiny, my teaching and research comfortably align under a consideration of the workings of the soul and spirit.

“In the end, my students and I use literature as inspiration to look beyond the divide, to move beyond fracture, toward wholeness. I’m trying to help my students see the possibility. I’m trying every day,” Dr. Lucky says. ♥

Who was
Saint
Augustine?



Born in 354 in the North African town of Thagaste (Souk Ahras, Algeria), Augustine was the son of Patrick, a town councilor, and Monica, a Christian. His parents, noticing his intellectual ability, found a way to send him to school, first in Madauros and then in Carthage where he would teach rhetoric before moving to Rome as teacher and then to Milan as imperial rhetor. As part of his interest and work in Milan, he became interested in another great speaker, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, and gradually learned that the Christian faith of his upbringing was more attractive and realistic than he had previously thought. He recounts his step-by-step journey to baptism in his *Confessions*, a book written after he had returned to North Africa and was named as the bishop of Hippo Regius, a seaport city about 60 miles from Thagaste.

As bishop, he gathered together a religious community—many of whom eventually became bishops for other cities in North Africa. He lived in Hippo Regius until his death in A.D. 430, a time when the Vandals had laid siege to that city. In the intervening years, Augustine wrote and preached in Hippo and in many other places as a guest preacher. We still have more than 600 of his sermons and numerous other works, including a complete commentary on the Psalms, works on the *Trinity*, on the *City of God*, on the book of *Genesis*, on human freedom and divine predestination, as well as many letters and occasional works in response to some of the issues of his day.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Augustine in his own time or in the following ages of Christianity. Not only is he studied in university departments (Classics, Theology, Philosophy, Political Science, Great Books, etc.), but his sayings about and his insights into faith, friendship, community

Detail of window of St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Villanova Church



and the care for the common good are points of reference, and his teachings on happiness, sin, sacramentality, Church, etc. are a mainstay for interested readers and scholarly publications. Known for his restless heart, Augustine’s constant reaching for something more lasted through his 76 years on earth. Known in the image of a pierced heart thereafter, his legacy continues to challenge and to inspire.

AUGUSTINE AND VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
Villanova’s mission as a Catholic, Augustinian university began in 1842 and seeks to embody the spirit of Saint Augustine, inviting us to notice and learn from the experiences that were at the heart of his life and work:

1) A commitment to friendship (*unitas*)— “There is no true friendship unless you establish it as a bond between souls that cleave to each other through the love ‘poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us,’”¹

Detail of The Conversion of St. Augustine window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church

2) an insistent desire for Truth (*veritas*)— “my burning passion since early youth,”² and
3) a passion to see everything in relation to God’s action in the world (*caritas*)—You are “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self.”³

What is it that makes his influence extend through the ages? His ideas alone or his way of expressing them cannot explain his impact on other ages. Yet, because his words and ideas were always attentive to the human context and to cultural change, it was perhaps inevitable that human experience and Christian faith could embrace one another in his thought and not just co-exist. His influence, therefore, has everything to do with his experience of friendship as a way to come to know God, with his commitment to the common good as a way to live in this world, and with his inclination to reconcile apparent contradictions rather than give in to easy dichotomies of his time. His way of thinking and acting tended to stimulate the heart-to-heart relationship before going head-to-head over some idea.

Augustine always saw his own life in relation to others; his life was, therefore, dedicated to working for the common good—a relentless search that began in his youth and that was, first of all, a need to know himself. As that process unfolded in the midst of friends, it was much more than the effort of a single person or passion for an idea. He accepted his humanity so that, just as his passion for truth engaged him in the love of others, so did it also spill over into the love of God: “Blessed is he who loves you, and loves his friend in you and his enemy for your sake.”⁴

NEEDING OTHERS TO SHARE HIS NEED FOR GOD
It is therefore, all about the way he affirms relationships: “Who can love something that is quite unknown? ... That which someone is quite ignorant of simply cannot be loved.”⁵
Friendship for Augustine is about a growing relationship, allowing him to talk about friendship in marriage rather than limiting his understanding to the procreative dimension of that



Detail of The Baptism of St. Augustine window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church



Detail of Monica and Augustine at Ostia window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church

relationship. The interactive and growing aspects of friendship also influenced his understanding of the Christian community, the Church, as human as well as holy.

Yes, the key belief for Augustine is *caritas*, love. It is rather easy to talk about love—at least because of the place of love at the foundation of God’s action in Christ and of God’s loving mercy. But I think that it may be helpful to begin with friendship—not only because it is a distinctive focus for that time and very much part of various aspects of his teaching and of his motivation for teaching, but also because he writes so often about its meaning. Joy in sharing is experienced "the more intensely, the closer our friendship with one another is, for the more the bond of love allows us to be present in others, the more what has grown old becomes new again in our own eyes as well.”⁶

HUMILITY

The humility that is “the glue” of a commitment to the common good is neither self-deprecating nor self-sufficient. Honesty—both before God and in one’s own eyes—allows for and inspires the beautifully human in teacher and learner, in leader and collaborator. Rather than a vision of teaching and leading that is neatly structured, however, Augustine brings a light-hearted and thoughtful presence to his interactions with teachers and learners.

“You know that we are travelers. You ask, what is ‘walking?’ Briefly it means to make progress. ... There is someone inside you who is pleased with humility. Let him test you, and test yourself as well. If you want to reach what you are not yet, always be dissatisfied with yourself. For wherever you are pleased with yourself, t

Augustine is a reference point in times of change because he recognizes that change is a human process that requires soul-searching, personal courage and a firm commitment to those who have the common good clearly in view.



Detail of St. Augustine Contemplating the Trinity window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church



Detail of St. Augustine Preaching to his Followers window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church

theologian of cultural transformation by Christ...” That description agrees with Augustine’s theology “of creation, fall, and regeneration, with his own career as pagan and Christian, and with the kind of influence he has exercised on Christianity. Augustine not only describes, but illustrates in his own person, the work of Christ as converter of culture... Augustine is himself an example of what conversion of culture means.”⁸

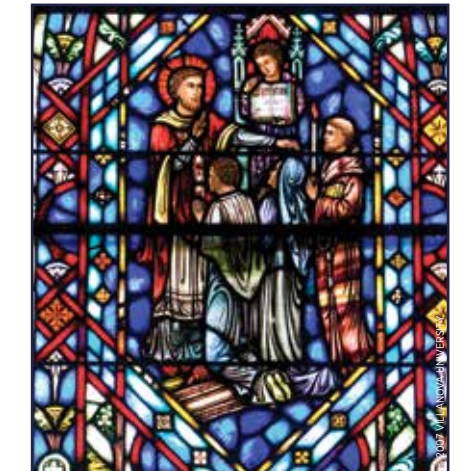
Augustine is a reference point in times of change because he recognizes that change is a human process that requires soul-searching, personal courage and a firm commitment to those who have the common good clearly in view.

So then, is it really possible for a person from the 5th century to



Detail of The Writings of Augustine window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church

inspire students, staff, professors and administrators who live and work in a university setting in the 21st century? Does Villanova’s Augustinian mission mean more than may first appear? Pay attention to the many dimensions of Augustine’s relationships with others, with his time and culture and with his God. ❤️



Detail of The Rules of St. Augustine window, St. Thomas of Villanova Church

Contributed by Allan Fitzgerald, OSA, PhD, Director of the Augustinian Institute at Villanova University.

1. Augustine, *Confessions* 4.4-7 (... [amicizia] non est vera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinas inter haerentes tibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis.)
2. Augustine, *The Advantage of Believing*, 1, 1 (quid mihi de inveniendā ac retinendā veritate videatur; cuius, ut scis, ab ineunte adolescentia magno amore flagravimus).
3. Augustine, *Confessions* 3, 6, 11.
4. Augustine, *Confessions* 4, 9, 14.
5. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 14, 1: rem prorsus ignotam amare omnino nullus potest? ... Nam quod quisque prorsus ignorat, amare nullo pacto potest.
6. On Teaching Beginners in the Faith 12, 17: “Et tanto magis, quanto sunt amiciores: quia per amoris vinculum in quantum in illis sumus, in tantum et nobis nova fiunt quae vetera fuerunt.”
7. Augustine, *Sermon* 169, 18.
8. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, Harper Torchbooks, p. 108-109.

Veritas, Unitas, Caritas:

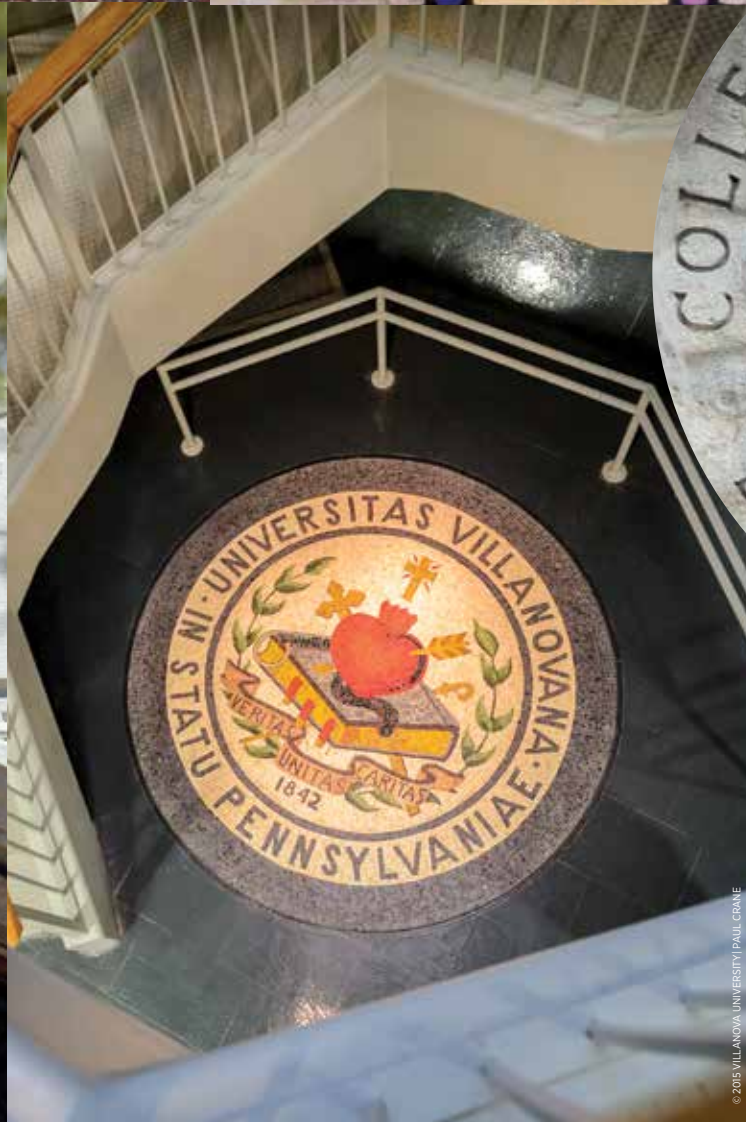
Villanova's First Principles

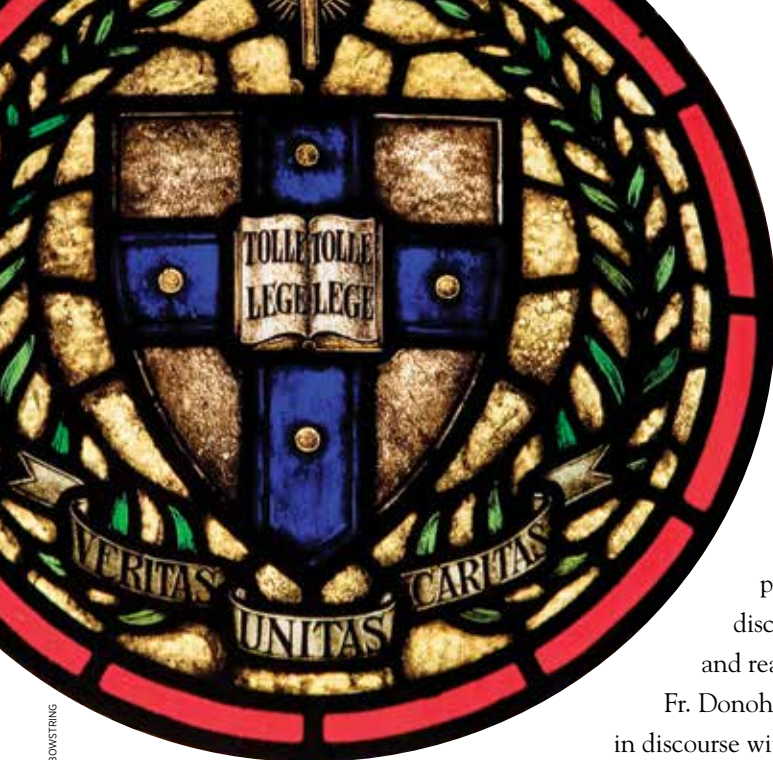
At the very beginning of his presidency, Fr. Peter Donohue recalled that the “Augustinian principles of *Veritas, Unitas and Caritas* (Truth, Unity and Love) are the foundation upon which the Irish friars formed Villanova,” that they remain “the ideals that continue to challenge us today and ... that will propel us into the future.” “Every decision we make,” he suggested, is to “be framed within these values.” Never to be “simply words we speak” or allowed to become some historical artifact “engraved on a seal,” he directed the community to “take them into our hands [as clay] and knead them into all that we do.”¹

It is our shared commitment to *Veritas, Unitas, Caritas* that “serves as a living embodiment of the University’s Catholic and Augustinian mission,” that creates “an environment that fosters exciting opportunities for learning and growth”² and makes Villanova distinctive. It should be no surprise then that the University’s Strategic Plan affirms that “truth, unity and love will continue to serve as the intellectual and spiritual guideposts for the University’s academic programs.”³

In an effort to live these concepts, one might be tempted to apply “*veritas*” only to Villanova’s academic enterprise, to define “*veritas*” as dedication to “seeking knowledge.” We might interpret “*unitas*” simply as “contributing to community”—the friendly, welcoming, on campus dynamic for which Villanova is justly proud. And one could translate “*caritas*,” not as “love” but charity, then extrapolate its meaning to merely service. What then of these “guideposts,” of these Augustinian ideals?

Would such an understanding sufficiently embody Villanova’s mission as Catholic and Augustinian? Is there a deeper, richer Augustinian context for these concepts, a shared meaning that allows them to continue to serve as “tenets of our creation,” the “foundation of what we are as Villanovans?”⁴ More importantly, how can we integrate them into our lived experience at Villanova?





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VERITAS = TRUTH

St. Augustine wrote a friend from Thagaste that "finding and holding the truth ... has been my burning passion since early youth,"⁵ He asserts throughout his life that "nothing is to be preferred to the search for truth."⁶ In the context of higher education, "a Catholic university pursues its objectives ... from a common dedication to the truth, a common vision of the dignity of the human person, and ultimately the person and message of Jesus Christ, which gives the institution its distinctive character."⁷ It is a place where "scholars scrutinize reality with the methods proper to each discipline" ... pursuing "integration of knowledge, dialogue between faith and reason, ethical concerns and theological perspective."⁸ In a like manner, Fr. Donohue also contends that in Villanova's academic programs "we engage in discourse with the world around us to search out the truth in all disciplines.

Remaining committed to Gospel values, we [are not] afraid to encounter and debate the challenges from voices of disagreement."⁹

Further, Augustine insists that "if the truth is the object of the aspirations of all human beings, it cannot be the exclusive personal property of any person. The truth cannot be exclusively mine or yours precisely because it must be both yours and mine."¹⁰ The implication is that an Augustinian community must be open to seeking the truth in each other and to respecting the well-reasoned differences among us.

On a behavioral level, Augustine articulated lofty standards for personal integrity. Not only did he maintain an absolute prohibition against lying in any circumstance,¹¹ but he insisted that members of every Augustinian community "act decisively when another member is in danger of straying into sin or is behaving in a manner that harms another."¹² Augustine set an exceptionally high bar for both truth seeking and truth telling in communities that bear his name.

UNITAS = UNITY

Augustine had a very specific understanding of "unity" with respect to knowledge and where and how truth could be found. He admonished seekers: "Do you wish to understand? ¹³ Believe. Do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that you may understand." In this context, Villanova University is free to pursue the "whole truth," both discovered and revealed, "working toward a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person."¹⁴ In its own Augustinian pursuit of unity, the University has set a high priority on developing innovative core courses and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, "especially those related to ethics and other value-based topics."¹⁵ In this way, Villanova advances a distinctive curriculum that encourages "coherence and connectedness among all aspects of our collective intellectual life."¹⁶

With respect to building and maintaining "unity" in community, Augustine's first expectation for members is "to live harmoniously together" in "oneness of mind and heart."¹⁷ An Augustinian community strives to live with mutual concern for each other, giving mutual assistance to each other in every way possible.¹⁸ Moreover, Augustine was clear that self-centeredness and pride were chief impediments to unity and so suggested that "no

one perform a task for his own benefit but that all work should be done for the common good, with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each one of you were to work for yourself alone."¹⁹ The desired outcomes of our commitment to communal unity are sensitivity to and responsibility for the needs of others, openness, collaboration and reciprocity.

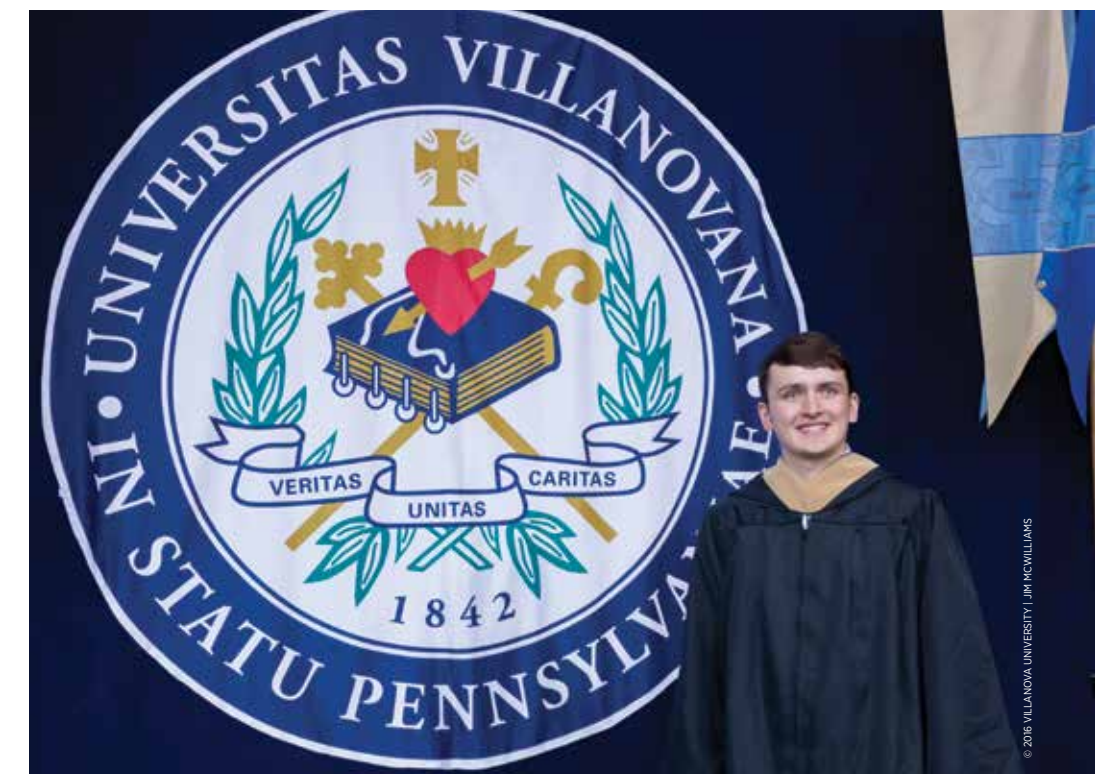
CARITAS = LOVE

For Augustine, love is the why and how of knowledge. "Use knowledge as a kind of scaffolding," he writes, "to help build the structure of love and understanding, which will last forever even after knowledge destroys itself. Knowledge is useful when it is used to promote love. But it becomes useless, even harmful in itself, if separated from such an end."²⁰ As for how to pursue knowledge, teaching and learning, Augustine reiterates that love is all that is needed. "Love, and do what you will. ... Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good."²¹

In a like manner, love is the root from which attending to others grows and must be the motivation for service. According to Thomas of Villanova, "Love renders everything precious. If a rich man gives away the whole of his property and everything he has yet withholds love, his giving means nothing. Every gift is to be tested against the touchstone of charity."²² At an Augustinian institution, what we give is not nearly as important as why we give.

EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW²³

Through Villanova's distinctive approach to teaching and research, pastoral ministry and service in all its forms, it expresses "special concern for the poor, compassion for the suffering, regard for the value of life, dedication to social justice and human rights"—commitments which it shares with all educational institutions sponsored by the Order of Saint Augustine.²⁴ What remains for each member of the University, regardless of role or responsibility, station or status, is to embrace the touchstones of our identity—to become *Veritas*, *Unitas*, *Caritas*. CMJ ♥



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1. P. Donohue, Inaugural Address, September 8, 2006.
2. P. Donohue, in *Student Handbook*, 2015-2016, 3.
3. Villanova University, Strategic Plan, 2009, 16.
4. P. Donohue, 2006.
5. Augustine, *On the Advantage of Believing*, 1, 1.
6. Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 3, 11.
7. John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 21. Cf. *Student Handbook*, 3.
8. Ibid., 15.
9. P. Donohue, 2006.
10. Augustine, *Explanations of the Psalms*, 103, 2.
11. C. Tollefsen, *Lying and Christian Ethics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
12. Villanova University, *Tolle Lege: An Introduction to Villanova University*, 2014, 76. Cf. *Rule of Augustine*, Ch. 4.
13. Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, 29, 6.
14. John Paul II, 16.
15. Strategic Plan, 2009, 18; P. Donohue, Opening Address to Villanova, 2011 and Message of the President, 2013.
16. Strategic Plan, 18.
17. Augustine, *Rule*, Ch. 1, n. 2 and n. 8. Trans, Robert Russell, OSA.
18. Ibid., Chs. 4-6.
19. Ibid. Ch. 5, n. 2.
20. Augustine, *Letter 55*, 33.
21. Augustine, *Sermon 110*, 8.
22. Thomas of Villanova, *Epiphany, Sermon 2*, 7.
23. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, 27.
24. Council of the Province, *Ministries Plan: Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova*, 1996, 24.

COMMUNITY

in the Spirit of Augustine

Ernest Boyer is widely recognized as one of the most articulate and influential voices in the history of American education.¹ Over a career that spanned forty decades, he served as academic dean at Upland College, Chancellor of the State University of New York System, United States Commissioner of Education and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He was among the first to write at length about “the underlying connections between segments of education, the people involved in the educational process” and “the moral issues surrounding specialization.”² Concerned about increasing fragmentation, realignment of faculty priorities and the growing isolation of campus constituencies, he authored *Campus Life: In Search of Community*. This landmark publication was his attempt to define the requirements of an ‘educational community,’ using “principles underlying effective community building.”³

Boyer’s six principles were praised by then president Edmund Dobbin, OSA, as being “fully consistent with Villanova’s mission” and an Augustinian sense of community.⁴ Later, the University’s Steering Committee on Villanova Quality Improvement (VQI) personalized Boyer’s statement for use by the campus community.⁵

Villanova’s Statement of Community Ideals⁶



“Villanova University is a **welcoming community**, where in the spirit of Augustine, each member greets guests warmly and acknowledges each other as colleagues engaged in mutual service to our students and their parents. Respect for all is powerfully affirmed.



Villanova University is an **educationally purposeful community**, acknowledging that learning should be a primary goal of every activity, each interaction. Villanova University believes that each member of our community both teaches and learns from every other. It is in this unifying context that Villanovans must approach each other. Teaching and learning in this Catholic-Christian environment are paramount.



Villanova University is a **selfless community**, a place where individuals understand and accept their responsibility to sacrifice self-interest for the common good and where the universal values of integrity, compassion and humility guide decision making at every level.



Villanova University is a **just community**, a place where the sacredness of each person is honored, where favoritism, bigotry and discrimination are categorically rejected.



Villanova University is a **caring community**, a place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported, where service to others is strongly encouraged.



Villanova University is a **celebrative community** that affirms the Catholic, Augustinian charism and our collegiate tradition.”

In the Spirit of Augustine

For Augustine, the purpose of life was to search for God, not alone but among friends, who were committed to the same journey. The communities he formed wanted to learn in a climate of love and friendship, where members engaged each other as equals, knowing that “truth is neither yours nor mine, so that it can belong to the both of us.”⁷ In such a community, love is at the center and the heart⁸ of every act and interaction. Respect for each person, as a child of God, is primary.

Members sought to live in harmony, offered mutual concern for and assistance to each other in every way possible. Not to be excluded was ‘fraternal correction’—to be conducted always in a spirit of love and understanding. Members were taught to look upon their work as an

expression of one’s human nature, not as a burden, but as cooperation with the Creator in shaping the world and serving humankind. At all times conscious of the virtues of honesty, integrity, and compassion as fundamental to the Christian way of life, members worked for unity, making justice and peace, the fruits of love, a reality in the Church and in the world.⁹

A Practical Application

The overlap between Boyer and Augustine is striking. Both knew well that while shared purpose is necessary for creating common unity—**community**—it is insufficient for sustaining it. Each in his own time, identified economic and educational inequality, status, power, competition, self-centeredness, insensitivity to others as obstacles to building cohesiveness. They knew

that authentic community required sacrifice, that genuine unity required attentiveness to others—the essence of commitment to the common good.

At its core, community is embodied in behavior. This is why even though the concept is hard to describe, “We know it when we see it.” As our own campus becomes more diverse and complex, as faculty priorities are realigned, as digital community and other forms of technology present increased potential for isolation, Villanova must be vigilant to maintain its sense of community. Each person, regardless of position or responsibility, contributes to or detracts from it. Let us be resolved then, to be more welcoming, purposeful, selfless, just, caring and celebrative, so that **community in the spirit of Augustine** continues to be a vital hallmark of the Villanova experience. CMJ ♥

1. R. Bingle, R. Games and E. Malloy, *Colleges and Universities as Citizens*, Boston: Ally and Bacon, 1999, 17.
2. Ibid., 20.
3. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Campus Life: In Search of Community*. Princeton, 1990.
4. Edmund J. Dobbin, OSA, *The Villanovan*, Vol. 66. No. 1, September 7, 1990, 8.
5. Villanova University, *Villanova Quality Improvement Training Manual*, July, 1993, 12.
6. Villanova University, *Tolle Lege: A Brief Introduction to Villanova University*, 2014, 155-158.
7. A. Esmerelda, *Augustinian Way* (2001), 9, perhaps an adaptation of Augustine’s Expositions on the Psalms 75, 17.
8. See; Rule of St. Augustine, Chapter 1.
9. Esmerella, A. (2001) *Augustinian Way*, 10.

“

So great is the influence of a

SYMPATHETIC MIND

that our students are **AFFECTED**

by us as we **TEACH**

and we by them as they **LEARN**.

Thus, we come **to dwell in each other;**

THEY SPEAK WITHIN US what they hear,

while **WE LEARN IN THEM** what we teach.”

St. Augustine—Instruction of Beginners, 12, 17

SECTION II: Pedagogical Issues

- Six Pillars of Augustinian Education

Heart of the Matter, Volume 4

- Teaching and Learning in the Augustinian Tradition

Heart of the Matter, Volume 4

- Seeking and Finding Truth: An Augustinian Model

Heart of the Matter, Volume 6

- Servant Leadership: An Augustinian Tradition?

Heart of the Matter, Volume 5

SIX PILLARS OF AUGUSTINIAN EDUCATION

Villanova is an “Augustinian” university, but what do we mean when we say so? If St. Augustine was to offer his own thoughts on what an Augustinian university should be, he might suggest these values, these six pillars, on which an Augustinian education should rest.

PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

“UNDERSTAND SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE. BELIEVE SO THAT YOU MAY UNDERSTAND.”¹

An Augustinian education acknowledges, as St. Augustine asserted, that “nothing is to be preferred to the search for truth,”² as his friends and disciples dedicated themselves to a journey of living lives of interiority and conversion.³ But Augustine knew well that knowledge, understanding and wisdom were only to be found at the intersection of faith AND reason. “Do not think that any human teaches any other” he said. “The sound of our voice can admonish, but the one who teaches is inside. The sound we make is useless.”⁴ “We all have one Master, whose school is on earth and whose seat is in heaven.”⁵

INVITATION TO THE INTERIOR LIFE

“DO NOT GO OUTSIDE YOURSELF, BUT ENTER INTO YOURSELF, FOR TRUTH DWELLS IN THE INTERIOR SELF.”⁶

Both Augustine’s personal life and his spiritual teachings are dominated by a continual call to interiority. He contends that it is “inside one’s self” where truth is found,⁷ and that only in contemplation and silence is understanding achieved.⁸ According to Augustine, the visual and the audible of the external world serve only as reminders to the student, and that learning takes place in the interior world.⁹ The interior activity of contemplation and a search for the ultimate Truth allows us to transcend ourselves to an eventual encounter with God, the Teacher.¹⁰

CULTIVATION OF HUMILITY

“UNLESS HUMILITY PRECEDES, ACCOMPANIES, AND FOLLOWS WHATEVER WE DO, WE WILL FIND THAT WE HAVE DONE LITTLE GOOD TO REJOICE IN. PRIDE WILL BEREFT US OF EVERYTHING.”¹¹

According to Augustine, humility is the root of true charity. It calls us to accept the sacred in ourselves and others. It allows us to recognize that we are human, to accept our place in reality - neither making oneself more nor less than what one actually is, and to love all things, but in an appropriate way.¹² Humility teaches us to see others as equals. “Humility induces us to presume on our own strength and to trust in God.” Humility allows us to listen to others and to see the truth in them.¹³ According to Augustine, the only way to reach an “abiding, active knowledge of the truth is through humility.”¹⁴



FORMATION OF COMMUNITY

IV

“COMMUNITY IS A PLACE WHERE THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH TAKES PLACE IN A CLIMATE OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP, WHERE ONE CAN EXPERIENCE THAT THE ‘TRUTH IS NEITHER YOURS NOR MINE, SO THAT IT CAN BELONG TO THE BOTH OF US.’”¹⁵

In an Augustinian community, the purpose of life is to search for God, the ultimate Truth, not alone, but among friends, who are committed to the same journey. In such a community “love is at the center and the heart”¹⁶ of every act and interaction, and respect for each person, as a child of God, is primary. Members strive to live in harmony - in a quest for union of mind and heart, to mutual concern for and assistance to each other in every way possible, including fraternal correction, in a spirit of love and understanding. Members look upon their work as an expression of one’s human nature, not as a burden, but in cooperation with the Creator in shaping the world and serving humankind. Always conscious of the virtues of honesty, integrity, and compassion as fundamental to the Christian way of life, members work for unity, making justice and peace, the fruits of love, a reality in the Church and in the world.¹⁷

CALL TO THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

V

“EVERY GOOD THING IS SEALED TO US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.”¹⁸

An Augustinian education is a Catholic education that “nurtures the development of religious faith and practice, develops moral and ethical perspectives and values of its members.”¹⁹ All in such a community are invited into the sacramental life that is active participation in an outward expression of one’s faith. Exploration of religion and faith, participation in prayer, liturgy and other forms of communal worship are both respected and encouraged.

Those who have a desire to live an Augustinian life seek to make “unity and peace a reality in the Church and in human society.” It requires a particular expression of faith, of Gospel values - putting aside narrowness and selfishness and becoming “attuned to a broader social love, joining ourselves to others in such ways that we may have only ‘one mind,’ the mind of Christ.”²⁰

VI

OBLIGATION TO SERVICE AND STEWARDSHIP

THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU ARE CONCERNED FOR THE COMMON GOOD RATHER THAN FOR YOUR OWN, IS THE CRITERION BY WHICH YOU CAN JUDGE HOW MUCH PROGRESS YOU HAVE MADE.”²¹

Stewardship of the common good requires that we willingly accept accountability for others through service to them, without control of them. In the Catholic tradition, “the Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us, and confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods. They teach us [how] to love.”²²

“Love, when it is true, is always directed away from oneself. It is transcendent. The two-fold commandment of love, therefore, translates into working for the common good, [and] working for the common good is service.”²³ Service in an Augustinian context is done in the spirit of gratefulness and in recognition that the service owed to God must be rendered to humankind. Service is love in its dynamic dimension. Service gives expression to Jesus’ command, “Love one another as I have loved you.”²⁴

Are these among the distinctive “markers” of Augustinian education? If so, how are they expressed at Villanova University? What must we do to make them the pillars on which a Villanova education rests? CMJ ♥

Those who have a desire to live an Augustinian life seek to make “unity and peace a reality in the Church and in human society.”

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1. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 43.
2. St. Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 3, 11.
3. Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Formation of the Laity*, III, Parish: VI, *Types of Formation in Enchiridion Vaticanum*, Volume 6, Rome 1980, pp. 667, 691.
4. St. Augustine, *Tratates on 1 John*, 3, 12.
5. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 242, 1.
6. St. Augustine, *True Religion*, 72, 102.
7. *Ibid.*
8. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 56, 22.
9. St. Augustine, *The Teacher*, XIV, 46.
10. Pelligrino, M. (1996) *Spiritual Journey: Augustine's Reflections on the Christian Life*, p.11.
11. St. Augustine, *Letter* 188, 22.
12. Burt, D. (1989). “Application of Augustine’s Spirituality to an Academic Community.”
13. Pelligrino, M. (1996), pp. 57-58.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
15. Esmerella, A. (2001) *Augustinian Way*, p. 9.
16. St. Augustine, *Rule of St. Augustine*, 3 and 4.
17. Esmerella, A., p. 10.
18. St. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 17.18, 11. p. 10.
19. Villanova University, *Mission Statement*.
20. Esmerella, A. p. 10.
21. St. Augustine, *Rule of St. Augustine*, 7, 2.
22. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1726-1728.
23. Esmerella, A. p. 10.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

teaching AND LEARNING IN THE Augustinian TRADITION

In the ideal, the spirituality of Augustine should be an important building block for teaching and learning at Villanova. In the Augustinian model of education, both faculty and students are “servants of the truth,” who place instruction and learning in the disciplines at the service of development of the intellect.¹

“Believe so that you may understand. Understand that you may believe,”² Augustine said. Learning, “cultivation of the mind,” in this context, must be understood as more than the pursuit of “academic excellence” or of attaining knowledge for its own sake. More appropriately, it is the pursuit of wisdom, the capacity to understand one’s self, others and the world in light of the ultimate reality. This “pursuit of wisdom coincides with the search for Truth for which every person longs.”³

Honesty and humility must characterize “disciplined conversation” between faculty and student, during which students develop confidence in their abilities to reason and to assert for themselves, discovered truth. The intended outcome, for which we hope, is less dependence on the teacher’s “authority” and greater appreciation for “truth,” both discovered and revealed during principled and collaborative inquiry.⁴

Villanova’s academic community acknowledges belief in God as reasonable, places each discipline in conversation with the Catholic intellectual tradition, and creates an environment “where being a faithful Catholic is taken seriously as an intelligent and morally responsible option for contemporary people.”⁵

In the Augustinian model of education, faculty and students form an egalitarian learning community, pursuing goals as “friends, brothers, sisters, sharing with others what they have or gain, and receiving what God has given or will give” to each.⁶



INSIGHTS FROM AUGUSTINE’S INSTRUCTING BEGINNERS IN FAITH

TEACHING AND LEARNING CAN’T BE SEPARATED.

Teaching and learning aren’t two different tasks, but two parts of a single system, where teachers and learners help each other to greater understanding and wisdom. For Augustine, the teacher and the student dwell in each other. They are not isolated individuals, but partners in a common task.

“So great is the influence of a sympathetic mind that our students are affected by us as we teach and we by them as they learn. Thus we come to dwell in each other; they speak within us what they hear, while we learn in them what we teach.”⁷



GOOD TEACHERS MAKE GOOD STUDENTS AND GOOD STUDENTS MAKE GOOD TEACHERS.

Good teachers engage students. Engaged students energize teachers. Augustine tells us that in order to be most effective, teachers must feel joy and enthusiasm. He writes of teachers:

“the texture of our speech is suffused with the very delight that we take in speaking, and our words flow more easily and more pleasingly.”⁸

Without active participation from students, teachers can lose heart. Augustine paints a familiar but painful picture of a teacher whose enthusiasm is not met by interest from the students:

“We feel distressed at our failure and, like people expending effort to no avail, we become limp with disgust and, as a result of this very disgust, our speech becomes even more sluggish and colorless.”⁹

IT IS ALL ABOUT LOVE.

Augustine advised his followers to “use knowledge as a kind of scaffolding to help build a structure of love and understanding. Your knowledge is useful when it is used to promote love, and becomes useless, even harmful, when separated from such an end.”¹⁰

Further, he claimed that successful learning really only happens in the context of a loving relationship – something akin to that between parent and child. And love, Augustine reminds us, is a reciprocal relationship, not just between teacher and student, but among teacher, student and the Teacher of us all.

“Fluent and cheerful words will then stream out from an abundance of love and be drunk in with pleasure. For it is not so much I who say these words to you as it is love itself that says them to us all.”¹¹

This same sentiment is echoed by the inscription in the entranceway to the St. Augustine Center:

“Set love as the criterion for all that you say. Whatever you teach, teach in such a way that the person to whom you speak, by hearing may believe, by believing, hope and by hoping, love.”¹²

HARD WORK IS WORTH THE EFFORT.

To be good students and teachers in the spirit of Augustine is a challenge!

A good teacher has enthusiasm not only for course content, but the process of learning. Teachers must be compassionate and have a sincere desire for students to succeed. Good students take learning seriously, come to class prepared, contribute to their own learning and help each other grow in understanding and wisdom.

Good teachers interact with students with a fervent desire “to inspire them with a serious interest in the truth, to instill in them a habit of diligence and application, clear their minds from worldly interests, and fix their thoughts on what is of real profit.”¹³ Good students “engage in spirited scholarly discourse, jointly pursue discovered truth, even admonish and correct one another as necessary.”¹⁴ Most importantly, students must be committed to pursuing larger, deeper goals – namely the formation of an educative community and development of the intellect.



VERITAS, UNITAS, CARITAS ONE MORE TIME.

Recall the familiar image of the blazing heart in the center of the University seal and its motto: veritas (truth), unitas (unity), and caritas (love). In an Augustinian environment, we search for the “authority of truth” not the “truth of authority.”¹⁵ Here, teachers and students see themselves not as autonomous individuals but as a single community working together in unity at a common task, where love drives us toward accomplishment of shared goals. Here, we hope that all our members develop a passion for learning and discover their own “burning hearts.”

The Center for Faith and Learning works in conjunction with the Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning to encourage students and faculty to build “Augustinian classrooms” at Villanova. For more information, contact Dr. Beth Hassel, PBVM, Director for the Center of Faith and Learning. ♥

1. The text for this article is adapted from *Tolle Lege: A Brief Introduction to Villanova University* (2014) published by the Office for Mission and Ministry. Jacobs, R. (2000). Augustine's pedagogy of intellectual liberation: Turning students from the “truth of authority” to the “authority of truth.” In K. Paffenroth and K. Hughes (eds.) *Augustine and liberal education*, pp. 111-123. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
2. Augustine, *Letter* 120.
3. Esmeralda, A. (2001) *Augustinian Values*, p. 5.
4. Jacobs, R., 111-123.
5. Eagan, R. J. (1996). “Can Universities be Catholic? Some reflections, comments, worries, and suggestions.” *Commonweal* 123 (7), pp. 11-14.
6. Order of Saint Augustine. (1980). *Secular Augustinians: The Rule of Life and General Statutes*, 17.
7. Augustine. *Instructing Beginners in the Faith*, 12, 17.
8. *Ibid.*, 18.
9. *Ibid.*, 2, 3 and 13, 8.
10. St. Augustine, *Letter* 55, 33.
11. St. Augustine, *Letter* 14, 22.
12. St. Augustine, *Letter* 4, 8.
13. St. Augustine, *Sermons* 47, 10.
14. Jacobs, R., 115.
15. *Ibid.*, 116.

SEEKING AND FINDING

TRUTH:

AN AUGUSTINIAN MODEL

Villanova University achieves academic excellence through a unique learning paradigm that is “rooted in the collaborative pursuit of knowledge—through which professors and students are partners in the learning process.” Villanova University “promises its students a caring educational experience, with professors and students working together within a personal learning environment”—one that encourages “active engagement, critical thinking and moral reflection” and will provide “a lifelong framework for ... the use of one’s unique talents for the benefit of humankind.”¹

Saint Augustine himself, advised that “nothing is to be preferred to the search for truth.”² How did he and his followers do this? What of their ancient experience is relevant to a search for knowledge, meaning, truth on any contemporary college campus, and especially to an Augustinian university?

SEARCH WITH OTHERS

Augustine advised that “[o]n earth we are wayfarers, always on the go,” and he admonished his followers to “be always unhappy with what you are if you want to reach what you are not. ... Always keep moving forward, trying for your goal,”³ “Search in ways by which we can make discoveries, and discover in ways by which we can keep on searching.”⁴

Those familiar with Augustine’s life know that he spent his search “in community,” surrounded by others with whom he shared his journey and from whom he drew inspiration. It was there that he “found all manner of joy,” where in the company of friends, he talked and laughed “read engaging books together” went “from the lightest joking to talk of the deepest things and back again,” where they could “differ without discord,” could “teach and learn from each other.” It was while working on their common task that [they] “gave and received affection ... and in a thousand other gratifying ways, ignited a flame which fused [their] very souls together and made the many of us one.”⁵ How does one build an intentional learning community such as this?



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HUMILITY

Augustine was insistent that “[t]he first step in the search for truth is humility” He didn’t claim that it was the only virtue necessary for authentic pursuit of truth, but it was his contention that “unless humility precede, accompany, and follow every good action we perform, pride will wrest wholly from our hand any good we accomplish.”⁶ As proof he offered his own assessment of those with whom he worked. “The more they think they are learned, the more unteachable they become. They have become ashamed to learn, because that means admitting ignorance.”⁷ He asked fellow teachers to “[c]onsider this great puzzle. The sounds of my words strike the ears but the Teacher is within. Do not think that any human teaches another. The sound of our voices can admonish, but the one Who teaches is inside.”⁸ And to those that aspire to grand accomplishments, he advised, “[t]o reach a high spot you need a ladder. To get to the height of greatness, use the ladder of humility.”⁹

“Unless humility precedes, accompany, and follow every good action we perform, pride will wrest wholly from our hand any good we accomplish”

COLLABORATION

Augustine is clear that teachers should provide guidance to students, much beyond narrow disciplinary interests. He says, “[i]nspire them with a serious interest in the truth, instill in them a habit of diligence and application, clear their minds from worldly interests, and fix their thoughts on what is of real profit.”¹⁰ But Augustine is equally insistent on reciprocity in learning. “I speak not as a master but as a minister, not to pupils but to fellow pupils, not to servants but to fellow servants.”¹¹ For Augustine, teaching and learning are inseparable. He says, “[a]s long as I am a good teacher, I will continue being a student.”¹²

“The truth cannot be exclusively mine or yours precisely because it must be both yours and mine, so that all who come to it may use it and be enlightened”

Humility and reciprocity promote openness—an ability to see and appreciate the truth in others. “If the truth is the object of the aspirations of all human beings, it cannot be the exclusive personal property of any person. The truth cannot be exclusively mine or yours precisely because it must be both yours and mine,”¹³ so that “all who come to it may use it and be enlightened. It is equally distant and equally close to everyone.”¹⁴ In Augustine’s method, knowledge is not possessed by one and given to another. Teachers and students learn together.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Augustine wrote extensively about love—of God and neighbor, of well-ordered and disordered love. He says that “[l]ove empowers us to support one another in carrying our burdens.” Augustine illustrates his point with this observation. “When deer need to cross a river, each one carries on its rear the head of the one behind it, while it rests its head on the rear of the one in front of it. Supporting and helping each other, they are thus able to cross wide rivers safely, until they reach the firmness of the land together.”¹⁵

“Those who listen are luckier than those who speak. The learner is humble, but the teacher must work hard at not being proud”

So central is love to Augustine’s philosophy of teaching that he advises teachers to “[s]et love as the criterion for all that you say. Whatever you teach, teach in such a way that the person to whom you speak, by hearing may believe, by believing, hope and by hoping, love.”¹⁶ For Augustine, however, love is more than an attitude. “Although we owe the same love to all, we should not treat all with the same remedy. And so for its part ... love is pain to some, makes itself weak with others, devotes itself to edifying some, greatly fears giving offense to others, bends down to some, raises itself up before others. To some it is gentle, to others stern, to no one hostile, to everyone a mother.”¹⁷ Creating an Augustinian learning environment requires discovering the differing needs of others and responding in an intimate, caring way.

DIALOGUE AND DOING

Though Augustine was acknowledged as a skilled orator and inspiring preacher, he claimed that “[t]hose who listen are luckier than those who speak. The learner is humble, but the teacher must work hard at not being proud.”¹⁸ He promoted dialogue as the preferred way of learning. “There is no better way of seeking truth than through the method of question and answer. But rare is the person who is not ashamed of being proved wrong. As a result, a good discussion is often spoiled by some hard-headed outburst with its frayed tempers, generally hidden but sometimes evident. We planned to proceed peaceably and agreeably in our search for truth. I would ask the questions and you would answer. If you find yourself in difficulties, do not be afraid to go back and try again.”¹⁹ Serving as an example, showing learners how to learn is always preferable to more passive methods of teaching. “Through watching and listening to us when we are actually engaged in working, you will learn better than by reading what we write.”²⁰

REFLECTION

Augustine well understands that only through silence and contemplation is real understanding achieved.²¹ “Let us leave something for people’s reflection, a generous margin for silence. Go within yourself—leave the noise and the confusion behind. Look inside yourself and see if you can find that hidden corner of the soul, free of noises and arguments ... disputes or pig-headed quarrels.”²²

“Go within yourself—leave the noise and the confusion behind. Look inside yourself and see if you can find that hidden corner of the soul, free of noises and arguments”

“Do not go outside yourself, but turn within. Truth dwells in the interior self. And if you find your nature, given to frequent change, go beyond yourself. Do not forget that

when you climb above yourself, you are lifting yourself above your soul, which has the gift of reason. Step, therefore, to where the light of reason receives its light.”²³ An Augustinian education requires time for thoughtful reflection, analysis and integration.

LIFELONG COMMITMENTS

Augustine’s restless search for truth led him to acknowledge that he would remain restless until he rested in God.²⁴ He recognized that God knew him better than he knew himself and prayed fervently “Let me know myself. Let me know You,”²⁵ and he concluded that knowledge was incomplete without faith. “Do you wish to understand? Believe,” wrote St. Augustine, “Do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that you may understand.”²⁶

An Augustinian education does not separate itself from the world, but engages it. “It is of no use ‘to know’ the truth unless you also embrace it with your life. It is necessary to build on a sure foundation of ‘hearing’ and ‘doing.’ Those who hear, and do not do, build on sand. Those who neither hear nor do, build nothing. Those who hear and do, build on stone.” Our knowledge must be used “as a kind of scaffolding to help build the structure of love and understanding, which will last forever even after knowledge destroys itself. Knowledge is useful when it is used to promote love. But it becomes useless, even harmful in itself, if separated from such an end.”²⁷

Villanova University believes that, in all things, the Augustinian principles of *Veritas*, *Unitas*, and *Caritas*—truth, unity and love—“serve as intellectual and spiritual guideposts” for our work and for lives.²⁸ It is in this context that “[t]he love of knowledge and truth should invite us to continue learning. The love of others should compel us to teach.”²⁹ CMJ ♥

The editor is indebted to the work of Fr. Alan Fitzgerald, OSA, Dr. John Immerwhar and in particular Fr. Gary McCloskey, OSA, on which this article is based.

1. Villanova University, “The Villanova Promise” in *Igniting the Heart. Inspiring the Mind. Illuminating the Spirit: The Villanova University Strategic Plan*, 2009, 6-7.

2. Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 3.11.

3. Augustine, *Sermon 169*, 18.

4. Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX, 1, 1.

5. Augustine, *Confessions*, IV, 8, 13.

6. Augustine, *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

7. Augustine, *Sermon 198*, 13.

8. Augustine, *Tractate on 1 John III*, 12.

9. Augustine, *Sermon 96*, 3.

10. Augustine, *Sermon 47*, 10.

11. Augustine, *Sermon 242*, 1.

12. Augustine, *Sermon 244*, 2.

13. Augustine, *Explanations of the Psalms*, 103, 2.

14. Augustine, *Explanations*, 75, 17.

15. Augustine, *Eighty-three Diverse Questions*, 71, 1.

16. Augustine, *Letter 4*, 8.

17. Augustine, *Instructing the Beginners*, 15, 23.

18. Augustine, *Explanations*, 50, 13.

19. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 7, 14.

20. Augustine, *Beginners*, 15, 23.

21. Augustine, *Sermon 56*, 22.

22. Augustine, *Sermon 52*, 19, 22.

23. Augustine, *On True Religion*, 39, 72.

24. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1, 1.

25. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 1.1.

26. Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, 29, 6.

27. Augustine, *Letter 55*, 33.

28. Villanova University, *Strategic Plan*, 16.

29. Augustine, *Answers to the Eight Questions of Dulcitius*, 3.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP:

AN AUGUSTINIAN TRADITION?

Robert Greenleaf is widely credited with developing the concept of *Servant Leadership*, first articulated in a 1970 essay, entitled “The Servant as Leader.” In it, Greenleaf contends that:

one who is servant first, “is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.”

“The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?”¹

Among several prominent authors who have summarized and assessed Greenleaf’s work is Dirk van Dierendonck who conducted meta-analysis research on relevant scholarly literature. He identified six overarching themes in servant-leader literature: humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, empowering others, providing direction and stewardship.²

SERVANT FIRST

Saint Augustine never penned a “theory” of leadership, but he did offer frequent advice to his followers, fellow priests and bishops related to the task of leading. Writing in about the year 410,³ Augustine says of leaders, “the first thing good superiors must realize is that *they are servants*. They should not consider it beneath their dignity to be *servants to many*.”⁴ Leaders are “designated for the purpose of looking out for the good of their subjects.”⁵

HUMILITY

As Greenleaf did, Augustine places high priority on humility—essentially a pre-condition for effective leadership. He writes, “unless humility precedes, accompanies and follows whatever we do, we will find that we have done little good to rejoice in. Pride will bereft us of everything.”⁶ Humility allows us to “accept our place in reality, neither making oneself more nor less than one actually is.”⁷ It “allows us to listen to others and to see the truth in them.”⁸ Humility is a guard against the *leader-first* pitfalls of pride, privilege and power.

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is closely related to knowing and expressing the “true self,” and acting in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings.⁹ Charles Taylor, among others, credits Augustine with initiating the Western concept of inward reflection, a turning towards the inner self to discover truth.¹⁰ For Augustine, knowledge of self cannot be found alone, but only with God and through others. Concerning this goal, he advises, “if you could be enlightened by yourself, you would never be in the dark, because you are always with yourself. Do not believe that you are a light unto yourself. The Light is that which illumines every person coming into this world.” And again, “let us leave a little room for reflection, room too for silence. Enter into yourself and leave behind all noise and confusion. Look within yourself. Hear the word in quietness that you may understand.”¹¹ It was for these reasons that Augustine prayed, “God, always the same, let me know myself, let me know Thee.”¹²

Through grace, faith and love deepen, strengthen and transform leadership. The result is leadership in the Augustinian tradition.

Augustine called leaders to “show [themselves] as examples of good works towards all”¹³ and to be truthful in all things. “Conscience and good name are but two different aspects of truthfulness,” he wrote. “Conscience is for your own sake; good name is for the sake of your neighbors. All who are solidly established in their own conscience but do not care about their good names become callous, particularly if they are in positions of leadership.”¹⁴ Most pointedly, Augustine contends that “in the Church or any class of society, if a man seeks to appear what in reality he is not, he is a hypocrite.”¹⁵

HARMONY

Harmony is the fruit of what van Dierendonck identifies as “interpersonal acceptance”—the ability to accept people as they are and create open, trusting environments for them. Augustine encourages this through one of the first admonitions found in the *Rule*—“live harmoniously... together in oneness of mind and heart.”¹⁶ In Augustine’s day, economic inequality was a frequent source of discord among members. He wrote at length on holding everything in common, sharing wealth and placing gifts at the disposal of the superior.¹⁷ Beyond these requirements, he advised taking members at their word,¹⁸ avoiding quarrels, asking pardon and forgiving injury promptly¹⁹ and taking care that “no transgression is carelessly overlooked.”²⁰

EMPOWERING OTHERS

Empowerment fosters a proactive, self-confident attitude among followers that engenders a sense of personal power. Servant-leaders believe in the intrinsic value of each individual. They recognize, acknowledge and understand each person’s current abilities and future potential.²¹ Augustine advocates the same by setting high standards for moral behavior—asking his members to “become temples”²² and obligating the group to “mutual care and vigilance over one another.”²³ To leaders he assigns a variety of special responsibilities: “rebuke those who stir up strife, comfort those of little courage and take the part of the weak, teach the ignorant, awake the indolent, put the presumptuous in their places, mollify the quarrelsome, help the poor, liberate the oppressed, encourage the good, suffer the wicked and love everyone”²⁴—meeting followers where they are and providing what each needs most.

PROVIDING DIRECTION

According to van Dierendonck, clear and timely direction “ensures that people know what is expected of them and provides the right degree of accountability.” These he identifies “as salient dimensions of high-quality, dyadic interpersonal relations.”²⁵ Augustine suggests that giving instruction encourages focus when he proposes that instructors “instill in them a habit of diligence and application ... fix their thoughts on what is of real profit.”²⁶

In holding members accountable, Augustine reminds leaders “that abuses are not done away with by harsh or severe or autocratic measures but by teaching rather than by commanding, by persuasion rather than by threats. This is the way to deal with people in general, reserving severity for the sins of the few. In this way, it is not we who are feared because of our power, but God because of our words.”²⁷

STEWARDSHIP

An ethic of stewardship evokes responsible planning and management. Its outlook is less oriented to the immediate present but to a more distant future. The implication is that “stewards” are not self-invested owners, but “custodians” of something larger than themselves.²⁸ While Augustine’s context is always the journey toward God and the “future” always eternal life in heaven, his words are nonetheless inspiring for servant-leaders:

“Let us take no delight in past pleasures and avoid being captivated by things of the present. Let nothing of the past prevent us from listening and let no present thing hinder us from giving thought to the future.”²⁹

“The degree to which you are concerned for the common good rather than your own, is the criterion by which you can judge how much progress you have made. Love puts the interest of the community before personal advantage, not the other way around.”³⁰

GRACED SERVANTS

From the synthesis presented here, one might reasonably conclude that Servant-Leadership and leadership in the Augustinian tradition are closely aligned, interchangeable concepts. Not quite. Re-read Augustine’s words. Reflect on the wisdom contained there. Two more fundamental imperatives come into clear focus: reliance on God and the primacy of love. Augustine implores us to “cling to the God by Whom you were made; rely on Him; call upon Him; let Him be your strength,”³¹ and know that “without Him we can do nothing.”³² And as for love, “once and for all, [he gives us] this one short command: love, and do what you will. If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good.”³³

When faith and love animate behavior, God is drawn near.³⁴ Christ becomes visible,³⁵ the grace of God is made available to us.³⁶ Faith and love, manifestations of grace, constitute the sacred foundation from which humility, authenticity, harmony, empowerment, direction, and stewardship can be practiced. Through grace, faith and love deepen, strengthen and transform leadership. The result is leadership in the Augustinian tradition. CMJ ♥

1. Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The Servant as Leader*. Newton Centre, MA: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 7.
2. van Dierendonck, D. Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37 (4), July 2011, 1228-1261. Also see: Spears, L. C., (ed.) (1998). *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-Leadership*. New York: Wiley; Russell, R. & Stone, A. (2002). A review of servant leadership attributes: Developing a practical model. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 23, 145-157; Piccolo, R. F., & Colquitt, J.A. (2006). Transformational leadership and job behaviors: The mediating role of core job characteristics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 327-340; Laub, J. (1999). Assessing the Servant Organization; Development of the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA)Model. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60 (02): 308A (UMI No. 9921922).
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4. *Sermon* 340A, 1.
5. *Sermon* 46, 1.
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9. van Dierendonck, 1233.
10. Taylor, C. (1992). *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
11. *Sermon* 52, 22.
12. *Soliloquies* 2,1.1.
13. *Rule* 7, 46.
14. *Sermon* 355, 1.
15. *On the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*. II, 2. 5.
16. *Rule*, 1, 3 and 1, 9.
17. *Rule*, 1, 4-5 and 5, 32.
18. *Rule*, 5, 35.
19. *Rule* 6, 41.
20. *Rule*, 7, 45.
21. van Dierendonck, 1233.
22. *Rule* 1, 9.
23. *Rule* 4, 2.
24. *Sermon* 140, 1.
25. van Dierendonck, 1233.
26. *Sermon* 47, 10.
27. *Letter*, 22, 5.
28. See in particular Block, P. (1993). *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
29. *Commentary on Psalm* 66, 10.
30. *Rule*, 7, 2.
31. *Sermon* 97, 4. Also see *Commentaries on Psalms* 93, 126, and 132.
32. *Sermon on John* 84, 2.
33. *Sermon* 110, 8.
34. *Sermon* 225, 4.
35. *Sermon on John*, 17, 8.
36. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, II, 1996-2005.

“Use **knowledge** as a kind of **scaffolding** to help build the **structure of love** and **understanding**. **KNOWLEDGE** is useful when it is used to promote **LOVE**, but it becomes useless, even harmful, when **separated** from such an **END**.”

St. Augustine—Letter 55, 33

Section III: Values and Virtues

- How Shall We Live?
Heart of the Matter, Volume 5
- Ancient Wisdom on Friendship
Heart of the Matter, Volume 2
- Augustine on Forgiveness and Reconciliation
Heart of the Matter, Volume 3

HOW SHALL WE LIVE?

Guidance from *the Rule of Saint Augustine*

A “rule” is a guide by which one can measure progress in one’s life. There are four great rules in the Church. Their authors are St. Basil, St. Benedict, St. Francis and St. Augustine. The *Rule of St. Augustine* is renowned for its simplicity, its moderation and its care for those in need. The spirit of the *Rule* is what aids our entire community—faculty, staff and students—in the collaborative search for wisdom and meaning in all aspects of life. While it was explicitly written for Christians living in religious orders, most of its content is applicable to any community.

ABOUT THE RULE

In the year 397, Augustine wrote a rule of common life for lay Christians. In it, he expressed his ideas about living in an intentional religious community. Compared with other monastic rules, it is very brief, but its precepts get to the heart of community life. The *Rule* has been chosen by more than one hundred other religious orders and societies as the pattern for their daily lives.

At its core is the description found in the *Acts of the Apostles* 4:32, “The whole group of believers was of one mind and one heart. No one claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common.” Upon this passage, the *Rule of Augustine* established that the community must live in harmony, “being of one mind

“THE WHOLE GROUP OF BELIEVERS
WAS OF ONE MIND AND ONE HEART.
NO ONE CLAIMED ANY OF HIS
POSSESSIONS AS HIS OWN, BUT
EVERYTHING WAS HELD IN COMMON.”

and heart on the way to God.” The fundamental message of the *Rule* is love—love of God, love of neighbor—the foundation of Christian living.

Central to these principles is overcoming the human tendency to favor one’s own ego, which Augustine saw as a major obstacle to achieving unity among members and to living the Christian message. Every member’s spiritual and material goods are to be shared in humility, which is a necessary condition for love. By their love for one another, by their ability to live together in harmony, members of the community embody the truth of the teachings of Christ. In so doing, they make His love present to others.

One might legitimately wonder how something of such great antiquity can be relevant for a 21st century university community. Augustine’s day and ours are still similar in many ways. The whole world was in turmoil, the ancient world was collapsing and what the new world would be like no one knew. As in our own day, it was a time of crisis and transition, a time of uncertainty and confusion in the world and in the Church. As a practical application of the Gospels to a life lived together in community amidst turmoil, the *Rule* still provides a wealth of spiritual and practical wisdom. Life *together* is the ideal for a university community whose members are on a shared journey toward knowledge, wisdom and what Augustine calls “the happy life.”

PRINCIPLE ONE:
HARMONY AND HUMILITY

*Therefore all should live
united in mind and heart
and should in one another honor God, whose temples
you have become.* [I, 8]

*“Humility consists of knowing yourself.
Pride does its own will. Humility does the will of God.”*¹

Humility is the root of true charity. It calls us to accept the sacred in ourselves and others. In other words, the humble person sees her or himself with all of her or his gifts and faults. Humility teaches us to see others as equals. “Humility induces us to presume on our own strength and to trust in God.”² According to Augustine, the only way to reach an “abiding, active knowledge of the truth is through humility.”³

*“An Augustinian community is a place where the search for truth takes place in a climate of love and friendship, where one can experience that the ‘truth is neither yours nor mine, so that it can belong to the both of us.’”*⁴

In an Augustinian community, the purpose of life is to search for God, the ultimate Truth, not alone, but among friends⁵ who are committed to the same journey. In such a community “love is at the center and the heart” of every act and interaction,⁶ and respect for each person, as a child of God, is primary.

- Members strive to live in harmony—mutual concern for and assistance to each other in every way possible, including fraternal correction, in a spirit of love and understanding.⁷
- Members look upon their work as an expression of one’s human nature, not as a burden, but in cooperation with the Creator in shaping the world and serving humankind.
- Always conscious of the virtues of honesty, integrity, and compassion as fundamental to the Christian way of life,⁸ members seek in every effort to work for unity, making justice and peace, the fruits of love, a reality in the Church and in the world.⁹

PRINCIPLE TWO: PRAYER AND INTERIORITY

*Persevere faithfully in prayers (Col 4:2),
at the appointed hours and times.* [II, 1]

While this part of the *Rule* specifically describes the Christian prayer practice, it can be understood as central for anyone with a faith orientation. Thus interiority—developing and maintaining an inner life at the depths of one’s person—is critical for anyone who seeks understanding. Prayer, meditation, religious celebration, all in the context of one’s own religious tradition or faith community, is essential for individuals and communities.

*“Do not go outside yourself,
but enter into yourself,
for truth dwells in the interior self.”*¹⁰

Both Augustine’s personal life and his spiritual teaching are dominated by a continual call to interiority. He contends that it is “inside one’s self” where truth is found,¹¹ and that only in reflection and silence is understanding achieved.¹²

According to Augustine, the sights and sounds of the external world only serve as signposts and reminders. Learning takes place in the interior world.¹³ The interior activity of contemplation and a search for the ultimate Truth leads us to transcend ourselves to an eventual encounter with God.¹⁴

PRINCIPLE THREE:
MODERATION
AND SELF-DENIAL

Discipline your flesh...so far as your health allows. [III, 1]
It is better to need less than to have more. [III, 5]
*You should not try to please by your appearance,
but by your behavior.* [IV, 1]
*... protect one another’s modesty,
for in this way God who dwells within you
will protect you from within yourselves.* [IV, 6]

Augustine’s thoughts on moderation and self-denial speak directly to our “post-modern” 21st century, consumer driven culture. For us, “subduing” the flesh isn’t meant to indicate some negative judgment about our human nature. It is, at heart, recognition that what we may desire or value is not always most beneficial for our human growth or healthy life. He asks us to place a higher priority on connections among the mind, body AND spirit. The *Rule* is a reminder that we must feed our spirits as well as our bodies and that over-consumption of anything can render us *unhealthy* in a variety of ways. Having too much can blind us to others and to the truly important and beautiful things in life.

This principle calls us to share our goods with those less fortunate and reminds us that we are only stewards of the things of this earth. It reminds us that appearances can deceive and the “good life” is to be sought above all.

PRINCIPLE FOUR:
FRATERNAL CORRECTION
AND MUTUAL
RESPONSIBILITY

*Whatever you are doing, your behavior
should in no way cause offense to anyone,
but should rather be in keeping
with the holiness of your way of life.* [IV, 1-11]

*...[Y]ou should warn [a brother or sister] at once
so that what has begun may go no further
and may be immediately corrected.* [IV, 7]

Fraternal correction and mutual responsibility for each other is fundamental to Augustine’s *Rule* and is a constant concern in the life of Augustine. We are indeed “our brother’s and sister’s keeper,”—an obligation which we must take most seriously. It is not permission to be “busybodies” but is a call to care for one another’s welfare. We’re all familiar with headlines describing unimaginable tragedy on college campuses. Could any have been avoided, if members of those communities had been more attentive to and responsible for each other? One clear manifestation of such care is the obligation to act when another is in danger of straying into sin or is behaving in a manner that harms another.

This principle is essential for responsible life together and is a real sign of respect for the other. It reflects a love and a care that goes beyond mere external social politeness and gets to the heart of the ideal of sharing all things. In today’s world, however, it takes real courage to move past the typical excuses: “So long as it’s not hurting me.” “It’s none of my business.” “It’s a free country.” and other typical responses frequently used in uncaring communities.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: THE COMMON GOOD & CARE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

So, then, no one should work at anything for [him/herself]. All your work should be shared together, with greater care and more ready eagerness than if you were doing things for yourself alone.

For when it is written of love that it “does not seek its own.” (1 Cor 13:5)

it means that it puts the common good before its own and not personal advantage before the common good. [V, 2]

Stewardship of the common good requires that we willingly accept accountability for others through service to them, without control of them. In the Catholic tradition, “the Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us, and confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods. They teach us [how] to love...”¹⁵ Likewise, the core teaching of the Gospel and the first principle of social justice is that every human person is a child of God, worthy of respect and dignity. Villanova encourages each person to use his/her God-given gifts in service to the community. The University also celebrates differences among individuals as a means of witnessing to the community through each person’s uniqueness and diverse gifts.

PRINCIPLE SIX: ASKING FOR PARDON AND EXTENDING FORGIVENESS

Avoid quarrels or at least end them quickly, lest anger grow into hatred. [VI, 1]

If anyone hurts another, [he/she] should be careful to heal the wound made by apologizing as soon as possible; and the one who was hurt should be careful to forgive without further discussion. [VI, 2]

A community without conflicts is impossible, but Augustine offers sound advice. Disputes are to be addressed quickly, directly and with compassion. Not only must forgiveness be sought, but the one who has been offended must pardon without rancor. Most importantly, forgiveness must come from the heart not just the lips.

Augustine makes it eminently clear that a community will be strong only if its members interact honestly and lovingly. An Augustinian institution strives to model open, forthright and loving confrontation as it points out what is truly harmful to individuals or the community for the welfare of all.



PRINCIPLE SEVEN: OBEDIENCE AND LEADERSHIP

You should obey [those in authority] as you would a father, with respect for [his/her] office, lest you offend God who is within [him/her]. [VII, 44]

[Everyone in authority] should consider [themselves] lucky not in having power over you but in being able to care for you with love.... [Leaders] should show themselves to all around as a model of good works. [VII, 3]

For Augustine, authority is an act of loving service. Designated leaders are not above others but remain part of the community with special responsibilities and duties toward others. In this tradition then, two of the most important aspects of leadership are guiding the community toward the fulfillment of Gospel ideals and being an example to others.

Every member, however, must take responsibility for achieving these ideals and for discerning the direction of the community. This requires a willingness to listen and cooperate for the common good. Moreover, obedience to authority shows loving compassion for leaders, who necessarily bear greatest responsibility for the community.

THE GOAL FOR VILLANOVA

Some parts of this ancient rule are common sense. Other parts have become almost counter-cultural. But these short excerpts demonstrate just how relevant the thought of Augustine can be for life here at Villanova. What would our university be like if every person lived Augustine’s *Rule* to the fullest every day? ❤

The text for this article is an adaptation from *Tolle Lege: A Brief Introduction to Villanova University—Part 2* (2014). Quotations from the *Rule of Augustine* are taken from the translation by Robert Russell, OSA. Chapter and paragraph appear in brackets.

1. *Sermon on John* 25, 16.
2. Pelligrino, M. (1996). *Spiritual Journey: Augustine's Reflection on the Christian Life*, 57-58.
3. *Ibid.* 35.
4. Esmeralda, A. (2001). *Augustinian Values*, 9.
5. *Confessions*, 4, 4-7.
6. *Tracts on the Gospel of John*, 7, 8.
7. *Rule*, 25-29, 41-43.
8. Cf. *General Statutes*, 67.
9. *Letter*, 234, 3-7.
10. *True Religion*, 72, 102.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Sermon*, 56, 22.
13. *The Teacher*, XIV, 46.
14. Pelligrino, 11.
15. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1726-1728.

ANCIENT WISDOM On Friendship

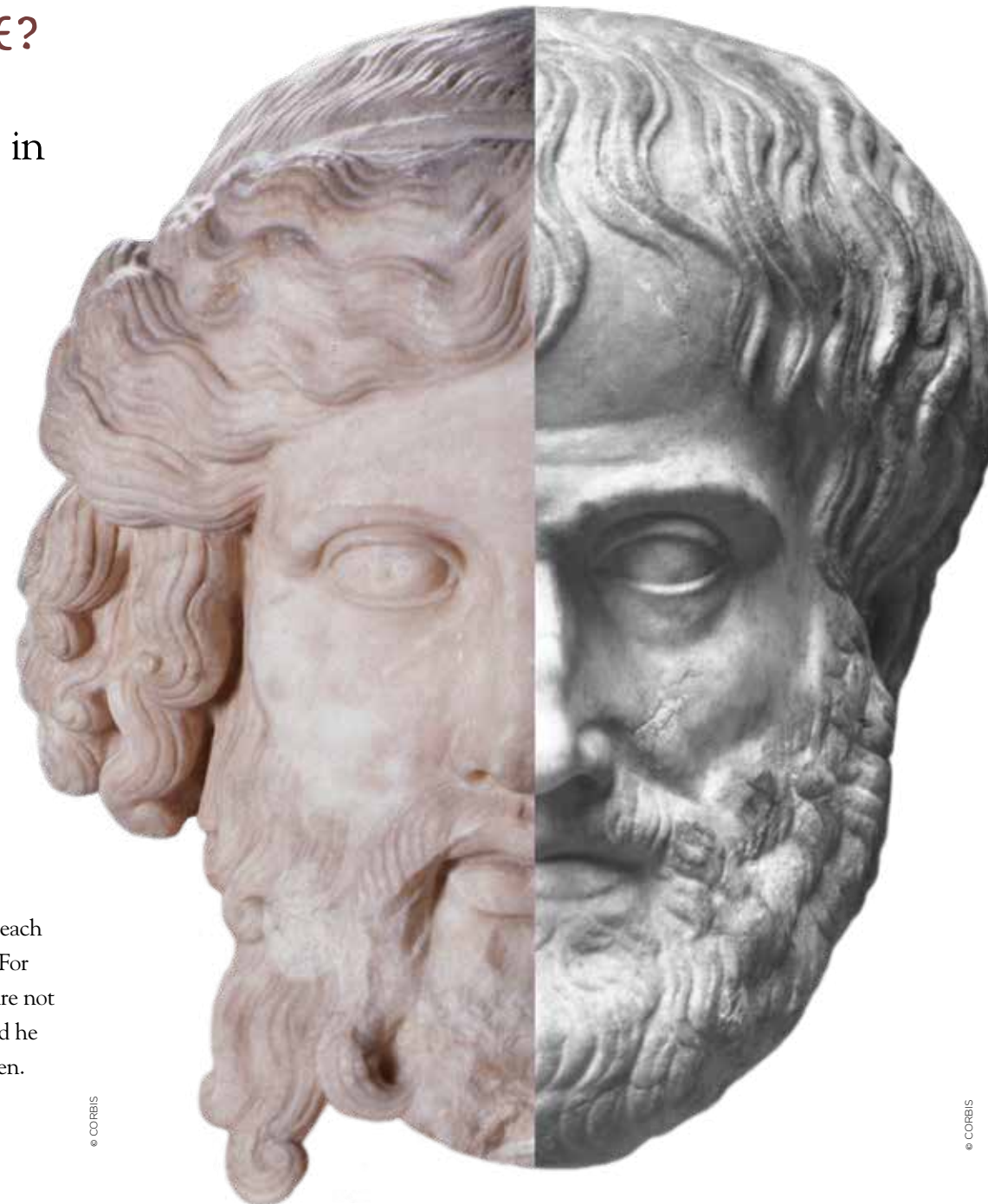
WHO INFLUENCED AUGUSTINE?

Two ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, influenced theories of friendship in Augustine's world.

More often than any other religious figure, Augustine examines the theme of friendship. Likewise, more than any other religious rule, more than those of the Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits or Carmelites, the *Rule of Augustine* is based on Augustine's experience of living with friends. Why so?

Augustine's contact with Platonic ideas of friendship was mediated through the Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero. In his dialogue *De Amicitia*, (On Friendship) Cicero claims that we are attracted to friends, real *true friends*, because they are good people, *people of virtue*. He contends that we are not attracted because a "friend" can do something for us. While this may happen on occasion, for Cicero it is neither essential to nor the heart of real friendship.

According to Cicero, friendship is the strongest tie between persons, even stronger than family. Friends care for each other to the point that, if necessary, they deny their friends' requests and openly criticize them. Best friends will tell each other "no" when one asks for something that is dishonorable or less than good. For Cicero, there is no limit on the good one will do for a friend. Such friendships are not entered into lightly and may even be difficult to maintain, but they are a joy and he contends, "they last forever."¹ Cicero counts true friends as the best gift of heaven.



PLATO (424/423 B.C.–348/347 B.C.)

ARISTOTLE (384 B.C.–322 B.C.)

Aristotle was more pragmatic than Cicero. Aristotle's concept of friendship is important not necessarily because Augustine would have focused on his work to the same degree, but because Aristotle's concerns about friendship can help us understand Augustine's relationships with various persons he calls "friends."

In Book VIII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes several sorts of relationships, all of which he considered friendship. They are friendships of *pleasure*, friendships of *utility* or usefulness, and friendships of *virtue*.

Friendships of pleasure are ones in which we feel some affection for a person and want to be close to him or her because the "friend" makes us feel good—not morally good, but merely pleasant. Cicero would have rejected this sort of friendship as unworthy.

Aristotle's second category is composed of people who are useful to us, people with whom we have mutual obligations. But, as one might imagine, such an attitude toward friendship may lead to "using" friends in unattractive way.² Aristotle thinks *friendships of utility* are more common among older adults. Perhaps he was so inclined since there were no pensions or Social Security in antiquity, and the elderly of his time had to depend on others to meet their daily needs. Such friendships were not always pleasant, but they persisted because for one reason or another one needed the other. But, when the "friend" no longer met a need, the so-called "friendship" dissolved.³

Aristotle calls his last category *perfect friendship*—the virtuous friendship of equals. He contends that if persons are not equals, temptation always exists for the friendship to become one of pleasure or utility. According to Aristotle, true friends are attracted to each other because of the good they see in each other, not for personal advantage, but simple and true good. True friends are persons who wish each well and do whatever is necessary for the other—whatever helps maximize the good, the virtuous, in the other person's life. These are the friends of the style that Cicero prized and that Augustine, in his mature years, found to be the best kind of friend. But it was not always this way with Augustine.

Augustine and Youthful Friendship

Readers of Books II and IV of *Confessions*, will know a lot about Augustine's friends and companions. Augustine's first story of friendship takes place when he was 16, when his parents were too short on money to pay his tuition.⁴ He spent time with a group of unnamed, so-called "friends." One day they set out to steal some pears. He did it out of a perverted craving for friendship,⁵ one of Aristotle's friendships of pleasure, one that both Plato and Cicero would have disdained.



Students forming friendships at New Student Orientation.

Augustine later confessed that he knew at the time it was wrong, but nonetheless he loved the lawlessness and found pleasure in it, a pleasure these so-called friends facilitated.

Later, when Augustine was able to go back to school, he fell in with another group of so-called “friends”—the Wreckers. While Augustine claims he did not join in the wrecking, he found their company both pleasurable and just a little disturbing.⁶ It was not a friendship of equals and therefore could not be a true friendship. The friendships were short-lived.

His first extended story of a single friend occurs a little later in his life. A young man and Augustine became friends because of shared experiences and interests. Both had been brought up in Christian households. This was a friendship of equals who wished each other well and hoped to cultivate some good in each other. Through illness, the friend became very religious, but not Augustine. He wasn’t ready to settle down, religiously or in any other way. And so, just as Cicero would have predicted, their friendship fell apart.⁷

This certainly was a better friendship than the evil one of pear-tree fame or with the mischievous Wreckers, but as with those friendships, this one did not endure.

In retrospect Augustine could diagnose what was wrong in this friendship. There was something missing in it, something that prevented them from being best friends forever. Augustine confesses: “No friends are true friends unless you, my God, bind them fast to one another through that love which is sown in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”⁸ Because Augustine was not ready for a relationship with God, he could not have the true friendship, which outlasts time and even death.

Augustine and True Friends

Emblematic of true friendship is his relationship with Alypius. He is one of the rare persons mentioned by name in the first part of *Confessions*. The two men had known each other since youth. They both studied Rhetoric and a spent time together among the Manichees before being baptized, on the same night, by St. Ambrose. Alypius, like Augustine, eventually became a bishop. The two of them cooperated in organizing regional councils for North African bishops and participated in reformation of the African church.

When Augustine first speaks of Alypius in *Confessions* he says: “He was greatly attached to me because he thought that I was a good and learned man, and I was fond

of him because, although he was still young, it was quite clear that he had a natural disposition to goodness.”⁹ Augustine describes their errant ways and then stops, almost in an aside, and adds two remarks. The first is “I had forgotten that I might use my influence with him to prevent him from wasting his talents in this thoughtless, impetuous enthusiasm for futile pastimes.”¹⁰ So even before Augustine’s conversion, he knew that *this friendship was good*. His second remark makes this clear: “But you, O Lord, who hold the reins of all you have created, had not forgotten this man who was one day to be a bishop and administer your sacrament to your children. You used me to set him on the right path, but so that we might recognize that it was all by your doing, you used me without my knowledge.”¹¹ *This was a true friendship* because it encompassed a third partner, God. In this relationship we hear an echo of the definition of true friendship: “No friends are true friends unless you, my God, bind them fast to one another through that love, which is sown in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”¹²

In the first half of *Confessions* Augustine mentions lots of friends. Almost none are named. Even his companion of nearly 15 years, the mother of his only child, is not named. But later, after

his conversion in Book VIII, Augustine chronicles many more friendships and all of these include names. Why?

Michael P. Foley has come up with a more than satisfactory explanation for Augustine’s never naming them. Professor Foley sees in the first half of *Confessions* a mirror image of the second. The break between the first and the second part is, as one might expect, Book VIII, which includes Augustine’s conversion. Before the conversion there is disorder: in the parts of the soul, in the pursuit of worldly gain and false wisdom, and significantly, in relationships, especially friendships. After conversion, there is order: in the parts of the soul, in the rejection of worldly ambition, the pursuit of true knowledge, and in relationships, now with many named friends.¹³ Friendships in the latter part of *Confessions* resemble the true friendships of Aristotle and Cicero. Friends are equals; most are bishops like Augustine. They care about each other and the cultivation of the goodness of their respective church communities. Each of these later friendships seems to include God, the missing partner in the friendships described in the earlier part of *Confessions*.

Evaluating Friendships

Think about your own friendships. Are you a true friend to those you identify? Are you using your influence for the good of your friends? Even if God’s name is never invoked, is God somehow at work in these friendships?

What about your family? Do you have siblings? Are they your friends? Is there simple pleasure in their company? Are they useful on occasion? How about parents? Can parents ever be friends to their children? Can parents only be friends of utility?

Challenge

Consider once again those whom you call friends. Are they true friends? If they are, keep them. If they or you are not true friends but want to be, consider how to cultivate the best in each other. If no friends are true friends yet, pray as Augustine did that God may bind them fast to one another through the love which is sown in your hearts by the Holy Spirit. ♥

This text is an adaptation from a lecture delivered by Dr. Maureen A. Tilley, Fordham University, while she held the 2011 Thomas F. Martin St. Augustine Fellowship of the Augustinian Institute at Villanova University. It is used here with permission of the author.

1. *De Amicitia* 31–32.
2. On using friends and the connection to Augustine’s distinction between use and enjoyment (uti/frui), see Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University, 1992), p. 198.
3. For a discussion of the friendship of utility and ones based on mutual obligation, see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), pp. 2–5.
4. *Confessions* II, 3.
5. *Confessions* II, 7.
6. *Confessions* III, 3.
7. *Confessions* IV, 4.
8. *Confessions* IV, 4, in *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, trans. by R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1984), p. 75.
9. *Confessions* VI, 7, (11).
10. *Confessions* VI, 7, (12).
11. *Confessions* VI, 7.
12. *Confessions* IV, 4.
13. Michael P. Foley, *Abusing and Reusing: Some of the Riddles of Augustine’s Confessions* presentation at the annual Meeting of the North American Patristics Society, May 2, 2002.

AUGUSTINE

on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Augustine preached frequently about the nature of conflict and the obligation of forgiveness to his congregation. He saw clearly that no matter how justified one felt, nothing good could come from unresolved conflict. He was in fact, sure that the longer a quarrel persisted the more anger emerged and the more intransigent opponents were likely to become.¹ Even for friends living together, he had this same concern.

In his famous Rule, he advised, “avoid quarrels altogether or else put an end to them quickly,”² that whoever injures another must repair the damage by apologizing, and further that he who has suffered injury must forgive without delay.³

Augustine used Christ’s instruction recorded in the parable of the two debtor servants⁴ to guide his own thinking on conflict resolution

among Christians.⁵ One must be patient, generous and persistent in forgiving others.

According to Augustine, sinners who recognize their own failures should humble themselves and seek forgiveness from those they have harmed.⁶ When pardon is sought and granted, or offered and accepted, offenses were forgiven and the parties reconciled. And as we read in

Matthew’s Gospel, offended Christians dare not refuse those seeking pardon, since refusal results in forfeiting any appeal to divine mercy for themselves⁷ and in a return of guilt for prior sins.⁸

Augustine sets an exceptionally high bar for Christians by insisting that when an offender fails to recognize an offense committed or to ask pardon for it, responsibility for initiating reconciliation falls to the person who



“But we had to **celebrate**
and **be glad**,
because this brother of yours
was dead and is alive again;
he was **lost** and **is found.**”

Luke 15:32

has been harmed, since the victim should have already forgiven the offender! In Augustine’s view, the well-being of the offender should be of even greater concern to the victim than the injury that has been suffered.

According to Augustine, sinners who recognize their own failures should humble themselves and seek forgiveness from those they have harmed.

In a variety of other sermons, Augustine elaborates on different aspects of forgiveness specified in Matthew. Mutual love and care were foundational. Sin of any sort must never be overlooked or dismissed.⁹ Christians were called not only to tolerate but to actively love and care for those who sinned against them. Any “toleration” that allowed fellow Christians to remain in sin could even be classified as an act of hatred. Thus, to follow Christ in the practice of love was not only to bear another’s burden grudgingly but generously to work at making the sinner healthy and loveable.¹⁸

Augustine’s analysis is clear: Conflict among Christians result in injuries to

all involved, and consequently to the whole body of Christ. His concern was focused then, on healing the resulting division rather than on reparations for the injury.

Running through Augustine’s treatment of mutual forgiveness is a particular understanding of the relation of mercy to justice. In his view, divine judgment must be approached with neither trust in one’s observance of the commandments nor reliance on one’s generous deeds. It was his contention that hope and security could be found only in the divine mercy. Divine mercy was neither capricious nor irrational, and followed the standard of a person’s own practice. And as seen in Matthew, God is merciful to those who have themselves extended mercy to others.¹¹ Thus, divine mercy follows a justice of its own, in which Christians are to participate.¹²

Application

Think about your friends and family, classmates at school or colleagues at work. Recall your last argument with one of them. Who was at fault? How did you respond? Were you quick to apologize for your transgression? Had you already forgiven the offender before he or she asked for pardon? Are you or someone you know holding a grudge? How is it affecting you? The offender? Who or what is more important: You? The offender? Justice? Mercy? Vengeance? Compassion? What sense of responsibility do you feel for the inappropriate, unhealthy, illegal or sinful behavior of another? Are your feelings the same for family members and friends, classmates and colleagues, acquaintances and strangers?

How might we and our world be transformed by an Augustinian commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness? ♥

This article is an adapted excerpt of a paper delivered at Villanova University by J. Patout Burns, PhD, entitled “Sin and Forgiveness in Augustine’s Sermons.” During the fall semester of 2012, Dr. Burns held the Thomas F Martin Fellowship of Villanova’s Augustinian Institute. Until 2010, Burns was the Edward A. Malloy Professor of Catholic Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School. The paper is used with permission of the Augustinian Institute.

1. Sermon 211.1–2.
2. Rule 6. 41.
3. Rule 6. 42.
4. Matthew 18:23–35
5. Sermon 82 provides a sustained and systematic analysis of the first.
6. Sermon 82.4.6.
7. Sermon 59.7, 211.5, 278, 6, 10–11, 315.10; Sermon Wilm. 2(179A).1,6–7; Exposition on Psalm. 54.14, 147.13.
8. Sermon 57.11.12, 278.6.11–12.
9. Sermon 4.20.
10. Sermon Frang. 5(162B).2–3, 9(114A).5.
11. Matthew 18:32–35.
12. Exposition on Psalm. 143.8, 147.13.

“**LOVE,** and do what you will.

If you **HOLD YOUR PEACE,**
If you **CRY OUT,**
CRY OUT IN LOVE.

If you **CORRECT SOMEONE,**
CORRECT THEM OUT OF LOVE.

If you **SPARE THEM,**
SPARE THEM OUT OF LOVE.

Let the **ROOT OF LOVE** be in you:

nothing can spring from it but **GOOD.**”

St. Augustine—Sermon 110, 8

MISSION STATEMENT

Villanova University is a Catholic Augustinian community of higher education, committed to excellence and distinction in the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the University is grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition and advances a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason. Villanova emphasizes and celebrates the liberal arts and sciences as foundational to all academic programs. The University community welcomes and respects members of all faiths who seek to nurture a concern for the common good and who share an enthusiasm for the challenge of responsible and productive citizenship in order to build a just and peaceful world.

ENDURING COMMITMENTS

In pursuit of this mission, we commit ourselves to academic excellence, to our values and traditions, and to our students, alumni and the global community.

To foster academic excellence, we as a University:

- Create a diverse community of scholars, united and dedicated to the highest academic standards;
- Emphasize the liberal arts and sciences as our foundation and foster in our students active engagement, critical thinking, life-long learning and moral reflection;
- Concern ourselves with developing and nurturing the whole person, allowing students, faculty and staff to grow intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, socially and physically in an environment that supports individual differences and insists that mutual love and respect should animate every aspect of university life;
- Encourage interdisciplinary research, teaching and scholarship;
- Affirm the intrinsic good of learning, contemplation and the search for truth in undergraduate and graduate education;
- Support a curriculum that encourages both a global perspective and an informed respect for the differences among peoples and cultures.

To honor our values and tradition, we as a Catholic University:

- Believe that the dialogue between faith and reason drives the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, and fosters St. Augustine’s vision of learning as a community ethos governed by love;
- Seek to understand, enrich and reach the Catholic intellectual tradition through our curricula, scholarship and activities in ways that engage diverse religious, intellectual and cultural traditions in a vigorous and respectful pursuit of truth and wisdom in every area of humanity;
- Provide opportunities for students, faculty and staff to seek guidance from Catholic intellectual and moral traditions, while always welcoming people from all faiths, cultures and traditions to contribute their gifts and talents to our mission;
- Respect and encourage the freedom proposed by St. Augustine, which makes civil discussion and inquiry possible and productive;
- Look to the Order of St. Augustine to preserve our Augustinian character, by showing appropriate preference to Augustinians in faculty and staff appointments, and by welcoming their presence and influence in our university community.

To serve our students, alumni and global community, we as an Augustinian University:

- Encourage students, faculty and staff to engage in service experiences and research, both locally and globally, so they learn from others, provide public service to the community and help create a more sustainable world;
- Commit to the common good, and apply the knowledge and skills of our students and faculty to better the human condition;
- Encourage our students and faculty to pursue virtue by integrating love and knowledge, and by committing themselves to research and education for justice, with a special concern for the poor and compassion for the suffering;
- Respect a world view that recognizes that all creation is sacred and that fosters responsible stewardship of the environment;
- Include our alumni as an integral part of the Villanova community;
- Value highly our relationship with neighboring communities.

“Consider this great puzzle.
The sounds of MY WORDS strike the ears,
BUT THE TEACHER IS WITHIN.
DO NOT THINK that any human teaches any other.
The sound of our voices can admonish,
but the one who teaches is inside.
The sound we make is useless,
unless there be not THE ONE INSIDE
that shall teach.”

St. Augustine—Tractates on 1 John 3, 12