THE HEART of the MATTER
MISSION AND MINISTRY AT VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

Service Inspired by
St. Thomas of Villanova
As both Catholic and Augustinian, Villanova University pursues academic excellence, promotes a vision of the common good and celebrates the sacramental character of all creation with respect and reverence. We search for truth with openness to ultimate meaning and value through the lens of Christian faith and engagement with all disciplines in the liberal arts tradition. Through innovative academic course work and pastoral ministry, we express a “special concern for the poor, compassion for the suffering, regard for the value of life and dedication to social justice and human rights.” (Augustinian Sponsorship of Higher Education, 1995)

Heart of the Matter is an annual publication of the Office for Mission & Ministry. It hopes to show the centrality of Villanova’s Augustinian and Catholic identity and its unique contribution to American Catholic higher education. For us, it is a year of anniversaries. Not only will the University soon celebrate the 175th year of its founding, but we have also recently celebrated the 150th anniversary of the publication of Gregor Mendel’s ground breaking paper on plant hybridization and the 40th anniversary of Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week. For all of these reasons, it is especially appropriate to focus on the patron and namesake of the University, St. Thomas of Villanova.

We are especially indebted to collaborators His Excellency, Cardinal Peter Turkson, Fr. James Keenan, SJ, to faculty mentor Dr. Tim Monahan and student scholars Eric Ragone, Mary Frances Roth, Sarah Stankiewicz and to Dr. Chris Janosik who contributed content for this issue. Our hope is that this publication and their efforts will provide insight into the heart of Villanova University and inspire not only personal growth but participation in and fulfillment of our Augustinian mission.

Barbara Wall, PhD
Vice President for Mission and Ministry

"LOVE renders everything precious. If a rich man GIVES AWAY the whole of his property and WITHHOLDS HIS LOVE, his giving means nothing. Every Gift is to be tested against the TOUCHSTONE OF CHARITY."

Thomas of Villanova, Epiphany, Sermon 2, 7

2 St. Thomas of Villanova: Namesake of the University
It’s Thomas, not Augustine, for whom the University is named. Most of us don’t know much about him.

4 St. Thomas’ Ten Rules for Serving the Lord
Thomas was a great preacher and had a special knack for succinctness. Here’s one of the first “top ten” lists.

6 Who are the Augustinians? Workers for the Hungry and Homeless
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8 We Believe: What does the "V" Mean?
When Villanovans flash the “V” it means more than victory.

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22 Mentoring for Faith and Learning
Augustine’s method is embodied by Villanova’s Center for Faith and Learning.

26 Since 1842, Villanova University’s Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition has been the cornerstone of an academic community in which students learn to think critically, act compassionately and succeed while serving others. As students grow intellectually, Villanova prepares them to become ethical leaders who create positive change everywhere life takes them.

28 Cover Image: Saint Thomas of Villanova Giving Alms to the Poor
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo
Spanish, 1617–1682, oil on canvas
132.4 x 76.2 cm
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In the United States, there are a handful of colleges and universities named for St. Thomas. Universities carrying the moniker are located in Houston, Miami and St. Paul. Thomas Aquinas College can be found in California. Thomas More College is located in Kentucky. Perhaps because we at Villanova focus so intently on the extraordinary legacy of St. Augustine, it’s sometimes easy to overlook that Villanova is named not for Augustine, but for St. Thomas of Villanova. Had the Augustinians who founded the school decided otherwise, Villanova could today be just as easily known as St. Thomas University of Pennsylvania.

Tomás García Martínez was born in Spain in 1486 and grew up in the home of his parents in Villanueva de Los Infantes. It was a time marked by tremendous change and fresh challenges. Spain’s conquests and new sources of trade provided great riches and wealth. The gold that poured into the country literally made it a “Golden Age”. During this era, many of the higher positions in the Church were obtained through power and political maneuvering, rather than through a life of holiness. Many of the men who occupied these positions spent lavishly and did little to enhance the spiritual lives of the people.

At an early age, Tomás was sent to Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid. He was a brilliant pupil. Upon graduation, he was quickly invited to become part of the teaching faculty of his alma mater. Eventually, his reputation for intellectual prowess spread across Spain to the halls of the renowned University of Salamanca, whose chancellor offered Tomás a professorship in 1516. To everyone’s surprise, he declined the offer. Despite the many material attractions and career advantages available to him in 16th century Spain, Tomás surrendered all that he was and all that he had to God. He entered the Augustinian monastery on November 21, 1516, and professed vows on November 25, 1517. The following year, at the age of 32, he was ordained to the priesthood.

Tomás was a man of the mind, who was comfortable with the power of his intellect. He was also gifted in the governance of men. His fellow Augustinians, recognizing both his gifts and his holiness of life, soon chose him to be local superior or prior, and later, regional superior or provincial. He was a skilled administrator, keeping careful watch over the spiritual and material affairs of the Augustinians in Spain, but he was also an innovator. Concerned about the spiritual state of the people in the far reaches of the Spanish empire, he promoted the organization of a missionary group of Augustinian friars to minister to the people in the New World. It was he who sent Augustinians to what is now modern Mexico and from there, Peru and the Philippines.

On October 10, 1544, after first declining the invitation of King Charles V to become the bishop of Granada, he was appointed Archbishop of Valencia by Pope Paul III. Contrary to the prevailing norm, he became well known for his charitable efforts, especially towards orphans, poor women and the sick. He possessed an especially wise notion of charity, so that while he, himself was very charitable, he sought to obtain definitive, structural solutions to the systemic problem of poverty. He created work opportunities for the poor, thereby making his charity bear fruit.

Tomás died in Valencia on September 8, 1555. His life is remembered for his ardent charity, zeal for the promotion of studies and the missions of the Order, as well as wholehearted service to the Church. Already called in his lifetime the “almsgiver” and the “father of the poor,” he was canonized in 1658. His earthly remains continue to be venerated in the Cathedral Church in Valencia.

Four centuries later, a score of churches, schools and universities bear his name. A congregation of sisters is also named after him. San Tomás is still remembered, still honored—not so much for his acute intellect nor for his strong administrative skills, nor even for his elaborate and inspiring sermons about the mystical life and the love of God, but for his simple caring for the marginalized. He once said, “One thing alone I can call my own—the obligation to distribute to my brethren the possessions with which God has entrusted me.” He lived this belief as fully as he could. Saint Thomas of Villanova was indeed, a true follower of Christ.

At Villanova University, the church that bears his name on the Villanova University campus.

St. Thomas of Villanova

NAMESAKE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Adapted from several short biographies published by Augustinian Press.
First
Love God and Neighbor

“It is important above all else to love God and neighbor and carry out His commandments, because to do so is to live fully and to put an end to our sinning.” We must endeavor “to practice all the virtues and to persevere in love of Him in such a way that we love Him alone” and through Him, love our neighbors as ourselves.

Second
Examine Your Conscience

“The second rule is that we must … very carefully examine our conscience, offering satisfaction to the Lord.” … thinking “of our past blindness and recalling the truth;—all the virtues and graces, purity, … knowledge of grace, purity, … the blessings of Creation, … the redemption of the human race, and for particular blessings, not given to others.” Engage “in other similar spiritual exercises, which include reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. It is here that we will obtain grace, purity, devotion—the gift of tears; light—knowledge of the truth; spirit—all the virtues and spiritual riches.”

Third
Seek Like-Minded Relationships

“Flee conversations with worldlings, for these sadder the spirit and the good desires of a devout soul; flee visits with seculars and seek conversation with a truly spiritual person in whom God dwells. For just as a fiery coal sets another coal on fire, so a heart that is burning and on fire in the Spirit will set another heart on fire.”

Fourth
Avoid Temptations of the Present Age

“Scorn all the pleasures of the past, as well as the worldly and empty delights of the present age, and endeavor to discover the other, much greater and more perfect interior delights of the spirit and mind. These give greater abundance to the soul and make those worldly delights seem trivial.” Do likewise “to all the riches, pomp, honors, and favors of this world. Make a great effort to keep the heart clean of all temporal affections and free of all impassioned love of creatures, in order that the Lord may fill it with Himself and His Holy Spirit.”

Fifth
Rely on the Sacraments

“We must cleanse our consciences frequently, by confessing our sins and receiving Communion with great devotion.” By doing so “we will obtain the grace of perseverance, remain firm and courageous in continuing the work so well begun.”

Sixth
Pray Regularly

Create a space “that fosters devotion and invites us to stay in it in order to converse with God, for it is here that we must immerse ourselves as in a crucible, in order to come forth on fire with the Holy Spirit. Here we obtain every blessing.” “Meditate with devotion … Thank God for the blessings of Creation, … the redemption of the human race, and for particular blessings, not given to others.” Engage “in other similar spiritual exercises, which include reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. It is here that we will obtain grace, purity, devotion—the gift of tears; light—knowledge of the truth; spirit—all the virtues and spiritual riches.”

Seventh
Avoid Judgmental Behavior

Let us “keep watch over our tongue and our heart and keep a very careful account of our thoughts and desires and words, quickly chasing from our heart all vain and harmful thoughts. Listen much and speak little, and then only what has been thought out. Flee all gossiping and adverse judgments on others, not being offended by anything. Let us not concern ourselves with … the doings of others … but rather only ourselves, living always within ourselves.”

Eighth
Avoid Procrastination

“We must be careful not to waste time but always to bear in mind that on the present moment of our lives depends everlasting glory in the future. We should regard as a major loss of an hour in which so great and everlasting a good might be gained. We must fix this thought firmly in our memory.”

Ninth
Do Good and Avoid Harm

“Do good to all and evil to none, either in judgment, word, or action. Put up with the weaknesses of others, not indicting them for their sins but, moved by charity, praying to God for those who go astray.”

Tenth
Improve Daily

“Take to heart all that has been said here, exhorting, rebuking and encouraging ourselves to improve daily and make progress without ever being forgetful of ourselves, because it is by doing so that we make certain of the glory for which we hope, and sow in this life the everlasting fruit that we shall reap in the next.” … “Ask persistently for salvation, help, for the light to know the good, for the grace to love it, and for the strength to pursue and persevere in it.”

Keep always in your minds a verse of Psalm 115:7-8: It is as if the Psalmist is saying “turn your eyes and heart to God, for in Him alone will you find your rest; nothing that is created will satisfy you, but only your Creator Himself.” This turning … “to God, who is its rest, means turning to Him in reflection and love; fastening one’s eyes on Him means gazing on Him, conversing with Him, embracing Him through prayer, meditation, and reading, so that one is united and joined to Him by desire.”

WHO are THE AUGUSTINIANS?

tireless workers for
the hungry
and homeless

Many in the Villanova University community are aware of the life and legacy of St. Thomas of Villanova, who gave away much of his personal wealth to feed the hungry and house the homeless. In our own time, many were and continue to be influenced by Augustinian Fr. Ray Jackson, OSA (1933-1997) who did likewise.

After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, Ray joined the Augustinian Order at Villanova University. He graduated in 1961 and was ordained in 1965. Thereafter, he dedicated his life teaching and inspiring young people as a high school teacher and college professor. In 1975, he founded the Center for Peace and Justice Education at Villanova University. In that same year, Fr. Jackson helped create Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

On any given day, 50 million Americans struggle to find their next meal. Likewise, each day at least 800,000 people are homeless in the United States, including about 200,000 children.

Now in its 40th year at Villanova, this observance sparked a national movement in higher education. In association with the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) and the National Student Campaign against Hunger and Homelessness (NSCHH), over 750 educational communities across the United States sponsor Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (HAW) programs modeled, at least in part, on the program designed by Fr. Jackson. Currently, our annual event, sponsored by Campus Ministry & the Center for Peace and Justice Education, engages the Villanova community in discussions around the root causes of poverty, particularly food insecurity and homelessness. Goals and objectives for the week raise awareness through education, demonstrate solidarity with those experiencing hunger and homelessness, take immediate action and advocate for broader, long-term solutions that address underlying systemic causes of hunger and homelessness. This event is grounded in Catholic social teaching—Solidarity, recognizing the Life and Dignity of the Human Person, and the Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. The week at Villanova includes:

- Hunger Runs $K
- Food Fast Day educational fundraiser
- On- and off-campus food drives
- Fair Trade Craft Sale
- Solidarity Sleep-Out
- “Faces of Homelessness” Seminar
- Bread for the World and Habitat for Humanity letter writing campaigns
- Food and Book Drive for Center of Campus Ministry
- “This year represents not only the 40th anniversary of Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week’s inception, but also that it has been 40 years too many that these issues have plagued society, both locally and globally. It’s both very humbling and encouraging to see how something that started at Villanova has spread to and been embraced by hundreds of communities around the country.”

—William Stehl, Associate Director of Campus Ministry

Jackson’s legacy

Fr. Jackson defined peace and justice education as “a process that enables students to broaden their appreciation for people in other circumstances and cultures, to develop a new vision for life based on humanitarian values and to participate actively in creating a better world.” Throughout his life, his goal was “to equip students with the knowledge, skills and sensitivity to live a life worthy of the highest aspirations of humankind.” He was insistent that “if we cherish the values of human worth and social solidarity, we build character by meeting the challenges and conflicts of life with firm conviction that justice is right; if we decide to hold this vision before ourselves each day, … we will be living a truly human life.”

Ray Jackson Memorial Fund

So influential was Fr. Jackson, that a memorial fund has been established by many of Fr. Ray’s supporters. The fund offers financial grants to assist Villanova students to engage in providing direct service to people who are impoverished and marginalized in the United States and abroad. A residence hall on the West Campus is named in his honor. For more information about the Fund, contact the Center for Service and Social Justice at Campus Ministry.

1. http://www.feedamerica.org
3. Adapted content from Villanova’s Campus Ministry website
4. From Office of University Communications Press Release, 2014
5. Owen R. Jackson, Dignity and Solidarity (Chicago: Loyola Press), Foreword
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 315.
Of all the great signs held by Villanova fans during March Madness a favorite was the one that read, \textit{WE BELIEVE}. The design incorporates our Villanova “V” into the word “believe.” The implication is that Villanovans \textit{BELIEVE} in a special way. Certainly, the team that won the 2016 NCAA Basketball Championship does.

First, \textit{WE BELIEVE} in God. You know what Catholics believe ... We “believe in the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth” ... and so on. We’re not all Catholics at Villanova. We are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and plenty of other kinds of believers. A great thing about Villanova is that here, we all can live our faith and give thanks to God. We thank Him for our talent and skills, for our family and friends, teachers and coaches. We THANK HIM for all that we are and all that we have ... because \textit{WE BELIEVE} that without God, we can accomplish nothing.

Second, at Villanova \textit{WE BELIEVE} in the wisdom of Saint Augustine. He wrote, “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. Always do more,” he said. “Always keep moving. Always forge ahead.”

Jay Wright says, \textit{“BE HUNGRY.”}

Augustine claims that the greatest obstacle to success is pride. He preached that “unless humility precedes, accompanies and follows whatever we do, we will find that we have done little good, in which to rejoice. Pride will rob us of everything.”

Wright tells his team, \textit{“STAY HUMBLE.”}

Augustine was an expert in building teams and encouraging his followers to be single-minded toward each other. He told the guys who wanted to be on his side, “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.”

Jay calls that \textit{“ATTITUDE.”}

Whether in practice or during a game, whether on the court or off ... everything is for the good of the TEAM—even deciding who takes the final shot.

So at Villanova, when we put our “Vs” up, it’s not a smug taunt from the Main Line. It doesn’t mean “V” for victory. It really means more than “V” for Villanova. The “V” stands for who we ARE—what \textit{WE BELIEVE}. CMJ
Gregor Mendel: Celebrating his Contribution to Science

Gregor Mendel was the second child of Anton and Rosine Mendel, farmers in Brunn, Moravia. As a young child, Mendel was a brilliant student and his parents were encouraged to support his pursuit of higher education. Their financial resources were limited, so Mendel entered an Augustinian monastery to continue his education and start his teaching career.

While abbot of the Augustinian Monastery, Brünn, Austria, (now Brno, Czech Republic), Mendel discovered the celebrated laws of heredity which now bear his name—the law of segregation and the law of independent assortment that prove the existence of paired elementary units of heredity (factors)—and establish the statistical laws governing them.

What Did He Discover?
Father Mendel planted pea pods in a small laboratory. It was here that he noticed that some of the plants were tall and some were dwarfs. Some had round seeds, some had wrinkled seeds. Some had yellow seeds, some had green seeds. Over the course of the next seven years, before his duties as abbot severely curtailed his work, he bred and cross-bred almost 30,000 pea plants, logging the traits of each, carefully breeding and cross-breeding, and noting the results.

Darwin's theory of evolution suggested that traits would average out, that the next generation of pea plants would be neither tall nor dwarf, but in between and that the traits of the parents would “disappear” into the children. Because of Mendel’s work, we know now that while averaging can occur over time, individuality does not average out.

Mendel theorized that each plant carried two markers for opposed traits (e.g., tallness and shortness), one from each of the parent plants. These markers are now called genes. One gene dominates over the other, so when a gene for brown eyes and one for blue eyes are present, the resulting eyes of the child will be brown, not blue or some muddy color combination. Even so, the “recessive” gene, the one that is not dominant, survives, so that in successive generations, blue-eyed offspring can still occur.

On Par with Darwin and Crick
Gregor Mendel’s short monograph, Experiments with Plant Hybrids (1865) describing how traits are inherited, has become one of the most enduring and influential publications in the history of science. The paper passed entirely unnoticed in the scientific community although, according to many science scholars, it is one of the three most significant and famous papers in the history of biology. The other two are the Darwin-Wallace paper on evolution by means of natural selection (1858) and the Crick-Watson letter to the journal Nature, which suggested a structure of DNA (1953). Unlike the latter two papers, both of which achieved acclaim almost immediately, Mendel’s contributions were viewed with such skepticism by scientific and philosophical circles of the time that his work became largely forgotten, only to be “rediscovered” some 34 years later.

The accomplishments of this 19th century Augustinian friar, teacher, scientist and mathematician have helped shape the world’s collective understanding of genes, crossbreeding and heredity.

As an Augustinian institution of higher education, Villanova University is one of the custodians of Gregor Mendel’s legacy. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the publication of his paper and to celebrate Villanova University’s connections to the field of genetics, from Mendel to modern day, Villanova hosted the inaugural Mendel Symposium. The occasion brought together several of the world’s leading minds to discuss the lasting impact of Mendel’s work across many disciplines.

The Mendel Medal
In 1928 the Board of Trustees of Villanova University established the Mendel Medal to recognize outstanding scientists who have done much by their painstaking work to advance the cause of science, and, by their lives and their standing before the world as scientists, have demonstrated that there is no intrinsic conflict between science and religion.

Past recipients have included Nobel Laureates, outstanding medical researchers and pioneers in physics, astrophysics and chemistry, as well as noted scientist-theologians.

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.”

Saint Augustine himself, advised that “nothing is to be preferred to the search for truth.” 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?

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.”

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.” How does one build an intentional learning community such as this?
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 wreck wholly from our hand any good we accomplish.” As proof he offered his own assessment of those with whom he worked. “The more they think they are learning, the more unteachable they become. They have become ashamed to know, because that means admitting ignorance.” 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.” 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.”

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.”

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 studies.”

DIALOGUE AND DOING
Though Augustine was acknowledged as a skilled orator and inspiring teacher, 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.” 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.” 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.”

REFLECTION
Augustine well understands that only through silence and contemplation is real understanding achieved. “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 quibbles.”

LIFELONG COMMITMENTS
Augustine’s restless search for truth led him to acknowledge that he would remain restless until he rested in God. He recognized that God knew him better than he knew himself and prayed fervently, “Let me know myself. Let me know you.” 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.”

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.”

“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.”

An Augustinian education requires time for thoughtful reflection, analysis and integration.
Creation Belongs to All

The earth belongs equally to all as Augustine writes, “We ourselves brought nothing into the world (1 Tim. 6: 7). You have come into the world, and you have found there a well-filled table. But the earth is the Lord’s and its fullness also (Ps. 24, 1)...God gave the world to the poor as well as to the rich.” It follows then, that all that we have, we have ‘on loan’ from God. We are only stewards. Consequently, “A human person has never complete power over that which he possesses.”

Birthed as Equals

The difference between rich and poor is only a question of external things. The equality of all human beings finds its strongest expression when we look at the manner in which we have been born: “When children are born, let parents, servants, retainers depart and see if you can recognize the rich children as well as to the rich.” It follows then, that all that we have, we have come into the world, and we have found there a well-filled table. But the earth is the Lord’s and its fullness also (Ps. 24, 1)...God gave the world to the poor as well as to the rich.” It follows then, that all that we have, we have ‘on loan’ from God. We are only stewards. Consequently, “A human person has never complete power over that which he possesses.”

Greed as the Main Cause

Avarice or greed is a vicious disposition that refuses to share or to hold resources in common. As such, it is the root of all evils. Many people are possessed by material goods rather than possessors of them. In the City of God Augustine writes: “Pride hates a fellowship of equality under God, and, as though a human being were God, the proud person loves to impose his own dominion on fellow human beings.”

Augustine protests strongly against the motto of the misers and the oppressors: “The more you have, the greater you are, that is your device, and this means the more money and property you have, the more powerful you are.” In private goods there lurks the danger of discord, division and drifting apart: “It is true that Augustine declares: “God made the poor to test the rich,” but this is not to proclaim the richness of poverty, but to exhort the faithful to perform works of mercy. For a person who wishes others to be miserable, so that he or she can be merciful, is possessed by a cruel mercy, just as a doctor who would wish others to be sick, so that he might practice his art, would be a cruel healer.”

Proper Motive

It is true that Augustine declares: “God made the poor to test the rich,” but this is not to proclaim the goodness of poverty, but to exhort the faithful to perform works of mercy. “It is better that no one should be impoverished than that you should perform a work of mercy. For a person who wishes others to be miserable, so that he or she can be merciful, is possessed by a cruel mercy, just as a doctor who would wish others to be sick, so that he might practice his art, would be a cruel healer.”

Augustine stresses the equality of all human beings. “A true Christian should never set himself up over other human beings... Therefore, you ought to wish all equal to yourself.” If the poor were simply means, then they would be no more precious to a rich person than to a poor person. Consequently, “A human person has never complete power over that which he possesses.”

Relief is a Matter of Justice

In Augustine’s words: “The superfluous goods of the rich are the necessary goods for the poor. The rich possess things which belong to others (es alienam).” He considers the refusal of help as a violation of justice, the virtue which preeminently endures respect for rights and duties.

In Confessions, we read that we have to be like fruit-yielding trees, that is, “Rescuing the person who is the victim of injustice from the hand of the powerful, and giving him or her shelter and protection by the power and force of just judgment.” To give help is nothing more than to repay a debt: “If you were giving something that was your own, then it would be pure largesse, but since you give what is God’s, you are repaying a debt.” According to Augustine, justice is one of the many aspects of love, and “the beginning of love is to give material goods to your brother and sister.”

Augustine’s theological reflections are based on four principles:

1) God created the world for everyone,
2) we are born equal,
3) greed is the main cause of poverty and
4) helping the poor is a matter of justice.
In announcing the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis proclaimed it was his “burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy” as a way “to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty.” He asked that we “enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel, where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy.” And he reminded us that “Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy—so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples.” Mercy is fundamental to imitating Christ.

During his recent lecture at Villanova University, Fr. James Keenan, SJ, acknowledged “the extraordinary importance of mercy” in the Christian tradition and suggested that “if there is one dimension” of the moral tradition “that differentiates Protestant from Catholic Christians, it is [the Catholic emphasis on] works.” Mercy is a condition for salvation.

Pity as imitation mercy

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, mercy is nothing more than “feeling sorry” for another person, that Christianity is the “religion of pity” and that nothing is more “unhealthy and mortally dangerous” than Christian pity. In simplest terms, his assumptions were that pity slows the natural order of things, bestows to the giver an illusion of power and encourages the receiver to remain dependent, rather than to become self-sufficient. Pity costs its practitioners very little. Pity is distant, uninvolved and judgmental. Pity appears merciful. Practitioners may well feel satisfaction from “doing good” and expect gratitude from recipients. But this is “imitation mercy.”

the merciful samaritan

James Keenan defines mercy as “the willingness to enter into the chaos of others.” Moreover, Kerry Walters contends that rather than an emotion, “mercy is an attitude, a comportment that creatively reflects the loving kindness of God, and suggests that by acting mercifully, we participate in the ongoing mystery of salvation.”

Mercy requires recognition of the human dignity of each person. Mercy requires compassion. The bond created through recognition allows us to relate to a victim’s suffering as our own, to endure his burden as our burden. Unlike pity, compassion moves us to genuine engagement in the plight of another.

Mercy requires action. Compassion motivates us to displace our own interests and needs. It encourages self-sacrifice for the needs of another.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, neither the priest nor the Levite responds to the injured man. Perhaps fear or disdain motivated their behaviors. Perhaps one or the other of them “piti[ed]” the victim. They may have wished that the road was safer. They may have hoped for the victim’s recovery. Still, each failed to show mercy. Each failed to act.

The Samaritan does indeed “take pity” on the roadside victim. But he does so much more. He “enters into the chaos” of the victim. His recognition of the victim’s personal dignity motivates physiological sacrifice of self-interest. Compassion moves the Samaritan to genuine engagement. He sacrifices his own time, energy and resources to attend to the victim.

The Samaritan remains steadfastly committed to the victim’s well being, by providing for extended care of the victim and has not the slightest expectation of gratitude or reward. Through his works, the Merciful Samaritan reflects the loving kindness of God and participates in the ongoing mystery of salvation. The Villanova community continues its long tradition of service, may it do likewise. CMJ ♥
During a two-day visit to Villanova University, Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, met with local religious leaders for interfaith dialogue, with inmates at Graterford SCI and with students and faculty in the College of Engineering to discuss service learning initiatives. His Eminence participated in Vespers, presided at Mass, delivered a public lecture and received an honorary degree from the University. A summary of his remarks follow.

Integral Ecology

“In Judeo-Christian tradition, the human story begins in an orderly fashion, within the story of the beginning of everything. God creates nature, inanimate and then animate, beginning of everything. God creates the earth itself.” When one of these relationships is broken, the others are broken too, and our insertion in the universe is no longer integral—humanity and the responsibility of it all underpin the Pope’s insistence on bringing the moral dimension of how we treat nature and the rest of creation. “Creation is the order of love,” he says. “God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected.”

The story of creation is central to reflecting on the relationship between human beings and other creatures. And that story is not static—but continuous today. Unfortunately, the present story is that our human engagement in it has failed to cooperate with God’s design: “The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.” This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and mutilated of our poor; the unused tracts in our midst (Rom 8:22).

More than Good Stewards

We are often told to be ‘good stewards’ of creation. ‘Good stewards take responsibility and fulfill their obligations to manage and to render an account. But one can be a good steward without feeling connected. Beyond jobs and accountability, care is a more intimate relationship. To care is to allow oneself to be affected by another, so much so that one’s path and priorities change.”

At the inaugural Mass of his Pontifical Ministry, Pope Francis put the protection of creation to the very forefront of his own ministry and the vocation of every Christian. Here, Francis offered Saint Joseph as a model for protecting Christ in our own lives, “so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation,” and “[he] explained that the vocation of being a protector...is very broad in scope...It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives...who protect one another, and then, as parents, care for their children, and children themselves, in time protecting their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness.”

“Pope Francis proposes that we think of our relationship with the world and with all people in terms of caring. As Jesus does when he calls himself the Good Shepherd who does not flee when the wolf threatens the flock (Jn 10:11-15). Caring for our common home requires not just an economic and technological revolution, but also a cultural and spiritual revolution—a profoundly different way of living the relationship between people and the environment, a new way of ordering the global economy.”

In selecting the name Francis, the present Pope offers Saint Francis of Assisi as another important model for our lives. “Pope Francis holds that a truly practical and sustainable integral approach to ecology has to draw on more than the scientific, the material and the economic, more than laws and policies. When Saint Francis gazed upon the heavens, when he surveyed the wonder and beauty of the animals, he did not respond to them with the abstract formulae of science or the...
utilitarian eye of the economist. His response was one of awe, wonder and fraternity. He sang of ‘Brother Sun’ and ‘Sister Moon.’ ...In other words, his response was one of reverence—of a deep and relational respect based on kinship and fraternity, the kinship with God, our neighbor and the land spoken of in the book of Genesis and praised throughout the wisdom literature and the psalms.”

The cumulative thrust of these exhortations is that true service to God requires more than being a good steward. It demands a new solidarity, “the creation of a new mind-set which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.”

Caring Enough to Change the World

Service learning is a cornerstone of Villanova’s curriculum across all colleges and schools. Perhaps positioned best to address environmental concerns is the College of Engineering, where students apply the engineering skills they learn in the classroom to benefit communities around the world. The College has established strong collaborative relationships and ongoing projects in many countries. Among them are:

- Burundi, providing open source cell phone and light chargers
- Cambodia, using robots to visualize and remove unexploded ordnance
- Honduras, building schools, dormitories and other educational facilities
- Madagascar, developing sustainable, safe water supplies
- Nicaragua, providing cellular communication to health service providers
- Panama, implementing solar technologies to address energy needs.

As Villanovans construct, connect and clean, “relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges... In this way, the world, and the quality of life of the poorest, are cared for, with a sense of solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to all of us.”

In the Odyssey by Homer, Mentor, friend to Odysseus, is charged with the education, training and personal development of the king’s son Telemachus. The relationship that develops between Mentor and Telemachus helps the young boy “meet the challenges he faced through life.”

Many claim that it is from this story that Mentor became the inspiration for the contemporary concept of “mentoring.”

The value of mentoring has been the object of much discussion and research in the academy. Defined most concisely, a mentor is “a person who achieves a one-to-one developmental relationship with a learner, and is one who the learner identifies as having enabled personal growth to take place.”

Common outcomes of mentoring appear to be: 1) transfer of knowledge skills, 2) assimilation of organizational and/or professional values and 3) increased confidence and self-esteem.

Historically, the most familiar mentoring model may be the apprentice. In its early form, a young laborer who showed promise was taken on by a master craftsman, who taught the apprentice over the course of months, even years until the apprentice developed sufficient skills and abilities to stand on his own.

More recently, a variety of mentoring models have been quantified and studied. Among them are the “cloning” model, coaching, nurturing, and friendship models. Each references differing degrees of knowledge transfer and personal closeness.
Augustine on Mentoring

Edward Smither contends that while Augustine left behind no “manual” for mentoring spiritual leaders, he was nonetheless an exemplary mentor, who prepared future leaders for the Church. Further, Smither claims that “many aspects of Augustine’s mentoring are instructive for modern mentors.” He lists seven elements of Augustine’s mentoring strategy:

1. Focus on continuous study,
2. Practice in questioning, answering and dialogue,
3. Training for debate,
4. Frequent and easy access to him and his resources,
5. Accountability,
6. Delegation, and
7. Collaboration.

More specifically, Smither cites Possidius in recalling that Augustine used the two common meals of the day to institute a form of “table talk.”

These mealtime discussions included “reading nourishing books … addressing philosophical or theological questions … discussing the events of their day … sharing victories and failures, finding renewed courage and vision to carry on.”

Modeling Augustine’s Table Talk

Eric Ragone (Finance, ’16) Mary Frances Roth (Classics/Humanities, ’16) Sarah Stankiewicz (Nursing, ’16) and Tim Monahan (VSB, Faculty) are participants in the Faith and Learning Scholars Program at Villanova. Here is their story.

A few years ago, the four of us became new members of the Faith and Learning Scholars Program at Mission and Ministry’s Center for Faith and Learning. We learned that this program gathers a community of over 135 students and faculty from across five colleges and schools in search of great fellowship and discussion around living out a life of faith. The program establishes a mentor-mentee relationship between a faculty member and assigned students. The required task is to discuss selected readings at quarterly dinners, shared in the mansion at Dundale on the West Campus.

Each of us has found being exposed to other faculty and student ideas compelling, motivating us to learn more, while growing our faith. Whether through the article we read before dinner or through aspects of the dinner discussion, we leave each time feeling inspired and motivated to share new insights with our roommates, spouses and friends.

“Our table talk” gives both students and faculty an appreciation of the distinct, individual backgrounds. It was so valuable to listen to a variety of perspectives and personal stories, all emerging from this common reading. The article provoked thoughtful discussion and self-reflection, while challenging us to consider something we had not imagined before. Ultimately, we left energized to live more meaningfully in all aspects of our lives—a lesson that will stay with us far beyond the dining room tables at Dundale.

When deer cross a river, each one carries on their backs the head of the one behind it, while it rests its head on the back of the one in front. In this way, supporting and helping one another, they are thus able to navigate wide rivers safely, until they reach the firmness of land together. From our experience, we contend that the program has enabled both students and faculty to better understand important issues, especially the connection between faith and learning, from a more personal, while at the same time a broader perspective. Because of the program’s commitment to diversity of thought, we hear and see briefly through the different lenses of age, race, personality, experience and faith tradition. Through this program we share the quest to discern what it means to live a life of faith. It is the anchor that motivates and sustains our special relationship—faculty and students—on a journey to God together. Could St. Augustine wish for anything more?
Oh what great profit you gain when you are generous to the poor. Give a coin and receive a kingdom. Give bread of wheat and receive the bread of life. Give an earthly good and receive an everlasting one.

For Christ Himself comes to you in the poor man and receives what you give in His own person.

Thomas of Villanova, Ash Wednesday, Sermon 2, 28-29