

# THE HEART of the MATTER

MISSION AND MINISTRY AT VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY



## Ancient Wisdom on Friendship

The Thought of Augustine



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 Ministry of Higher Education*, 1996)

*The Heart of the Matter* is an annual publication of the Office for Mission and Ministry. It hopes to show the centrality of Villanova’s distinctively Augustinian and Catholic identity and demonstrate its unique contribution to American Catholic higher education. The cover image, “Augustine Telling His Friends about God’s Influence” by Jaume Huguet is an especially appropriate illustration for much of the content in this issue. The nature of friendship, our relationships, especially to the poor and to creation are all issues with which Augustine grappled. These reflections on his thought express its continuing relevance for us today.

We are especially indebted to David Hollenbach, S.J., Linda Jaczynski, Dr. Joseph Kelley, Dr. Maureen Tilley and Dr. Chris Janosik, who contributed content for this issue. Our hope is that this magazine and their efforts will provide insight into the heart of Villanova University, encourage reflection on the University’s tradition and inspire not only personal growth but participation in and fulfillment of our Augustinian mission.

Barbara Wall, PhD

Vice President for Mission and Ministry

“ 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.**”

St. Augustine—*Confessions* IV, 4



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**Cover Image:**  
*Conversó de Sant Agustí*  
Jaume Huguet  
circa 1466–1475,  
tempera on panel,  
1071 x 78.7 in.  
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**VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY**  
IGNITE CHANGE. GO NOVA.

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.

# WHO ARE THE UGUSTINIANS?



## UNITY

“Before all else,” Augustine wrote, “you must live together harmoniously, in one heart and one in soul, on the way to God. . . Let all of you live together in unity of heart and mind, and honor God in one another.”<sup>3</sup> So firm was his instance on living and loving together in community that *Unus in uno ad unum*—One together, in the one Christ, on the way to the one Father—might well be a fitting motto for any Augustinian community.<sup>4</sup>



## LOVE

The context for the *Rule* is drawn from the *Acts of the Apostles*. It was there, among Christ’s first followers, where *love lived in community* was foundational. For Augustine, “community life and love are only different words for the same reality, where social love becomes the ultimate criterion for personal progress.”<sup>1</sup>

Augustine wrote that “perfect love only depends on two Commandments, namely, those of love of God and of love of one’s neighbor.” He claimed that “people can easily fool themselves concerning love of God, since this love is seldom tested.” He preached that “it is enough to name one to name both...and by preference, the commandment to love one’s neighbor ...about whom one can easily judge in daily life and in concrete behavior.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason, love of God rarely is mentioned in the *Rule* and asceticism, the absence of worldly pleasures, is limited to the service of individual health or the community at large, not promoted as a way to demonstrate love of God.



## HUMILITY

Augustine placed great importance on humility and preached frequently against pride. For him, community life—*love and unity*—were impossible without humility. He often addressed humility and poverty together, suggesting that real *poverty of heart* consists of humility. In this context, the words “poor” and “humble” take on the same meaning.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Rule* then, respect for all regardless of wealth or position and resisting all forms of pride, especially those related to possessions and personal desires<sup>6</sup> were essential. Put more strongly, the only way to reach an “abiding, active knowledge of the truth is through humility.”<sup>7</sup>

1. VanBavel, “The Evangelical Inspiration of the Rule of St. Augustine.” *Downside Review*, 93 p. 84. The content of this article draws heavily from this 1975 work.  
2. Augustine, *Commentary on Galatians* 45.  
3. Augustine, *Rule* 1, 3, 9.  
4. Augustine, *Exposition on the Psalms* 147, 28.  
5. Augustine, *Sermon* 14, 2, 2-6, 9.  
6. Augustine, *Rule* 1, 7, 8.  
7. Pellegrino, M. *Spiritual Journey: Augustine’s Reflection on Christian Life*, p. 35.

# Followers of the *Rule*

The *Rule of Augustine*, written at the beginning of the fifth century, almost 120 years before the Rule of St. Benedict, is the oldest Western monastic rule recorded. In less than 2,000 words, Augustine captures the essentials for living a Christian life. Perhaps this is why it has been adopted by more than 100 religious communities and speaks so powerfully, especially to the Order of St. Augustine—the *Augustinians*—followers of the *Rule*.



## PRAYER

For Augustine, prayer too was an expression of love.

“It is you that makes God either far or near. Love and he will come close. Love and he will dwell in you.”<sup>8</sup> “Let your prayer flow from your heart before him and he will hear.”<sup>9</sup> “Come back to your heart and from there, to God, for the path is not long from your heart to God.”<sup>10</sup>

While the *Rule* does not dwell on how or how much to pray,<sup>11</sup> it is clear that Augustine believes that prayer and contemplation are essential to love of God and provide “an inward experience quite unlike any other, a sweetness beyond understanding.”<sup>12</sup>



## MODERATION

Augustine’s *Rule* does contain admonitions “not to seek what is vain and earthly,”<sup>13</sup> to “subdue the flesh...by fasting and abstinence,”<sup>14</sup> to “let nothing about your clothing attract attention.”<sup>15</sup> On the whole, however, the *Rule* is distinctive for its lack of prescription and its focus on broader core motivations. Nothing should be done for its “own benefit” but all “shall be done for the common good.”<sup>16</sup> All should be given only according to need.<sup>17</sup>



## MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Perhaps the most useful parts of the *Rule* are those that specify mutual responsibility for members. “Whenever you are together... exercise mutual care...mutual vigilance over one another.”<sup>18</sup> “If you notice in a brother an ailment, warn him immediately.”<sup>19</sup> “Never allow anger to grow into hatred, making a plank out of a splinter.”<sup>20</sup> In chapters 6 and 7, Augustine challenges his followers to “hate the sin but love the sinner,” to hold each other accountable for behavior, but avoid being too harsh with words, to extend and accept forgiveness quickly and sincerely, to see authority, leadership and obedience only in the context of service to the greater good.

### Lessons for Today

On a personal level, how might our lives be changed if we assess our love of God by how well we love our neighbors? What kind of harmony could we experience if we were less concerned with how much we own and how much status we have? Consider the groups to which you belong. Family units, parishes, workplaces, schools and social circles all offer opportunities for easy application of the *Rule* as well. Perhaps with further reflection, we could conclude that the *Rule* of Augustine isn’t just for Augustinians anymore.

8. Augustine, *Sermon* 21.2.

9. Augustine, *Exposition on the Psalms* 141. 4.

10. Augustine, *Sermon* 311, 13.

11. Augustine, *Rule* 2. 11-13.

12. Augustine, *Confessions* X, 40, (65).

13. Augustine, *Rule* 1, 7.

14. Augustine, *Rule* 3, 14.

15. Augustine, *Rule* 4, 19.

16. Augustine, *Rule* 5, 31.

17. Augustine, *Rule* 5, 32.

18. Augustine, *Rule* 4, 24.

19. Augustine, *Rule* 4, 25.

20. Augustine, *Rule* 6, 41.

# ANCIENT WISDOM on Friend

## WHO INFLUENCED AUGUSTINE?

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

**M**ore 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."<sup>1</sup> Cicero counts true friends as the best gift of heaven.



CORBIS

PLATO (424/423 B.C.–348/347 B.C.)

# ship



CORBIS

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> one of Aristotle’s friendships of pleasure, one that both Plato and Cicero



Students forming friendships at New Student Orientation.

would have disdained. 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.”<sup>8</sup> 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

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.



young, it was quite clear that he had a natural disposition to goodness.”<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> *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.”<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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 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.*

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).

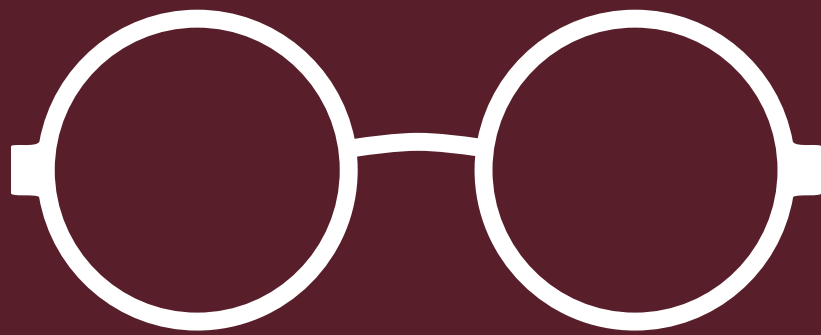
10. *Confessions* VI, 7, (12).

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.

# FINDING AUGUSTINE



in the

## LITERARY MAGIC of HARRY POTTER

Since publication of the first book in 1997, much has been made of the Harry Potter novels by J.K. Rowling. Some have judged them evil and urged that children not be allowed to read them. Others have hailed them as the most significant literary achievement of the past century.<sup>1</sup> For his part, Greg Garrett, professor of English at Baylor University and author of *One Fine Potion: The Literary Magic of Harry Potter*, suggests that while not overtly religious in any sense, the books do illustrate a deeply Augustinian understanding of human nature and the world.<sup>2</sup> How so?

## Friendship

St. Augustine observed that friendship is capable of pulling us away from our tendency toward self-love and selfishness, and instead toward God. From a life spent mostly in community, he knew that friends made laughter deeper, joy broader and sadness bearable. “If such people are with us” he wrote of true friends, then times of grief or difficulty become “less bitter, the heavy burdens become lighter, perceived obstacles are faced and overcome.”<sup>3</sup>

For her part, Rowling chose to construct a story about an unloved orphan whose encounters with friendship and community shape him into the hero he becomes. Along his journey, his housemates and teachers form him, support him in all he does, and enable him to do the great work to which he is called. Ultimately, Harry makes possible a world where old divisions are erased and a larger, more inclusive community can emerge—and all this grows out of the bonds of friendship.

Further, Harry Potter’s life reflects Augustine’s understanding of happiness, friendship and love. As the Rev. Donald Burt, OSA has written:

Augustine believed that our social nature is a true good. We are perfected as humans by our love for other humans. We are made

happy when that love is returned, and the most important expression of such reciprocal love is the love of friendship.

Friendship is the highest expression of a person’s social nature; it is

also the solid foundation for any society. The more a society becomes a society of friends, the more perfect it becomes as a society. But this is a hard task, certainly impossible for all (and perhaps any) society on earth. The difficulty becomes apparent once one begins to consider what is necessary in order to be a friend.<sup>4</sup>

At the Hogwarts School, Harry learns to make friends based on the worth of the people he loves, not on what

they possess or how popular they might be. He chooses Ron and the Weasleys, who have much less of what the world values, over the Malfoys—rich, powerful, “pure-bloods.” Harry rejects superficial societal mores as he forms other friendships. He befriends Hagrid, a half-giant, knowing that inside that mammoth chest beats a loving and compassionate heart. Professor Lupin, a werewolf, becomes a trusted confidant and friend. Friendships with Luna and Neville are not ones made for the sake of social approval or status. Rather, he chooses those who are capable of “reciprocal love.”

## Community

In one of the first serious discussions of the Potter books, Alan Jacobs wrote that the purpose of Hogwarts is not just to teach students how to use magic but to teach the moral discernment necessary to avoid continued reproduction of dark wizards like Voldemort.<sup>5</sup> Dumbledore’s task as Headmaster is to teach his students how to live together, rather than simply how to use magic. Moreover, the purpose of communities like Hogwarts is to develop character, a point with which Rowling herself agrees.<sup>6</sup>

Christian theologian Stanley Hauerwas suggests that “the most important social task of Christians is to be part of a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God’s

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truth in the world,”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, St. Augustine advises all with whom he lived to “live together in oneness of mind and heart, mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you have become.”<sup>8</sup> What we discover when we read Harry Potter is the transformational power of community. Harry’s journey is the story of an orphan who finds a new family that loves, supports and follows him. It is the story of an extraordinary community that grows in virtue sufficient to stand up for truth even in the face of death.

### **Forgiveness and Fraternal Correction**

In surprising ways, the Potter novels illustrate mercy—rendered even to those thought of as aliens or enemies. Dumbledore’s willingness to offer “second chances,” Harry’s mercy on Peter Pettigrew despite the desire of Sirius and Lupin to

kill him in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, his rescue of his enemy Draco Malfoy from the blazing Room of Lost Things in *Deathly Hallows*, even his concern for the broken remnant of Voldemort’s soul at King’s Cross station near the end of *Deathly Hallows* are all reminders that we are called to recognize the needs of others, and to forgive even those who are different, difficult or disagreeable.

But Augustine’s concept of friendship and community requires this and more. Augustine says that true friends are not only to “exercise mutual vigilance over one another” but must “admonish [wrongdoing] at once.”<sup>9</sup> True friends are required to confront each other and invite change when necessary. Recall that Neville’s reward for “standing up to his friends” was sufficient to win the House Cup

for Gryffindor in *Sorcerer’s Stone*. Perhaps the most striking example of Augustine’s notion of friendship occurs at the end of *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry offers Voldemort one last chance to repent—to feel remorse—to change:

“I’d advise you to think about what you’ve done...Think, and try for some remorse, Riddle...It’s your one last chance,” said Harry. “It’s all you’ve got left...I’ve seen what you’ll become otherwise...Be a man...try...Try for some remorse.”<sup>10</sup>

This is what is required of true friendship, according to Augustine.

### **Love**

St. Augustine recognized that as we love in our hearts, so we are. In *Confessions*, he put it this way: “My weight is my love, and by it I am carried wheresoever I am carried.”<sup>11</sup>

In *City of God*, he observes that there are two kinds of love, two cities. There is unholy, selfish, disordered love—love of the worldly city that leads to an ungodly, disordered life—*cupiditas*, and a holy, self-sacrificing, rightly ordered love—love of the heavenly city and of God that leads to a saintly, ordered life—*caritas*. Augustine contends that human nature is driven by disordered desire, and that as a result we are pulled toward *cupiditas* even though God seeks our participation in *caritas*. And the Potter novels offer a number of opportunities to explore the consequences of choosing the former over the latter.

In *The Sorcerer's Stone*, Dumbledore explains to Harry that the magical Mirror of Erised “shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts... However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge nor truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible.”<sup>12</sup> Rather than allow Harry and Ron to be tempted by it,

Dumbledore has the mirror removed and asks them never to look for it again. Later, Dumbledore says of the Sorcerer's Stone, “It's the embodiment of a bad thing: As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all—the trouble is, humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them.”<sup>13</sup> On a larger scale, antagonists Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape among others live unhappy, tortured lives because, according to Augustine, “one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers torture,...and one who does not seek what is worth seeking for is diseased.”<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Augustine spoke of a willingness to sacrifice, noting that “world society has flowered from a selfish love, which dared to despise even God, whereas the communion of saints is rooted in a love of God that is ready to trample on self.” This “trampling on self”<sup>15</sup> is humanity at its most generous.

The life of Harry is one of constant sacrifice and it illustrates well

*caritas* in contradiction to *cupiditas*. It is this kind of love, Augustine says, that is at the very heart of all our Christian understanding: “Whoever, therefore, thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love of God and of our neighbor does not understand it at all.”<sup>16</sup>

“Is it love again?” Voldemort mocks, referring to Harry's secret weapon against him. The answer is, of course, YES. Again. Always. Voldemort does not, cannot and never will understand love. Love—the secret of life we learn from Jesus, from Paul, from Augustine, and now from J.K. Rowling—is the most counter-cultural, most powerful force of all. Love is the deeper magic that rescues, redeems and puts the world right. With this final recognition, it's only fair to conclude that for Augustine and for J.K. Rowling, despite any other disagreements, love is the answer to every important question.

1. For an overview of the debate see *What's a Christian to Do with Harry Potter* by Connie Neal (WaterBrook Press, 2001) and *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* edited by Lana Whited (University of Missouri Press, 2003).

2. Greg Garrett, *One Fine Potion: The Literary Magic of Harry Potter*. Dr. Garrett visited Villanova University as part of its lecture series on Catholic Imagination in the Arts on March 13, 2012. Content for this article draws heavily from his presentation and is used with permission.

3. Augustine, *Letter 130*, 2.4.

4. Donald X. Burt, *Friendship & Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 56–57.

5. Alan Jacobs, “Harry Potter's Magic,” *First Things* 99 (January 2000) Accessed at [www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/harry-potters-magic-28](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/harry-potters-magic-28)

6. J. K. Rowling herself has said that what matters most in the course of the story is how Harry becomes a worthy person—a person capable of doing what is right. See: “J.K. Rowling at the Royal Albert Hall, 26 June 2003,” Accio Quote! Accessed at <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2003/0626-alberthall-fry.htm>.

7. Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 3.

8. Augustine, *Rule of Augustine*, 1.9.

9. Augustine, *Rule of Augustine*, 4, 24.

10. J.K. Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 741.

11. Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII, 9:10.

12. J.K. Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone*, 171.

13. J.K. Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone*, 297.

14. Augustine, *Against the Manicheans* 3.

15. Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV, 28.

16. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 30.



# Ecological Conversion:

## The Catholic Church, St. Augustine and You

**S**ome may be aware that the current pope, Benedict XVI, has been called the “Green Pope.” Most Catholics might be surprised to learn, however, that it was Pope Paul VI who is credited with first raising environmental issues in the context of economic and social development in the Third World.

### **Catholic Social Teaching**

In Pope Paul VI’s encyclical, *Octogesima Adveniens*, we read:

*We are suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploita-*

*tion of nature, we risk destroying it, and becoming, in turn, the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace—due to pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity—but the human framework is no longer under human control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow, which may well be intolerable.<sup>1</sup>*

Since then, successive popes, conferences of bishops and lay associations have exhorted Catholics, Christians and all persons of good will to be more attentive to practices of consumption and habits of disposal that lead to making our planet uninhabitable.

Shortly after Paul VI's warning about "an intolerable environment," the world's Catholic bishops met in Rome in the summer of 1971. They also expressed their concern for mistreatment of the natural environment in the context of Third World development. They wrote that:

*"[M]aterial resources, as well as the precious treasures of air and water—without which there cannot be life—and the small delicate biosphere of the whole complex of all life on earth, are not infinite, but on the contrary must be saved and preserved...Such is the demand for resources and energy by the richer nations, ...that irreparable damage would be done to the essential elements of life on earth if the constantly increasing rates of consumption and pollution in rich nations were extended to the whole of humankind."*<sup>2</sup>

Pope John Paul II continued his predecessor's concern about the use and abuse of natural resources. In his 1987 encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he wrote that a proper concern for social and economic development "cannot exclude respect for the beings, which constitute the natural world."<sup>3</sup> Four years later in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* Pope John Paul II writes more forcefully that:

*"[A]t the root of the senseless destruction of the environment lies an anthropological error." [People think that they] can make arbitrary use of the earth...as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose."*<sup>4</sup>

In other words, environmental abuse occurs because humans are the self-appointed centers of the universe.

The most compelling and concise document for Catholic teaching on the environment is Pope John Paul II's *Day of World Peace Address* in 1990. Here, the Pope stressed the urgency of environmental awareness and action, and directly connects world peace to ecological issues.

The pope emphasized over and over that the ecological crisis is not just a scientific, technological problem of industrialization. It is moral issue—perhaps the moral issue of our day. He contends that at its foundation is a failure of global proportions to respect life in all its diversity, fragility and interdependence, and claims that education about environmental issues must lead to conversion.

*"A true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior."*<sup>5</sup>

What exactly does ecological conversion mean? Is it a dimension of religious conversion? Do you have to be a practicing Catholic or Christian to have such a conversion? What does one convert from or to in this process?

## Augustine's Ecological Conversion

Ecological conversion is, at its root, a change in a person's relationship with nature, a change in one's mind, heart and behavior regarding the created world and universe.

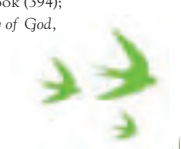
Most people familiar with Augustine know something of his stormy, if typical adolescence, his student days in Carthage, his sexual trysts, his philosophical and religious searching, and his eventual decision to become a Christian. His is a conversion story that has enchanted, intrigued, and inspired untold numbers throughout the past 1600 years.

But when did Augustine have time for "ecological conversion," and why would he need one? Certainly, Augustine and his compatriots were not faced with the ecological crisis that confronts us today. And anyway, wasn't his conversion story about finding God, leaving behind a turbulent life of imperial politics and pleasure, and becoming a Christian?

If one stays with Augustine beyond his first well-known conversion story and baptism in the years 386 and 387, follows him carefully and studies his writings

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1. Pope Paul VI. 1971. *Octogesima Adveniens*, paragraph 21.  
2. Synod of Catholic Bishops. 1971. *Justice in the World*, chapter 1.  
3. Pope John Paul II, 1987. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, paragraph 34.  
4. Pope John Paul II. 1991. *Centesimus Annus*, paragraph 37.  
5. Pope John Paul II. 1990. *Day of World Peace Address*, paragraphs 6–13.  
6. Augustine. On *Genesis, Against the Manicheans* (389); On the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, an Unfinished Book (394); Books 11, 12, and 13 of *The Confessions* (397–401); On the *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (401–415); and, *City of God*, Book 11 (413–426).



between 389 all the way to 426, one discovers a second conversion, what can be called Augustine's ecological conversion.

You may remember that during his early student years in Carthage at age 18 or 19, Augustine joined the Manichean sect. He remained a member, though with ever decreasing fervor, until he went to Milan at age 30 or 31. After leaving the Manicheans, Augustine met a group of intellectual Christians in Milan. From them he discovered the more intellectually consistent and philosophically respectable thought of Neo-Platonism. So, before his baptism, Augustine had two major flirtations with religion and spirituality. Both predisposed him to dismiss the created world. Neo-Platonism saw nature as irrelevant or at best incidental to salvation. Worse yet, Manicheism saw matter as inherently evil and an impediment to salvation.

Despite Augustine's attraction to Christianity, neither his fervor as a convert nor the waters of Baptism were sufficient for Augustine to fully comprehend, in the words of John Paul II, that "created matter has its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose." Instead, it takes Augustine years of reading, of wrestling with and writing about *Genesis* for him to work through his own ecological conversion—to subvert his previously dark and dismissive views about the created world of nature and the physical universe.<sup>6</sup>

### Augustine's Reading of Genesis

Over time, Augustine slowly comes to affirm that the good Lord created all things, that all created things are in themselves good, and that the magnificent diversity of creation is a reflection of infinite divine beauty. He writes in *Confessions*, that:

*"[E]verything that exists is good...You have made all good things...[and] there are absolutely no substances that you have not made."*<sup>7</sup>

In Book 11 of the *City of God* Augustine sounds like a contemporary biologist marveling at creation:

*"[E]very creature has a special beauty proper to its nature, and when one ponders the matter well, these creatures are a cause of intense admiration and enthusiastic praise of their all-powerful Maker"*<sup>8</sup>

Such joy over nature would have been anathema to any Manichean and confusing to a Neo-Platonist.

As Augustine matures in his Christian vocation, his appreciation of nature takes a central place in his thoughts. He writes eloquently about the beauty of the created world, affirming over and over in his writings and sermons that all creation is from God, is therefore good, and reflects the nature of the creator.

### Human Abuse of the Created World

An important dimension of Augustine's ecological conversion is his

conviction that humans must take responsibility for creation, and for what we today call the environment.

In his commentary on *Psalms 147*, a Hebrew song, which exalts the glories of our natural environment, Augustine writes about our use of the fruits of nature in words that sound like a contemporary campaign for limited use of scarce resources and careful recycling:

*"God asks back what he gave you, and from God, you take what is enough for you. The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. When you possess superfluities, you possess what belongs to others."*<sup>9</sup>

Augustine's ecological conversion ultimately matures into a social justice of ecology. In his *Sermon 29* he confronts his congregation:

*"Do you think it's a small matter that you are eating someone else's food? Listen to the apostle; we brought nothing into this world, yet a full table is spread before you. The earth and its fullness belong to God. [not to the powerful, wealthy individuals or nations] God bestows the world on the poor; God bestows it on the rich."*<sup>10</sup>

If Augustine were alive today, he might put it this way: The superfluous water you leave untouched in your water bottle actually belongs to the parched throats of Darfur. The food you leave on your table really belongs to a child somewhere in America who won't have any dinner tonight. When you throw unwanted or outdated





# Ecological conversion is, at its root a change, in a person’s relationship with nature, a change in one’s mind, heart and behavior regarding the created world and universe.

clothes in the trash, you are disposing of someone else’s garments. Indeed, Augustine’s struggle to grow beyond his earlier religious and philosophical dismissal of nature, provides us with a model of the depth and breadth that may well be necessary to any ecological conversion.

## The Present Day

Pope Benedict XVI has affirmed the messages of his predecessors and agrees that the ecological crisis is both a moral crisis and a spiritual one. But in doing so, he brings his own particular theological stamp to Catholic reflection on the environment. The ecological crisis, according to Pope Benedict XVI, forces us to confront what it means to be human. In his own *World Day of Peace Message of 2007*, the pontiff writes:

*“It is understandable that visions of what it means to be human will vary from culture to culture. Yet what cannot be admitted is the cultivation of anthropological conceptions that contain the seeds of hostility and violence. Equally unacceptable are conceptions of God that would*

*encourage intolerance and recourse to violence against others.”*<sup>11</sup>

Here, he reminds us that the ever-growing scarcity of natural resources is fraught with possibilities for violence and intolerance. As we work together across state and national borders to reverse local and global environmental damage, we also must talk with each other across cultural and religious divides about what it means to be human. Ecological conversion requires anthropological conversion. That is to say, in changing how each of us thinks about respecting the environment, we also need to change how we think about and respect each other, for we share this good earth.

So what are we to do? What is required if we apply to ourselves Pope Benedict XVI’s principle that ecological conversion must include anthropological conversion—that respecting the environment also inherently requires that we respect and revere each other?

Let us, at the very least, reflect on these questions:

- What do you think about the thirsty woman who lays claim to that water bottle in your backpack or refrigerator?
- How do you feel about the child whose clothes lay on the floor of your closet?
- Do you ever think about the man whose malnourishment is a function of the food left on your plate?

It seems clear that what Pope Benedict XVI is suggesting is that as we struggle with such questions we must work through our own ecological conversion. Perhaps for Villanovans in particular, Augustine’s ecological conversion can be a model for our own.

*This text is adapted from a lecture presented at Villanova University by Dr. Joseph Kelley, Merrimack College, in April, 2009, with permission. Also see Arthur Ledoux, “A Green Augustine: On Learning to Love Nature Well” *Theology and Science*, (2005) 3:3, pp. 332–344, which both inspired and informed the original paper.*

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7. Augustine. *Confessions* VII, 12, (18).  
 8. Augustine. *City of God* 11.16.  
 9. Augustine. *Exposition on Psalm 147*, 12.  
 10. Augustine. *Sermon* 29, 2-4.  
 11. Pope Benedict XVI. (2007). *World Day of Peace: The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, paragraph 9.

# Humor, Laughter and Joy

## in Our Spiritual Lives



Think of a *holy* person. Who and what come to mind? Villanovans might recall St. Thomas of Villanova, who attended to the needs of the poor or St. Monica, who prayed unceasingly for the conversion of her son, St. Augustine. Both were people of great sacrifice and prayer. While acknowledging that these are indeed characteristics frequently associated with holiness, Jesuit priest, James Martin encourages us to understand that holy people are also joyful people, and that humor and laughter are important elements of a healthy spiritual life as well.<sup>1</sup>

Christians believe in the Resurrection, in the power of life over death, of love over hatred. Humor, laughter and joy are demonstrations of faith in God. Moreover, living a hopeful, joy-filled life draws others to God.<sup>2</sup> **Humor evangelizes faith.**

Self-deprecating humor reminds us of our own humanity. It guards against spiritual pride and the tendency to take ourselves too seriously. G.K. Chesterton wrote that seriousness is not a virtue but a vice, and that “angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.”<sup>3</sup> **Humor teaches humility.**

Effective use of humor is engaging, even disarming. Sometimes telling a light-hearted story can be the best

way to de-escalate a contentious issue. It can be the most effective way to communicate a difficult truth. **Humor helps us see reality more clearly.**<sup>4</sup>

“A witty remark is a time-honored way to challenge the pompous and the powerful.” Jesus even used “humor to this end, exposing and defusing the arrogance of some of the religious leaders of his day with clever parables and amusing stories.”<sup>5</sup> **Humor can be courageous; can enable us to speak truth to power.**

Ever think that God has a sense of humor? Many saints thought so. Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI said this in a 2002 interview:

I believe that [God] has a great sense of humor. Sometimes he gives you something like a nudge and says ‘Don’t take yourself so seriously!’ Humor is in fact an essential element in the mirth of creation. We can see how, in many matters of our lives, God wants to prod us into taking things a bit more lightly; to see the funny side of it; to get down off our pedestal and not to forget our sense of fun.<sup>6</sup>

“God is the One who delights in your own sense of humor and surprises you with life’s funny moments.”<sup>7</sup> Understanding that God does *delight in us* can change our relationships with Him. **Humor deepens our relationships with God.**



Villanova University president, the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, leads a flash mob for students on the first day of classes.

And there is scientific evidence that humor has both physical and psychological benefits. “Laughter releases endorphins...that relax the body, reduce stress, relieve frustration and produce an overall feeling of well-being.”<sup>8</sup> “Humor also helps us endure suffering...by reminding us that pain is not the last word for one who believes in God.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **Humor heals.**

Likewise, St. Paul acknowledges the centrality of joy when he specifies three components of an authentically Christian life in his letter to the Thessalonians. “Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks, for such is God’s will for you.”<sup>10</sup> This sounds like an

impossible task, especially in today’s world. But Father Martin suggests that “Joy...is a virtue that finds its foundation in the knowledge that we are loved by God.”<sup>11</sup> “Joy springs from gratitude” and “joy moves us to prayer.”<sup>12</sup> He makes three simple suggestions on how to move closer to this ideal.

**Be joyful with God.** Bring to God not only your trials and tribulations, but the parts of your life that are exciting, even funny

as well.<sup>13</sup> **Develop the habit of gratitude.** “Being able to say thanks to God deepens your relationship with God, because it encourages you to more consciously identify the source of your joy.”<sup>14</sup> **Finally, imagine yourself with God,** not simply being in his presence during prayer,<sup>15</sup> and consider these words by American Essayist Agnes Repplier, “We cannot really love anybody with whom we never laugh.”<sup>16</sup>

“God is the One who delights in your own sense of humor and surprises you with life’s funny moments.”

1. February, 2012, the Center for Spirituality and Discernment at Villanova University in collaboration with local parishes, Our Mother of Good Counsel and St. Thomas of Villanova, brought bestselling author and culture editor of America Magazine, James Martin, SJ to campus. His public lecture was taken largely from Chapter 4 of his latest book. Excerpts from the lecture and book form the text of this article.

2. James Martin, SJ, *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011) p. 87.

3. Martin, p. 90. Also see: G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995) chapter VII.

4. Martin, p. 93.

5. Martin, p. 96.

6. Martin, p. 102. Also see: Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002).

7. Martin, p. 102.

8. Martin, p. 107.

9. Martin, p. 109.

10. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16–18.

11. Martin, p. 214.

12. Martin, p. 216.

13. Martin, p. 226.

14. Martin, p. 228.

15. Martin, p. 232.

16. Martin, p. 233.



Since the issuing of *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 and the conclusion of Vatican II in 1965, the Catholic Church has strongly affirmed human rights as the moral standard to which all nations and cultures should be held accountable. *Pacem in Terris* proclaims that because every human being is endowed with intelligence and free will, each “has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable” (PT 7). The Second Vatican Council went even further theologically, declaring that the Church proclaims human rights “by virtue of the Gospel committed to her” (*Gaudium et Spes* 41). Thus, in a dramatic shift, the Church linked the full gamut of human rights with **both** the fundamental nature of what it is to be human **and** the very core of Christian faith.

These developments have had dramatic consequences for the ministry of the Church. In recent decades, the Church has become an active supporter of human rights around the world. Since the early 70s, the Church has become a strong institutional activist for human rights. This led the late political scientist Samuel Huntington to conclude that the Catholic Church has become one of the world’s leading forces for the advancement of human rights and democracy.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Solidarity and Human Rights**

Both *Pacem in Terris* and other documents of Vatican II stressed that human dignity only can be achieved by participation in community. The location of human rights in the context of an ethic that stresses the social nature of personhood and human solidarity has important implications for the way these rights are understood. It means that human dignity requires not only protection of the space required for the exercise of agency by persons acting on their own, but the securing of those conditions that make it possible for them to be active participants in the life of the community.

Such a solidaristic understanding has implications for how to address the meaning of the full range of human rights. In the days of the Cold War, for example, the West was largely

inclined to conceive human rights in individualistic terms and to give priority to the civil and political rights to free speech, due process of law and political participation. In contrast to this emphasis, Eastern Bloc nations and some in the Southern Hemisphere stressed social and economic rights such as those to adequate food, work and housing. A solidaristic ethic not only suggests that these two traditions ought to learn from the strengths of the other, but also that the opposition between individual freedoms on the one hand and mutual solidarity in society on the other is a false dichotomy.

It is no accident, therefore, that *Pacem in Terris* supported the full range of human rights, both the civil-political rights such as free speech and self-governance as forms of social participation, and the social-economic rights to food, health care, education and work, which must also be guaranteed if a person is to be treated with dignity as a participating member of the community. *This leads to a distinctive Catholic stress on the link between human rights and social solidarity*, a linkage that is particularly important when we seek to address the economic inequalities of our country and our world today.

### **The Challenges of Africa Today**

*Pacem in Terris's* affirmation of the social and economic rights to food, health care, education and work provides a helpful framework for



# To be excluded from the community or to be simply left behind, therefore, is to have one's basic rights violated.

thinking about our duties toward developing and poor countries. In both Catholic and secular thinking, the dignity of the person is the basis of human rights, including the rights of the poor.<sup>2</sup> Further, our dignity as persons can only be attained in community.<sup>3</sup> It follows then that people who have been left out of the economic benefits of the advancement of our increasingly integrated global economy are harmed by that very fact.

From this perspective, we can see why the situation faced by many of the poor people of Africa is such a serious injustice. The US Catholic Bishops have affirmed that:

*“Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.”*

They echoed *Pacem in Terris*'s stress on the social embeddedness of human dignity when they went on to define human rights as “the minimum conditions for life in community.”<sup>4</sup> To be excluded from the community or to be simply left behind, therefore, is to have one's basic rights violated. It is to be

treated as if one were not a member of the human family.

In significant parts of Africa, poverty both wounds the dignity of poor persons and undermines the well-being of the communities in which they live. There, 50 percent of Africans live on less than \$1.25 per day. With so few economic resources, just getting food is a prime task. People can become willing to barter their political support for what little economic gain their patrons might provide them. Those not willing to make such bargains face grave consequences, including violence or withdrawal of support by their patrons.

The situation is grave and complex. The expansion of global markets brought about by economic globalization has indeed brought a decline in the percentage of the human race living in poverty. Yet, more than half the people of the African continent continue to be poor, no lower than in 1981.<sup>5</sup>

In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII observed that current global institutions “are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all

peoples.”<sup>6</sup> He called for a “public authority, having worldwide power and endowed with the proper means for the efficacious pursuit of its objective,” namely, the worldwide common good. He gave particular endorsement to the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Pope Benedict XVI has gone even farther in *Caritas in Veritate*, calling for:

“A reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.”<sup>8</sup>

Both Pope John XXIII and Benedict XVI reaffirm full respect for the principle of subsidiarity. The contribution of subsidiarity would be clearer, however, if they noted that today's global order is increasingly the result of a complex network of institutions. These institutions range from private entrepreneurs to global financial institutions like the *World Bank*. They include regional agencies such as the *African Development Bank*, country-to-country bilateral assistance programs, private corporations and banks, non-governmental development organizations like *Oxfam*, and, of course, faith-based organizations such as *Caritas Internationalis*.

Thus individual nation-states and global political bodies like the *United Nations* are far from the only actors with important influence on development. A more effective *United Nations*, though needed, will be just one of the factors that must contribute to more



than just global economic interaction based on equality and reciprocity.

While the effectiveness of foreign aid has been challenged for a number of reasons, *Pacem in Terris* does argue for increased aid from the developed to the developing world. Important though it may be, government-to-government bilateral aid is not the only key to alleviate poverty in developing countries such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. International pressure to deal with corruption and move toward good governance—the protection of civil and political rights and the rule of law—have rightly become a central concern of the *World Bank* and the *IMF*.<sup>11</sup> Development policy, both public and private, should indeed aim to make governments more accountable and to increase the participation of the poor in both the economic and political life of the society being assisted. In countries where corruption is widespread, placing conditions on aid to prevent it from simply ending up in the pockets of the ruling elite is critical.

The recent case in Kenya<sup>12</sup> points to why working to prevent internal conflicts and civil war must become



a central goal in development strategy. Post-election violence demonstrates how civil conflict and lack of development can be closely linked in poor nations.<sup>13</sup> Progress in such environments requires political and diplomatic efforts to address the roots of conflict and to prevent it.

Development policy today needs to address multiple issues: the health care and education available to poor people; economic and financial matters related to growth and investment; ethical governance and the prevention of war. These considerations all point to the interconnection of diverse human rights—civil, political, social and economic. Following both *Pacem in Terris* and

the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, we need to pursue all human rights. Each of them opens up a way for persons to contribute to the overall common good of the community and to benefit from the common good that can be achieved only in community. By putting all these diverse rights on the agenda of the Church's social mission and on the policy agenda of society, *Pacem in Terris* raises a challenge for both the Church and civil society, that is still before us.

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1. Samuel Huntington, "Religion and the Third Wave," *National Interest* 24 (Summer 1991), 29–42.

2. Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 219–220, in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

3. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*, no. 25, in O'Brien and Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought*.

4. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (1986), at no. 79, in O'Brien and Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 576–77.

5. "World Bank Updates Poverty Estimates for the Developing World," press release.

6. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 135.

7. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, nos. 135–138.

8. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 67.

9. Slaughter, *A New World Order*, 19–22 and 10. For a study of the emerging role of NGOs, see Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

10. David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 229.

11. See World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report: Millennium Development Goals: Strengthening Mutual Accountability, Aid, Trade and Governance* (2006), online at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGLOBALMONITORING2006/Resources/2186625-1145565069381/GMR06Complete.pdf>

12. See U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton, Remarks With Kenyan Foreign Minister Moses Wetangula, Nairobi, Kenya, August 5, 2009. Online at: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/08/126890.htm>.

13. See Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes*, esp. Chap. 5, "Wars: The Political Economy of Destruction."

# FAITH and LEARNING at VILLANOVA

Understand that you may believe;



I attribute my own flourishing to the fact that I am able to see God in all my learning. My faith—my personal beliefs guided and nourished by Catholicism—tells me that God has endowed humanity with incredible gifts through his incomprehensible love. I believe that as I learn, I develop greater insight and understanding of the complexity and richness that God has created in this world. Faith and learning play a large role in my life because I see them as working in tandem. I worship and revere God both through the understanding of his world and through the cultivation of my mind, one of my most precious of His gifts.

*Sarah McNally, Communication, Humanities, Honors—Class of 2013*



With respect to faith and learning, I often reflect on a quotation by C.S. Lewis, who wrote: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”<sup>4</sup> Faith is the sun in life. It is the illuminating hope that brings everything else out of darkness, allowing it to make sense to us.

*Kaitlin Thompson, Political Science—Class of 2014*



Faith is not irrational. Rather, faith is what makes reasoning possible. Once we have committed ourselves to certain truths, reason becomes an invaluable tool for understanding the world around us and guiding how we ought to interact.

*Paul Dupont, Humanities—Class of 2012*



Intelligent minds should never see matters of faith as a waste of time, but

instead as a great challenge, an invitation to explore in a different way, and opportunity to do something great. Learning through the lens of faith expands one’s understanding of people in the world around you. It promotes knowledge of self as well, which can be the most beneficial reward. Self awareness strengthens and empowers you in all that you do.

*Stephanie Colombini, Nursing—Class of 2014*



**A**ugustine's invitation, *Intellige ut credas* (Understand that you may believe); *Crede ut intelligas* (Believe that you may understand) is relevant to all Catholic universities but especially to Villanova University.<sup>1</sup> Our purpose is "to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity,"<sup>2</sup> We accomplish this task through a curriculum that is "grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition and advances a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason."<sup>3</sup>

Villanova's Faith and Learning Scholars Program brings together outstanding students and exemplary faculty mentors for a year-long discussion of what it means to live one's faith and apply it in the context of an academic community. Several of Villanova's 2011-2012 student scholars agreed to share their perspectives with us.

## Believe that you may understand.



It is no coincidence that science classifies humans as the most advanced creatures to ever walk this earth and that our Christian traditions reveal that man was made in God's divine image. Our minds are a reflection of God so that the more we exercise its capabilities, the more we come to realize the infinity that is God's influence. To say that faith limits intellectual development is a contradiction, as the existence of religion proves that we are engaging in thought, as it is only through contemplation that we catch a glimpse of God.

*Christine Bosco, Psychology—Class of 2013*



At Villanova, there is a clear connection between faith and the life of the mind. It is not only possible but beneficial to pursue both. A rigorous life of the mind gives one the power to prosper and advance, while faith provides the necessary hope to persist during life's tragedies.

*Matthew Whalen, Economics—Class of 2014*

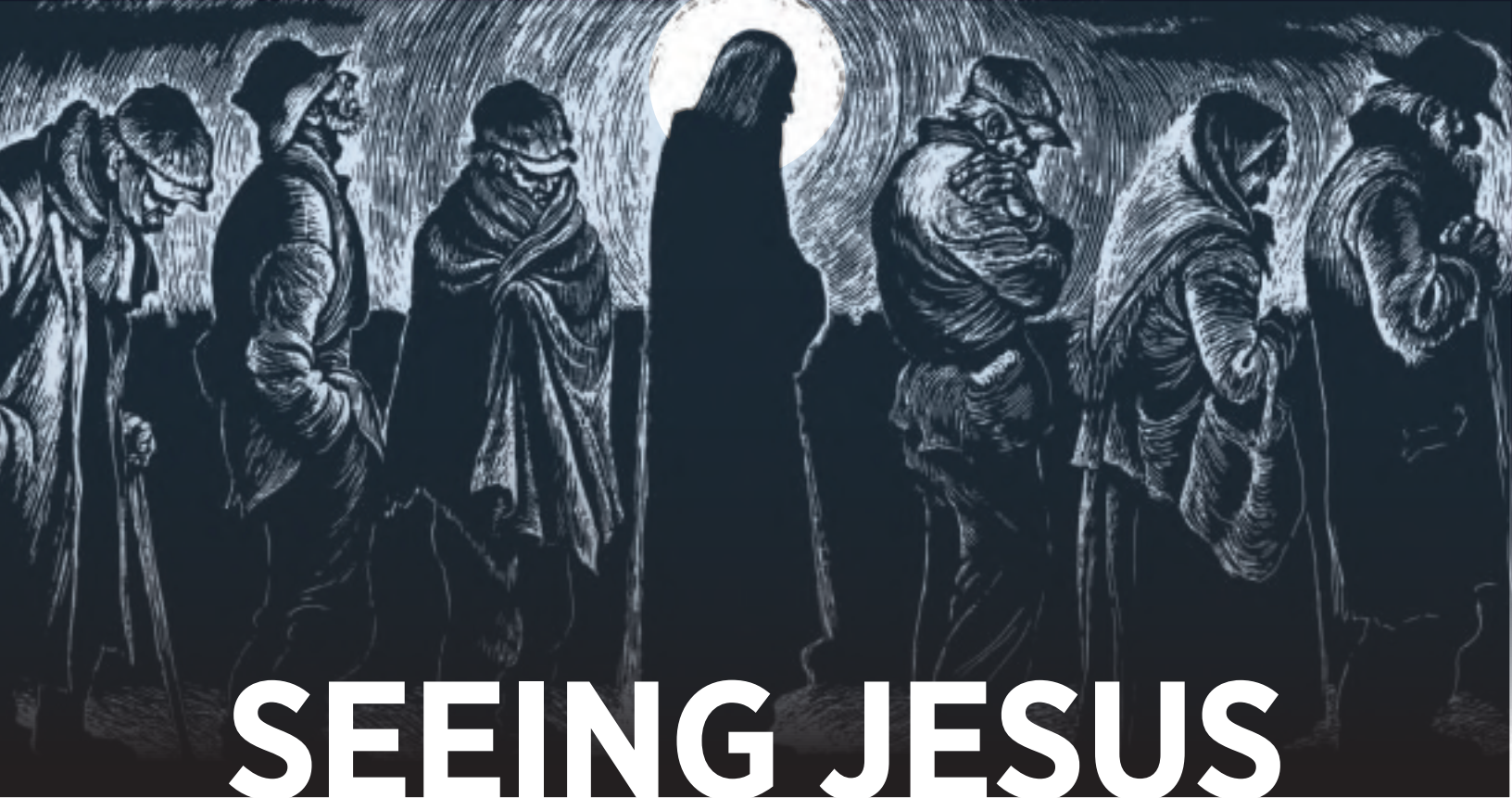


Science and religion do not go hand in hand, but they are two parts of life that I believe one must live by to live a successful life.

By accepting and respecting the two and their differences, one can live a Christian life and advance forward in the scientific world. Every day I learn new things through the rational and fact-based perspective, yet I believe that there is a point when even the best of "science" is taken over by faith in God. We must continue to question, debate and research for new answers in the scientific world, while we continue to believe in our faith even though both don't match up sometimes.

*Chrissy Conroy, Biology—Class of 2014*

1. Augustine, *Sermon 43*.  
2. Pope John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 5.  
3. Villanova University Mission Statement.  
4. C.S. Lewis, *Is Theology Poetry?* In *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962.



# SEEING JESUS IN THE FACE OF OTHERS

Everyone is familiar with the gospel reading in *Matthew* concerning the Last Judgment (*Matthew 25: 31–46*). In it, neither those on Christ’s right nor left can recall seeing Him in need. Even *the just* ask,

“Lord, when did we see you hungry...thirsty...away from home...naked...sick or in prison?” And He answers, “as often as you did it for one of the least of mine, you did it for me.”

Ever wonder why neither group saw Him in the faces of the outcast? Maybe *the just*, though busy about the right things, were simply *too busy*.

At least one consequence of our hectic lives, our results-oriented society is that even during our best efforts to serve, we are so busy “doing for” that we miss the opportunity of “being with” others. We miss seeing who people really are and understanding what they really need. Taking time to learn about and develop personal relationships with those we serve promotes a richer understanding of humanity. And this effort, which allows us to access a deeper part of ourselves, brings real fulfillment, wisdom and peace.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once asked, “How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your

neighbor whom you see, whom you touch, with whom you live?”<sup>1</sup> Later, she gives us the key to being able to see Jesus in our neighbor. She suggests that to be able to love one another, “we must pray much.” Constant prayer and meditation, she contends, prepares our hearts “to see God in our neighbor.”<sup>2</sup>

In Catholic social teaching, a useful concept is **solidarity**: “[N]ot a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of people” solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good...of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible” for **everyone**. Understood in this way, our moral and social attitude deepens and becomes a “virtue.”<sup>3</sup>

Villanova University is nationally recognized for the exceptional variety of opportunities it provides for service. Hundreds of students, staff, faculty and alumni participate in the annual St. Thomas of Villanova Day of Service; fall, winter, spring and summer break service experiences; service-learning course work and dozens of weekly programs. Among the newest opportunities, **ones that focus intentionally on moving from “doing for” to “being with”** are *Back on My Feet* and *Student-Run Emergency Housing Unit of Philadelphia (SREHUP)*. The first

promotes year-long relationships that encourage “independence and self-sufficiency within the homeless and other underserved populations by first engaging them in running as a means to build confidence, strength and self-esteem. The organization does not provide food or shelter, but instead provides a community that embraces equality, respect, discipline, teamwork and leadership.”<sup>4</sup> The *Student-Run Emergency Housing Unit of Philadelphia*, on the other hand, “is a winter shelter initiative,

which brings Philadelphia area college students together with people experiencing homelessness. Volunteers offer guests warm meals, a place to sleep, a caring environment and a variety of holistic programs.”<sup>5</sup>

Think about your good works. What do you know about and what kind of relationship do you have with those you serve? Are you “doing for” or “being with?” Can you see Jesus in the face of others?



Students partner with *Back on My Feet* to provide support and build relationships.



Villanova University professor Stephanie Sena prepares spaghetti at a dinner for the men at the Old First Reformed United Church of Christ SREHUP location in Philadelphia.

1. Mother Teresa, Acceptance of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html).
2. Mother Teresa, 1997 Letter to Albania. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/31540871/31/Her-letters>
3. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #38.
4. See organizational website at: <http://www.backonmyfeet.org>
5. See organizational website at: <http://www.srehup.org/home.html>

CAN I GET

# SOME DIRECTION HERE?



Who among us cannot relate to the young Augustine who looks continually outside himself to find God? Then one day he notices what he is doing and cries to God, “You were within me, but I was outside myself, and there I sought you! In my weakness I ran after the beauty of the things you have made. You were with me and I was not with you.”<sup>1</sup> But finally he looks within and finds the beauty of God revealed intimately and intensely.

As Augustine did, we too live in an extraverted world of too much noise, activity and responsibility. We don’t have the time, space or even the “know how” to listen to the deepest parts of ourselves. In this world of growing speed and complexity, it’s easy to lose touch with the wisdom of God deep within.

Spiritual direction is an ancient practice of meeting with another person in the community for the sole purpose of growing a personal

# As Augustine did, we too live in an extraverted world of too much noise, activity and responsibility.



and intentional relationship with God. In spiritual direction, we take time out of our hectic schedules to pause and to reflect on our lives in a prayerful way. The process helps us to develop a life of interiority, which Augustine prized so highly, so that we can live our lives more consciously, with a discerning ear toward the true voice of God.

Spiritual directors are persons of prayer and experience in the spiritual life, as well as people who are trained in the skills and the art of spiritual direction. Their purpose is to provide a safe and trusting environment, and to “walk with” the person who is seeking God. They companion seekers by listening to their stories and noticing what is most in their hearts. In the telling and listening, the movement of God in that person’s life unfolds. Sister Maureen Conroy, RSM, writes that a “spiritual director will seek to create such an atmosphere to help you look at, become absorbed in, relive and respond to your

experiences of God. In doing this, the director will try to help focus on how God is actually present in your life and prayer...”<sup>2</sup>

Where do I see God? What is God saying to me in a personal way?  
How do I feel about God? Who is God for me? What do I want to say to God? Where am I my strongest, deepest, truest in my relationship with God and in my daily life?  
What is God’s invitation? What will my response be? What grace do I need to respond? These questions are as vital today as they were in Augustine’s time.

Many are surprised to discover just how active God is in their lives. Seekers come to see how deeply God wants to have a relationship with them and how God desires to love them in a personal way. Spiritual direction offers companionship, while seekers reflect and discern, as they pray and learn who God is in their everyday lives.

Jesuit Fathers William A. Barry and William J. Connolly remind us that “the person is helped not so much to understand that relationship [with God] better,

but to engage in it, to enter into dialogue with God. Spiritual direction of this kind focuses on what happens when a person listens to and responds to a self-communicating God.”<sup>3</sup> It elicits a daily awareness of God in prayer and a closer examination of our lives. In it there is a curiosity for who God is for us and a desire to respond personally.

For Villanovans, present, past and yet to be, it is an opportunity to find oneness with St. Augustine’s intimate experience of God:

“You have called, you have cried, and you have pierced my deafness. You have radiated forth, you have shined out brightly, and you have dispelled my blindness. You have sent forth your fragrance, and I have breathed it in, and I long for you. I have tasted you, and I hunger.”<sup>4</sup>

*This article is adapted from one written for the Office for Mission and Ministry by Linda Jaczynski, Director of the Center for Spirituality and Discernment, Villanova University.*

1. Augustine. *Confessions* X, 27.
2. Conroy, Maureen. “What to Look for in Your Spiritual Direction.” *Praying* 34 (January–February, 1990), 9–11.
3. Barry, SJ, William and Connolly, SJ, William. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. HarperOne (2009).
4. Augustine. *Confessions* X, 27.

# Recalling the **Jubilee Year of Paul** with a **Fitting Close**



**W**hile speaking to those gathered at First Vespers of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul in 2007, Pope Benedict XVI observed that “as in early times, today too Christ needs apostles ready to sacrifice themselves. He needs witnesses and martyrs like St. Paul” who upon his conversion followed Christ “without second thoughts” who “lived and worked...suffered and died” for Christ. According to Pope Benedict XVI, Paul’s success “depended above all on his personal involvement in proclaiming the Gospel with total dedication to Christ; a dedication that feared neither risk, difficulty nor persecution.”

“Neither death, nor life,” he wrote to the Romans, “nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Romans* 8:38–39).

To inspire a renewed dedication to proclaiming the Gospel, Pope Benedict XVI announced a special Jubilee Year to the Apostle Paul from June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009, on the occasion of the bimillennium of Paul’s birth, which historians have placed between the years AD 7 and AD 10.

In support of his declaration and in collaboration with the universal church, the Office for Mission and Ministry implemented its own year-long celebration of the Jubilee Year Dedicated to the Apostle Paul.

The program, acclaimed nation-wide for its breath and scope, began with special recognition of The Rev. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, OP and The Rev. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ for their outstanding contribution to biblical scholarship.

Father Murphy-O’Connor and Father Fitzmyer were and remain among the most eminent biblical scholars in the world. They are well-known for their lives dedicated to uncovering the meaning of biblical texts; for teaching that has

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The icon, *The Apostle Paul*, used for the occasion was commissioned by the Office for Mission and Ministry and written by The Rev. Richard Cannuli, OSA.

# With the publication of *Celebrating Paul*, Villanova University recognized Murphy-O'Connor and Fitzmyer for exemplary achievement in biblical scholarship.

inspired countless others; and, above all, for their ability to bring a remarkable breadth of knowledge—biblical, ancient and contemporary—to the study of Paul’s letters. Father Murphy-O’Connor and Father Fitzmyer truly embody the Augustinian ideal of striving for knowledge that seeks the truth (*veritas*) and unites (*unitas*) in love of God and others (*caritas*).

The celebration continued with a series of lectures designed to explore Paul the Apostle, the

relevance of his legacy and the importance of biblical scholarship in our contemporary world.

With honorary doctorates, Villanova University recognized Father Murphy-O’Connor and Father Fitzmyer for their foundational role in shaping Catholic biblical scholarship. Further, in recognition of their exemplary achievement in biblical scholarship, and as a lasting tribute, the University commissioned the publication of a *Festschrift*.

A collection of 10 papers presented on campus, plus an additional 12 on the life and letters of St. Paul, were edited by Dr. Peter Spitaler, chair of Villanova’s department of Theology and Religious Studies. The volume was published this past fall by the Catholic Biblical Association of America, as part of its quarterly monograph series. With the publication of *Celebrating Paul, Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy-O’Connor OP and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ* Villanova’s Jubilee celebration came to a fitting close.



Cover of *Celebrating Paul: Festschrift in Honor of The Rev. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, OP and The Rev. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ*.



Left to Right: The Rev. President Peter Donohue, OSA with The Rev. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, OP at the honorary degree presentation.



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“**PARTICULARLY**  
when I am **worn out**  
**by the upsets of the world,**  
I cast myself without reservation  
on the **LOVE** of those  
who are especially **close to me,**  
to those who are aflame with  
**Christian love and have become**  
**faithful FRIENDS** to me.  
**For I am entrusting them**  
**not to another human,**  
but to **GOD** in whom they dwell  
**and by whom they are who they are.**”