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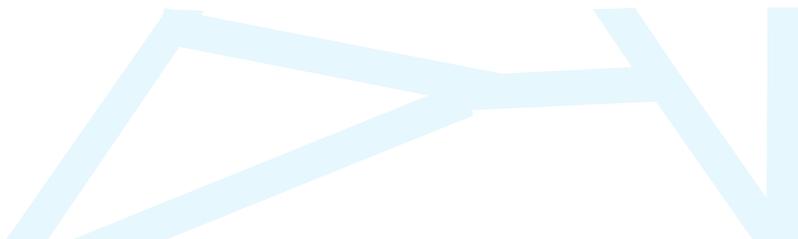
VOCATIONAL WEEK 2021



VOCATIONAL WEEK



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"What are you looking for?"
(Jn 1, 38)*





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INTRODUCTION

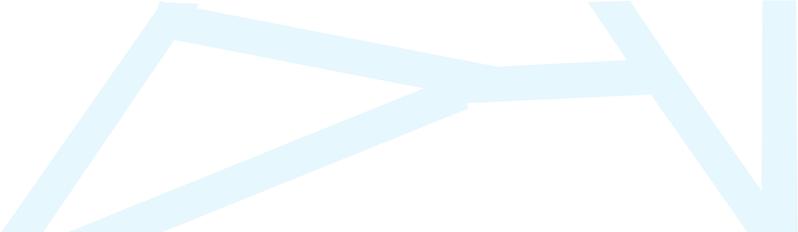
For the year 2021 the Order proposed the following guideline: “Creators of dialogue programs with the world and the contemporary culture”; however, since the subject is complex, it has been summarized in three important dimensions of our religious life and our contribution to the world in which we live from the Augustinian Recollect charism. These are: DIALOGUE, PURSUIT AND CULTURE.

The **dialogue** sinks its roots in the Augustinian thinking of becoming a part of the life of the other, understanding the other, putting ourselves in the place of the other (empathy) and, from there, share what we have and letting us be enriched by the contributions of others. Dialogue means openness to change, learn to *unlearn* to relearn, resilience, creativity before situations of uncertainty and knowing how to read the signs of the times.

From this point of view, the vocational companion walks together with the aspirant and has previously traveled the way, inviting the vocational aspirant to travel safely and for this reason, knows how to orient toward the goal; he is a pilgrim who walks with another pilgrim, like Jesus Christ himself. Along the way (*process*), dialogue, friendship and trust are fundamentals. The **dialogue** in the process of vocational accompaniment allows a full knowledge of the young person who aspires to be Augustinian Recollect. Only through the dialogue is confidence generated and open spaces of deep discernment.

Secondly, there is the **pursuit**. It is one of the highlights of Augustinian Recollect spirituality. It speaks to us of restlessness, dynamism, innerness. “Do not go outside, enter into yourself; in the inner man dwells the truth” (*De Vera Religione*, 39, 72). The pursuit invites us to embrace the change of each day without losing the essence that defines us and whose foundation we find in God.

In this sense, the companion notices the direction of the deep desire of the accompanied person. In this process, the vocational promoter together with the aspirant, draw a path in which the pursuit for the truth strengthens the process of maturation and vocational decision, illuminated by the biblical sense of life. The **pursuit** for the inner Master allows the aspiring Augustinian Recollect to seek a life project marked by the restlessness of the heart.



Culture tells us about meeting, building bridges, opening ourselves up to the diversity of people and contexts where we live. Culture also reminds us of the valuable legacy we have and the responsibility we have to convey it. "The Order of Augustinian Recollects is, with full right, heir to the religious family founded by St. Augustine. The spiritual Heritage of the Order are the life, doctrine and *Rule* of St. Augustine, the *Way of life* and our good traditions, as well as the examples of holiness and sleeplessness for the kingdom of God of so many religious who, over the centuries, have given splendor to the great Augustinian family" (Const. 7). As children of St. Augustine, we are called to contribute to the cultural development of our time, to let ourselves be enlightened and, in turn, to enlighten with the testimony of our lives.

The Order of Augustinian Recollects is in itself, a set of cultures reflected in the faces of religious from so many places in the world, languages and customs, which make the Augustinian Recollect charism a dynamic and non-static element. In this sense, the companion pedagogically leads the accompanied to the experience of living in community, immersed in the culture of today's world, but without losing the foundational identity. The dialogue with today's culture, so diverse in its forms and elements, is also a great opportunity to help the aspiring Augustinian Recollect to discover the clear signs of vocation.

The General Secretariat of Vocations and Youth makes available a series of liturgical, pedagogical and pastoral materials, which can be used in the various ministries of the Order, in the framework of the vocational week of this year 2021. Firstly, there are a number of liturgical forms for each day of the week, praying especially for the various vocations in the Church. There is also a *lectio divina* and a Holy Hour Vocation. Secondly, there are three Augustinian catechesis about pursuit. Finally, an Augustinian path for vocational discernment is proposed.

May the Lord of the harvest, who gathers his *Church in one soul and one heart*, to live and celebrate faith and invites us to preach his Gospel to the whole world, guide the works we do throughout the week and grow what we joyfully sow in the hearts of many people. Mother of Consolation, Patron of our Order, walk with us and help us to be at all times creators of dialogue programs with the world and contemporary culture.

General Secretariat of Vocations and Youth



PRESENTATION

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN YOU LOOK FOR GOD?

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "what are you looking for?"

They said, "Rabbi (which means Teacher), where are you staying?" He replied, "come and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

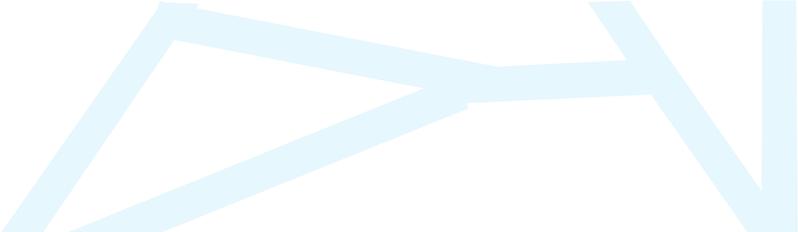
(Jn 1, 38-39).

The challenging question of Jesus to these two disciples of John the Baptist, who when they heard of Him were interested in knowing Him, also leads us to think, what do we seek, when we seek God? Undoubtedly our whole life consists of small pursuits: economic and occupational security, health, well-being, prosperity, stability. As human beings we know that the sense of our life is not limited to merely biological, so we seek personal realization, fulfillment of our dreams and ideals. And because we are nonconformists, we always want to look for more.

But what are we truly looking for? What do we look for with our work, with our money, with our family and social relationships...? What do we truly seek when we come before God? It is important to ask ourselves these questions in order to find the meaning of our pursuits, let us not forget that when we look for something deep down, we know what we want to find, if not, our pursuit would be empty and barren; it would be, like we become unconscious animals, that we only go by instinct.

To Jesus' question, *"what are you looking for?"* They respond by saying they want to know Him, know about Him, know where He lives, so that later, be able to speak personally, they wanted to know everything, they had been captivated by His presence. And if the question was disturbing, even more so was his answer: *"Come and see it"*; continues the Gospel by saying that *"then they went, saw where He lived and stayed with Him that day."* Only Jesus can present himself as the answer, because He is the way, the one that gives meaning to any pursuit, the one that fulfills the expectations of the human being, the one that grants true happiness.

They went, saw, and stayed one night, one day, one week, one month, all their lives... what were those men looking for and what did they find? Perhaps the curiosity to know the Master led them that afternoon



to ask about a place *"where do you live?"*. But they did not imagine that the experience of that afternoon would forever transform their existence. Their pursuit were transformed into an encounter; an encounter that gave meaning to their small pursuits. Moreover, not only did they stay with Jesus, but then they went and told what they had experienced, so that others would experience the same thing as well.

They say, today exist a generation called the "seekers", "searchers", what they seek is a religion. They search for truth that gives meaning to life, that satisfies, that liberates from the dissatisfaction of small truths, of the small and empty satisfactions; above all, looks for someone to trust, which will be a reference to their lives.

The young man is a seeker by nature, not satisfied with what he finds first, but always wants more; his passion for life leads him to draw horizons of pursuit, to set goals that generate enthusiasm, dreams that are more than fantasies. But it is necessary to have a clear path in this pursuit, otherwise it can be misplaced in false enthusiasm that leave only dissatisfaction, unhappiness and loss of the meaning of life. The young man needs to have all the senses ready and oriented in the pursuit for what is truly important in his life and what he wants to find, so that he does not simply stay in the satisfaction of his desire for power, pleasure and want.

Vocation is precisely that: to seek, to call, to find, to stay; to be before God who has a life project for each of us, which fills all expectations. But it must be a conscious pursuit because He is the one who takes the initiative, who inspires those desires to seek and find it, because there is a magnificent plan for each of us. Something that totally transform our lives to the point of staying with Him forever, as the first disciples did.

Also, today when we approach Him, Jesus continues to ask us *"What do you seek?"*, and continues to offer himself as the answer: *"Come and you will see"*; know that only in Him can we find happiness. Since baptism we have all been called to follow Him. That is our vocation as disciples that gives meaning to our existence. Let us not allow the eagerness of the world, the strident voices of those who offer vain assurances, and the false promises of happiness, disguised as shimmering illusions, to distract us from the path that leads to God.

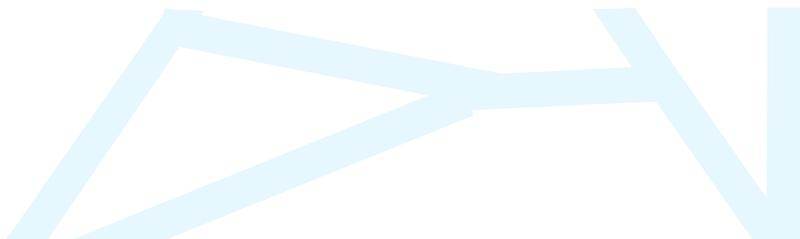
Let us seek for God with a sincere heart, not as a religion, but as the one who fills everything, which gives meaning to life, and we always want to be with Him, because only in Him can we find what we seek.

*Fr. Juan Pablo Martínez Peláez, oar
President of the General Secretariat of Vocations and Youth*



LITURGICAL SCRIPT

Liturgical celebrations for the vocational week



UNPLUGGED



OPENING MASS PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

Brothers and sisters, we come together as a family to celebrate the gift of life and religious vocation. Today we start a week of prayer in which we want to ask the Lord with insistence to increase the desire of many to follow Him. May this week also be an opportunity to *create the conditions, so that in all Christian communities, from the baptismal awareness of its members, may develop a true vocational culture and a continuous commitment to prayer for vocations.*

Let us pray, then, so that, just as St. Augustine was a pilgrim, and he remained on the path of faith, so we, his children, live our journey without losing consciousness. Let us celebrate this Eucharist by opening our hearts in a prayerful and listening attitude to the word and the message that He has prepared for us.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

If you want to go all the way, sell what you have, give the money to the poor and then come with me," says the Lord (Mt 19,21)

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Lord, Holy Father,
You who invite all the faithful
to achieve perfect charity,
and do not stop calling many
so that they may follow the footsteps of your Son more closely,
grant to those you want to choose
with a particular vocation
to become, by their life,
the sign and witness of your kingdom
before the Church and before the world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Is. 55, 6-11 *God is close and great.*

PSALM: Ps 26, 7-14 (R.: 8b) *I will seek your face, Lord, do not hide your face from me.*

SECOND READING: Acts. 8, 26-40 *Taking this passage he announced the Scripture.*

GOSPEL: Jn. 1, 35-42 *They saw where He lived and stayed with Him.*

PRAYERS

Recognizing, Lord, that every vocation is a gift of yours and wanting all of us to be at the service of others, we ask you:

Listen, Lord, our prayer.

1. So that the Pope, the bishops and the whole Church may carry out their evangelizing mission in the midst of the world. Let us pray.
2. So that peoples and nations fight for the values of the Gospel, which brings peace, justice and true freedom. Let us pray.
3. So that priests and consecrated persons may announce with enthusiasm the Gospel of Jesus in the world. Let us pray.
4. So that there may always be young hearts that are willing to follow God's call and dedicate their lives, like Jesus, the prophets and the apostles, to the service of their fellow men, being witnesses of hope. Let us pray.
5. So that Christian homes may feel they are witnesses of the Gospel and promote the Christian vocation of their children. Let us pray.
6. So that each community may commit to being an evangelizing community and courageously sow Christ's call among its members. Let us pray.
7. So that all gathered here may be responsible for proclaiming Jesus Christ and encourage those who choose to consecrate themselves to the service of the gospel. Let us pray.

Accept, Lord, our humble prayer and make that all —adults, young people, and children—called by you, respond with total dedication to the Gospel and to our brethren. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Be pleased to accept, Holy Father,
these gifts we present to you,
and grant a life of fraternal communion
and in freedom of spirit
to those who have set themselves to follow your Son joyfully
down the difficult path of perfection.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Believe me, those who have left everything and followed me will
receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life, says the Lord
(Mt 19,27.28.29).*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We beg you, Lord,
that you give strength to your children
with these heavenly foods,
so that, remaining faithful to their evangelical vocation,
be everywhere, the living image of your Son.
He, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

THANKSGIVING

We give you thanks, our God, for your call of Baptism to be your people.
We answer you again with our "Yes". Give us fidelity for your cause and for
our vocation. Renew with a spirit of enthusiasm all who are dedicated to
the service of your people. Give our young people the desire to dedicate
themselves to this service in the religious and priestly life, or as lay deacons
and ministers. Fill their hearts with your Spirit of Wisdom so they may
proclaim your Gospel, and bear witness to your presence among us. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT VOCATIONS

Lord, our God,
Let the cry of your voice reach many;
that they rise up and live together with you.
Prepare their hearts with your Word,
so that they will be prepared to evangelize to the poor,
and take care of your abundant harvest.
Lord, may all those called to the Augustinian Recollect life
listen to your voice
and be able to fulfill your will. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE VOCACIONAL PROMOTER

Jesus thank you for calling me to follow you and to work in your kingdom,
I couldn't have had better.
Let me love my vocation and live in such a way
that I radiate the joy of belonging to you and to be better for others.
Help me perform, the mission you have entrusted me.
You keep sending workers to your harvest, and to me, let me find them.
Give me boldness to avoid, prudence not to abate the vocation,
patience to wait for each other's moment,
and wisdom to discern who is suitable.
Make me respect the freedom of others, and not pretend to
"produce" vocations based on blackmail, pressure and attractions.
Fill me with the strength of your spirit so that it does not bend me into
weariness,
Nor in adversities.
Do not let me be discouraged even though the fruits are scarce,
or the vocations do not persevere.
Rekindle in me the awareness that I am only the instrument
through which You continue to call others to follow you. Amen.

MONDAY

PRAYER FOR THE YOUTH

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

We pray in this Eucharist for the youth. In the heart of the Church, they have always been, are, and will be. *For many young people, God, religion and the Church are empty words, however, they are sensible to the figure of Jesus, when presented in an attractive and effective way. In many ways, today's young people also tell us: "We want to see Jesus" (Jn 12.21), thus manifesting the good concern that characterizes the heart of every human being: "The restlessness of the spiritual pursuit, the restlessness of the encounter with God, the restlessness of the love".*

Let us also raise our prayer for the Augustinian Recollect Youth, so that they may be young people full of hope, open to the love of God and willing to follow him always with a restless heart on the example of St. Augustine.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

I pleaded and was given prudence, I invoked and a spirit of wisdom came upon me. Alleluia.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Illuminate, Lord, the path of our life
with the light of your gaze,
so that we may know our Christian dignity
and may we have the courage to commit ourselves
and to live according to that dignity.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: 1 Tim 4, 6-16 *Let no one despise your youth*

PSALM: Ps 27, 1-4 (R.: 8b) *The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in him.*

GOSPEL: Mk 10, 17-23 *If you want to go till the end, sell what you have and then come with me.*

PRAYERS

Let us pray, brethren, to the Lord to give the youth responsibility and desire to work for a world where joy and peace reign.

Listen, Lord, our prayer.

1. For the Church of God, that we may always remain young and open to the restlessness of men, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For the parents and educators of the youth, so that they may be concerned about guiding their children and students humanly, socially and religiously, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For the young people who open themselves to life, so that they may collaborate with their joy and work in forming a better society and a better Church, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For young people who say they are not free, so that they may understand what true freedom consists of and work to obtain it in themselves and others, let us pray to the Lord
5. For the youth who struggle, that they may find support and help and not be frustrated by their illusion of success, let us pray to the Lord.
6. For the Augustinian Recollect Youth, so that with restless heart, they may seek Christ every day, conscious that He is the only way that leads to true happiness, let us pray to the Lord.

Listen, Lord, to our prayers and make us, united in the same ideal, live our faith and come to you, source of eternal youth. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Receive, Lord, the gifts we present to you.
May they increase in us your grace,
your joy and your love.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

I bless the Lord who counsels me; even at night he instructs me. I always have the Lord before my eyes, for with Him I do not hesitate. Alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Giving You thanks. Lord, for the gifts you have given us,
we plead with you to pour out your grace upon us,
that we may always walk enlightened by your Truth.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THANKSGIVING

At the conclusion of this eucharist we give you thanks, Lord, because with your body and blood you feed not only our body, but above all our soul. May this food of salvation and eternal life keep the flame of our youth burning, so that we may be exposed in decision-making and generous in responding to God's vocation for our lives.

A YOUNG MAN PRAYS FOR VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father,
You who mold us in our mother's womb
and create us with a concrete role in building your kingdom:
Grant us the grace to discover the path
that you have established for us,
the way in which we use the gifts you have given us
for Your greater glory.
Awaken in our hearts the desire to follow Your will
and to respond with generosity and courage
recognizing that You know us better than ourselves.

May the youth of our community
open their hearts to Your will
and find in our families and parishes
a place where they receive support and encouragement
no matter what vocation they pursue.

Send us your spirit to inspire our youth
in their vocational effort for holiness,
to establish an intimate friendship with you
so that they can become holy husbands and holy wives
holy mothers, sisters and nuns
holy fathers, brothers and priests,
holy deacons and holy consecrated virgins,
holy and chaste single men and women.

Above all, we recognize our urgent need for saints
may they be beacons of light in a culture of darkness.

To You, Merciful Father, we offer this prayer,
with the intercession of Mary, our Mother,
in the Holy Spirit
and through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY

PRAYER FOR RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

Brothers and sisters, we are preparing to celebrate the eucharist, which we pray especially for the religious men and women of the whole world and especially for those who are part of the Augustinian Recollect Family. Your consecrated life is a sign of the presence of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ who gathers us, once again, around the table of the Word and the Eucharist. Let us prepare to participate in this celebration and renew, together with them, our consecration to God in baptism.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Trust in the Lord and do good, inhabit your land, and practice loyalty; May the Lord be your delight, and He will give you what your heart asks for.
(Psalm 36:3-4).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, who inspires and leads to completion all good purpose,
lead your servants on the path of eternal salvation;
And, to those who have left everything
to give themselves fully to You,
grant them to follow Christ
in the renunciation of temporal ambitions,
in the spirit of poverty and in the humility of the heart,
so that they may serve you faithfully among the brethren.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Eph. 1, 3-14 *God chose us in the person of Christ*

PSALM: Ps 23,1-2.3-4ab.5-6 (R.: 6) *This is the group that seeks your presence, Lord.*

GOSPEL: Mt 16, 24-27 *whoever loses his life for me, will find it.*

PRAYERS

Let us raise, brethren, to almighty God, the common prayer of the Church for all religious men and women, who follow Christ from their consecrated life and let us say:

We beg you, hear us.

1. For all who have dedicated their lives to following Christ, so that, looking at Mary, may know to offer to all, the testimony of a generous and serene dedication, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For consecrated persons, that they may always find time dedicated to prayer, let us pray to the Lord.
3. So that there may always be young hearts who are willing to follow God's call and dedicate their lives, like Jesus, to the service of their brethren, the men, being witnesses of hope, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For the members of our religious community, that we may live with greater joy and dedication each day of our vocation, and encourage among us authentic brotherhood, let us pray to the Lord.
5. That all of us, Christian community, become aware that vocation is fruit of the grace and pray insistently to the Lord, asking for the abundance of vocations that the Church needs, let us pray to the Lord.

O Jesus, who by your example taught us to unite our lives to the will of the Father, and thus achieve holiness; let us, through our prayer, be witnesses of the faith and joy that your presence produce in our lives. You who live and reign for forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

By these sacred offerings that we present to you,
sanctify, Lord, the servants
that you have consecrated in your name,
so that, by living their vows faithfully,
serve you with sincere heart.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, Rise, eat, for the journey is too great for you (1K 19:7).

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, Lord, to your servants,
gathered in your love and partakers of the same bread,
encourage each other in charity and good works,
so that, everywhere, by the holiness of their life,
may stand as true witnesses of Christ.
who lives and reigns for forever and ever.

THANKSGIVING

Thank you Lord, because we have listened to your Word and fed us from your Table. Our prayer of this day for all religious men and women, come to your presence as a humble offering, grant them the grace to persevere in their religious consecration and continue to be in the world, instruments of your infinite love and reflection of the holiness of the Church.

A RELIGIOUS AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT PRAYS FOR VOCATIONS

Today, Lord, we put our heart
in the open book of your hands.
Grant us love and knowledge.
A heart that is loving, fearless, that is not scared of anything,
that in You and for You, everything can, everything overcome.
Give us the wisdom that knows how to identify the true path that you are,
among other possible paths
that only lead us away from You, away from us.
Make us return to the heart
and discover that the truth is within
and that leaving everything to you
is how to find true freedom and happiness,
the one that nothing and no one can take away from us.
Grant us today and always, the wisdom of love. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

PRAYER FOR CHILDREN

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

The vocation is the call that God makes to dedicate life in the Church for others. God calls some to be priests, others to be religious men and women, others to be missionaries. When one listens, he decides to give his life to the Lord. For him it is important to pray to know what God wants of one. And He says it. We pray in this eucharist for the children, so that from young age they may learn to discern the will of God in their lives, and be available to the call that they begin to feel in their hearts.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

"You, my God, are my hope and my trust, Lord, since my youth. In the womb I was already leaning on you, in the bosom you held me" (Ps 71:5-6).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, you who are meek and humble of heart,
you who said that whoever welcomes a child welcomes you,
you who promised the kingdom of heaven to those who become like a child,
don't let our hearts be ambitious.
but help us to silence and moderate our desires,
waiting on you, like a child waits in the arms of his mother.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Ho 11,1-4 *When Israel was a child, I loved him.*

PSALM: Ps 130, 1-3 (R.:3) *Israel wait on the Lord now and forever*

GOSPEL: Mk 10, 13-16 *Let the children come to me.*

PRAYERS

Let us pray, brethren, to Almighty God and ask Him to inspire our requests and listen to us in his goodness.

Listen, Lord, our prayer

1. For children who suffer the terror of war, the fear of losing their families, the persecutions, who live full of pain, fear, anguish and despair.
2. For children who are abandoned, rejected, despised, humiliated and have no family to grow up with joy.
3. For children who do not have education because they have to work from when they were young and many are exploited and enslaved.
4. For children who have no food, do not have shelter and wander the streets, pleading for charity, protect them from the evil one.
5. For children who have everything materially, who are left in front of a TV, computers and games, instead of being accompanied by the family.
6. For children who are sexually abused and by those who grow up educated in the absence of God.
7. For children who are victims of family problems, fights, violence and maltreatments, lacking in love, and for those who have been orphaned, devoid of the love of their parents.

Almighty and eternal God, look propitiously to your people; and to those whom you have called blessed for having a humble and simple heart like yours, grant them your help and comfort. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Lord, you who said, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart", help us not to pretend greatness that exceed our capacity, but to wait on you, who are the source of true happiness. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

"Truly I tell you that if you do not convert and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven", says the Lord (Mt. 18,3).

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Through the reception of this Sacrament,
we ask you, Almighty Father,
not to seek glory in the greatness of this world;
and, since You are sweet and humble heart,
teach us to have your same feelings
with our simple and humble way of living.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THANKSGIVING

God of love, we thank you for our children, because with their sweetness you show us your love. We thank you for their health, as you hold them with strength and energy to develop their abilities and gifts. Health to study and prepare for a better future. We give you thanks Lord for the work, which allows us to meet the needs for their shelter, food, clothing and education that they have. And above all Lord, thank you for allowing us to enjoy their smiles and antics. Permit us to always show the love we have for them. In the name of your Son Jesus, who also became a child. Amen.

A CHILD PRAYS FOR VOCATIONS

Hello Jesus, my friend:
I know that you love me very much and,
even if I do not see you,
i know that you do see me and call me.

I want to tell you one thing,
which is very important for me:
I know there are children without toys.
I know that there are poor
and abandoned children.
I know there are children
who have nothing to eat.
I know there are some older ones
who have not yet learned to love.

I want to help you and that you help me
to make everyone a little bit happier;
'll give my toys, if I have to.

I want to help you and
I'll search those who are alone,
so they'll be my friends too,
our friends.

I ask you for all the priests,
religious men or women, missionary men or women
who are taking care of children
all over the whole world
announcing your name.

That there may be more brave people
that give up their lives for you.

I want to help you and I want you to
help me to study a lot,
so that when I am older I can
help many,
being, - why not? - priest?
religious man or woman, missionary man or
missionary woman?
a good Christian father or mother?

My hands are small
and every now and then I catch a cold,
I am a little thing, but I'm worth a lot to you.

I hope you listen to me,
maybe it'll cost me to be generous
but I know you'll help me.

I am decided, with your help and
that of your mom, Maria, I'm going to try.
your friend... Amen.

THURSDAY

PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

Our prayer this day is addressed to you, Lord, for those men You have consecrated, priests, ministers of your altar on earth; through them you continue to make yourself present among us, especially in the Eucharist. Men like us, have decided to achieve holiness by consecrating their lives to you and your Church. May our prayer for them in this Eucharist strengthen and encourage them on the path of surrender that they have begun.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Spirit of the Lord is upon to me, for He anointed me, He sent me to give good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart (Lk 4:18.19).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, who constituted your Only Begotten,
High and Eternal Priest,
bestow upon those whom He has chosen for ministers
and dispensers of your mysteries,
the grace to be faithful
in the fulfillment of the ministry received.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Is. 61, 1-3a *The Lord has anointed me and sent me to evangelize.*

PSALM: Ps 109, 1-4 (R:4) *You are an eternal priest, according to the rite of Melchizedek*

GOSPEL: Jn 17,6.14-19 *For them I consecrate myself, so that they too may consecrate themselves.*

PRAYERS

Let us pray, brethren, to Almighty and Eternal God, who with His Spirit sanctifies and governs the body of the Church.

Listen, Lord, our prayer.

1. For the Church, community of believers in Jesus, so that there may be no shortage of priests who continue to proclaim the Good News in the world and celebrate salvation with their brethren, men, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For the Pope, bishops and priests, so that they may know that the existence of men is especially illuminated by their lives and be indicators of right paths for men, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For the priests and consecrated persons, that they may proclaim with enthusiasm the gospel of Jesus in the world, let us pray to the Lord.
4. So that the pastors of the Church and other consecrated persons live their vocation with joy, fidelity and perseverance, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For our great Augustinian Recollect family, who gathers today for this vocational prayer; so that the spirit of St. Augustine is always alive in us and we all become one soul and one heart directed toward God, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, you have wanted to call our brothers so that, by faithfully following you, you make yourself present in them through the joyful experience of living their vocation; listen to the prayer of your servants, who today also ask you the grace to be your witnesses, by example of your love, in the midst of the world. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

You wanted, O God, that your priests
be ministers of the altar and of the people,
propitiously grant, for the efficacy of this sacrifice,
that their service be always pleasing to you
and bear fruit that always remain in your Church.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Holy Father, sanctify them in the truth; your word is the truth. Just as You sent me into the world, so I also send them into the world, - says the Lord (Jn 17:17-18).

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the divine sacrifice
that we have offered and received, Lord,
enliven your priests and your faithful,
so that united to you with constant charity
we can always worthily serve you.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THANKSGIVING

We thank you, Lord, for the Eucharist we have celebrated is a sign of unity and a bond of charity. You have stayed with us forever in this admirable sacrament and, through your priests, feed us every day with your Body and Blood, may they remain for us, pastors who guide us on the path of holiness, until the final encounter with you.

A PRIEST PRAYS FOR HIS VOCATION

Lord, you have called me to the priestly ministry
at a specific moment in history when,
as in the early apostolic times, you
want all Christians,
and especially priests,
be witnesses to the wonders of God
and the strength of your Spirit.
Make me also witness to the dignity of human life,
of the greatness of love
and the power of the ministry received:
All this with my peculiar lifestyle dedicated to You
for love, only for love and for a greater love.
Make my celibate life
be the affirmation of a yes, joyful and cheerful,
born of surrender to You
and total dedication to others
in the service of your Church.
Give me strength in my weaknesses
and also appreciate my victories.
Mother, who said the greatest and most wonderful yes
of all time,
let me know how to turn my daily life
into a source of generosity and dedication,
and together with You,
at the foot of the great crosses of the world,
associate me with the redeeming pain of the death of your Son
to enjoy with Him the triumph of the resurrection
for eternal life. Amen.

FRIDAY

PRAYER FOR THE SEMINARIANS OF THE ORDER

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

Brethren, we gather around the Eucharistic table this day to pray to the Lord for the young people who prepare themselves in the formation houses of our Order. They have generously responded to your invitation to leave everything and follow your path, but they need our prayer. We present them in this Eucharist and ask you to grant them the grace of discernment and perseverance in this holy purpose.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Pray to the Lord of harvest to send workers to his harvest, says Jesus to his disciples (Mt 9, 38).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, who wanted to provide pastors to your people,
pour upon your Church
the spirit of piety and strength
that raises worthy ministers of your altar and make them brave
and humble witnesses of your Gospel.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Je 1. 4-9 *wherever I send you, you will go*

PSALM: Ps 15, 1-2a and 5, 7-8.11 R *You are, Lord, my inheritance.*

GOSPEL: Mk 1, 14-20 *I will make you fishers of men.*

PRAYERS

We bless you, Lord, for the priests, for the vocations and for the young people who prepare themselves in the formation houses, and in giving thanks for them, we ask you to listen to the pleas that we now present to you:

Receive, O God, the prayer of your people

1. For the Holy Church of God, in need of Pastors, that many may be called to the service of God and of men, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For bishops, priests and religious, that they may be authentic testimonies and example of life for many young people who feel called by Christ to a more radical experience of the gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For seminarians and their formators, that they may be docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to them through the teaching of the Church and the signs of the times, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all the seminarians of the Order, so that, open to the light of the Word of Jesus, they may prepare to be servants of the people who await their message and testimony, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For all those called to the Augustinian Recollect life; That they may find in us the necessary encouragement, example, and testimony of life, let us pray to the Lord.

Listen, Good Father, what we have now asked of you, and make, in example of your Son Jesus Christ, young people who are able to risk their lives for all, following Him, who lives and reigns for forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Accept kindly, Lord,
the prayers and offerings of your people,
so that the number of dispensers of your mysteries may increase
and that they will always persevere in your love.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

By this we know the love of God; that He gave his life for us. We too must give our lives for our brethren (1Jn 3:16).

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished with the bread of the heavenly table,
we ask you, Lord,
that by this sacrament of charity,
the seeds which you abundantly sow in the field of your Church may mature,
in a way that every time, the numbers of those who choose the path to serve you
may increase among the brethren.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THANKSGIVING

Once again, Lord, we thank you for continuing to touch the hearts of brave young people willing to leave everything and follow you; this is how you provide your Church with the pastors it needs to proclaim your kingdom of salvation and eternal life throughout the world. May your Body and Blood be the food that strengthens the vocation of those who prepare in the formation houses of our Order.

A SEMINARIAN PRAYS FOR HIS VOCATION

Lord, one day you touched the doors of my heart inviting me to follow you more closely and I, trembling with fear, responded to you: *"Here I am"*. Today, as the years go by and my vocational journey goes towards a full configuration with you, make me radiate your love to my brethren and thus spread your message of love among all. That from the smallness of my life I can bravely assume the challenges and adventures that you send me every day. Grant me the grace to live in continuous communion with you from the daily study of your Word and the contemplation of your mysteries; may it be a reflection of a man in love with spiritual beauty and to love with passion our life in common, contributing in it all that you have given me, so that together with my brethren, I can direct my heart towards you. Amen.

MOTHER OF CONSOLATION

Mother of Consolation, the beauty of our Augustinian recollection, teach me to love Jesus as you love Him; teach me to offer like you, my generous and sincere yes to the One who one day, has called me to follow Him. To you, O Mother! The first consecrated, I entrust my vocation to be able to live it with passion together with my brothers of the community. As you make us your youngest children so we need your tenderness and motherly love. Our Mother, help us to give ourselves completely to God, our Lord.

SATURDAY PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

On this Saturday, dedicated to honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary and with her, to her husband St. Joseph; we raise our prayers in this Eucharist, for all marriages. This particular vocation of God to form a home, with the grace and holiness of the Sacrament, inspire all families to be “domestic churches”, where the vocation to Christian, Religious and priestly life is cultivated and where the path to holiness is built from the values of the Kingdom of God. With joy and happiness, we begin this celebration and present on the altar of the Lord each of our homes, of our families.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Honor your Father and your mother, for it is the first commandment with a promise: you will do well and live long on earth (Eph. 6:2-3).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, in whose disposition
the family has its firm foundation,
compassionately accept the prayers of your servants,
and make that, following the examples of domestic virtues
of the Holy Family of your Only Begotten
and the submission of your charity,
we can enjoy eternal rewards
in the joy of your home.
Through our Lord, your Son.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Col 3: 12-21 *Review feelings of deep compassion.*

PSALM: Psalm 127, 1-5 (R:1) *Blessed are those who fear the Lord and follow His ways.*

GOSPEL: Lk 2:41-52 *Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and grace before God and men.*

PRAYERS

Let us pray, brethren, to God the Almighty Father, from whom the whole family takes its name in heaven and on earth, and ask him to listen to the prayer of his Church, for all Christian homes:

Through the intercession of the Family of Nazareth, listen to us, Lord.

1. That the Lord preserve in unity and fidelity those whom He has united in marriage, and that their testimony of life and dedication may be the seed of vocations to the Christian and religious life, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For Christian families, that through an example of life according to the gospel, may fortify the faith of their children and encourage in them the desire to imitate Christ with fidelity, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For all homes on earth, for all spouses, parents and children, for the elderly and orphans, for families who have no shelter or lack the necessary resources, and for spouses who live apart, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For Christian families, so that they may be homes where future vocations for the service of the Church may be born, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For Christian parents, so that they may become aware of their responsibility in the Christian community and consider their children's vocation as a "gift" of God, let us pray to the Lord.

We ask you Lord to continue to favour and enrich your Church with the gifts of your vocations. We ask that many will listen and respond generously to your call to marriage, so that the Church may rejoice every day with the birth of new children in the faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

We offer you, Lord, this sacrifice of reconciliation
and we humbly ask you
that you comfort our families
in your peace and in your grace.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Can a mother forget about her child? Well even if she forgets, I will not forget you, - says the Lord (Is. 49,15).

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Most merciful father,
who renew us with these heavenly sacraments,
grant us to faithfully imitate
the examples of the Holy Family of your Only Begotten,
so that after the trials of this life,
we can enjoy your company in eternity.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THANKSGIVING

We thank you, Lord Jesus, because by being born in a family you sanctified the Christian home and the love of the spouses; May this Eucharist which we have received, inexhaustible source of your love, serve us as a nourishment and keep together each of the couples who were consecrated by the Sacrament of Marriage, in the faithfulness and trust that come from you. May their vocation as spouses and parents, be a response to the love with which you always love us.

A MOTHER PRAYS FOR VOCATIONS

Lord, I ask you for the vocations of my children,
whatever you have determined
for each one of them,
may they obtain the grace to discover it
and accept it according to your will,
and give themselves obediently and generously to Him,
faithfully fulfilling the duties
that you impose. Amen.

SUNDAY CLOSING MASS

PRELIMINARY EXHORTATION

Throughout this week, we have reflected on each of the vocations that come from God, and have prayed for all the brothers and sisters who have responded to the Lord's call to them, to be holy in the specificity of each of the vocations. In this Eucharist we thank the Lord for the infinite love with which he loves us, and we ask him to continue touching the heart of every Christian, to be able to discover, with the action of the Holy Spirit, the call that God makes and know how to respond generously to this invitation. With the joy that comes from the encounter with Christ, let us begin this celebration.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

There is diversity of gifts, but the same Spirit; there is diversity of services, but the same Lord; and there is diversity of functions, but the same God who works everything in everyone (1Cor 12:4-6).

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

O God, you taught the ministers of your Church to serve the brethren and not be served, we ask you to grant them, availability for action, humility in service and perseverance in prayer. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Is. 6.1-2a. 3-8 *Here I am, send me.*

PSALM: Ps 95,1-2a. 2b-3.10 R *Go and make disciples of all nations.*

SECOND READING: 1Cor. 9,16-19.22-23 *Woe to me, if I do not proclaim the Gospel!*

GOSPEL: Lk 10: 1-9 *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers few.*

PRAYERS

At the conclusion of this week of prayer for the distinct vocations in the Church, let us address to God our prayers, with the confidence that we will be heard:

Listen, Lord, to the prayer of your Church.

1. For the Pope, bishops, priests, deacons and those who have pastoral commission in the Church, so that their testimonies may make new vocations to the priesthood, let us pray to the Lord.
2. So that the hopeful testimony of today's priests and religious help grow vocations of tomorrow's consecrated and priestly life, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For the young, that they may be generous in following Jesus Christ and, if God calls them, be courageous and have their lives ready for their service in the ministerial priesthood and for the evangelizing service in our Christian community and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our families, that by renewing their Christian life, they may offer their children the opportunity to consider and choose the priestly vocation, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the rulers, that they seek in their service to society the common good and promote justice and peace, progress, and always respect freedoms and, among them, the religious freedom, let us pray to the Lord.
6. For those who do not have work and for those who can give them, so that, we may increasingly share in the society and in the Christian community, the spiritual and material goods, let us pray to the Lord.
7. So that each of us may take seriously the responsibility to promote new religious and priestly vocations, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, grant your Church the grace of new vocations to consecrated life and priestly ministry; may our pastors hopefully live their dedication and service to humanity and, through the holiness of their life, show us the path of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

God, Holy Father,
your son wished to wash the disciples' feet
to give us an example;
receive the gifts we present to you
and make that, by offering as a spiritual oblation,
fill ourselves with a spirit of humility and zeal.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Blessed are the servants whom the Lord, when he arrives, finds them awake:
he will make them sit at the table and serve them (Lk 12:37).*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, Lord, to your servants,
nourished by this Eucharist,
to seek your glory and the salvation of your children,
always being faithful ministers of the Gospel,
of the sacraments and of charity.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THANKSGIVING

Once again, thank you Lord. At the end of this eucharist, we raise our voice as a song of gratitude to you, from whom everything comes; for you call us all to be happy in a specific vocation. Grant us the grace, Father, to respond generously to the vocation you give to each of us. To those who have already discovered their vocation and walk in it, grant them fidelity to persevere to the end; to those who are beginning to discover it, grant them the gift of discernment to know how to interpret in it your holy will and their personal fulfilment, and to those who have not yet discovered in their lives the call you make, availability in their heart to listen to your Word and know how to follow your path. With Mary, Mother and Lady of every vocation, we praise and proclaim your greatness.

PRAYER FOR THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLECT FAMILY

In this new era of history,
in which the Gospel forces to seize
in the troubled heart of humanity,
we ask you, O Lord, may it not be lacking among men,
the gift of faith that enlightens and encourages tier lives.

Our trust in you is sometimes timid,
and go against the current as we try to paddle out to sea tires us inside,
and we can turn our gaze with interest
before the easy and comfortable seductive offer;
but this blackmail of temptation freezes our soul.

Absorb, Lord, our coward heart,
just as you expanded the brave spirit
of the Augustinian saints and Augustinian Recollects,
so that we your Recollect children respond with valor
when it comes to living the Gospel in the vicissitudes of history.

Make, Lord, that the Augustinian Recollect family
shine with a glow of devotion,
blow warm encouragement in the embers of our hearts,
to be burning in love with You and the brethren,
and be credible witnesses of your living presence in the midst of humanity
and come to express it with gestures of compassion, service, and surrender.

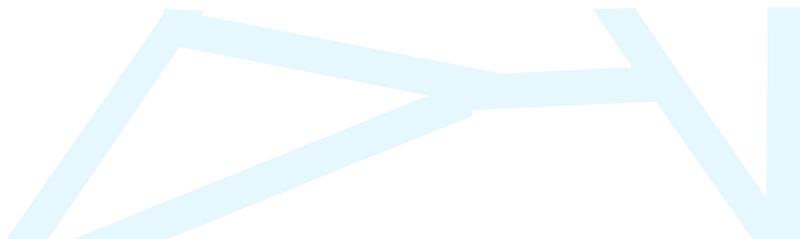
Renewed airs arrive, Lord, to our family,
and may it grow and multiply in your Church
among those baptized who, inspired by St Augustine,
may manifest the light of Christ in the world;
May it ablaze, Lord, with strength, the retreat!

O Spirit of Love,
grant to the Augustinian Recollect family
the cherished gift of joy, innerness, and conversion
to be meaningful communities in your Church,
bold pedagogues of encounter with you in prayer,
passionate searchers of your living Presence in the Word and events,
builders of solid relationships and of a dialogue always possible,
available servants of others, especially of the poor. Amen.



LECTIO DIVINA

"Dialogue, pursuit, culture"



A PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lord, we praise you and bless you for the time you have given us to listen to your Word. We rarely know how to listen, be silent, and speak. We are aware that prayer is a dialogue with That which speaks to us in our hearts. Lord, give us your Holy Spirit, which speaks and prays in us. Oh, Holy Spirit, you the fountain of light and life, open our eyes and hearts. Light up our minds and help us receive your life-giving Word as true disciples of Jesus. Inspire a spirit of openness and generosity in us, so that through our dialogue with you, our inner teacher, we could know and love Jesus and testify among those with whom we share the life and beauty of the Gospel.

Holy Spirit, you have taught us that faith is born in the hearts of those in whom the Word and your loving presence exists. We feel weak and fragile and are often assaulted by fear of being unable to continue following Jesus Christ's footsteps in the road of accompaniment. Enlighten us with the Word. We wish to internalize it and experience it in our daily lives. Do not make us harden our hearts when we hear your call. Push us softly to search for Jesus and to hear the echo of his voice as it tells our hearts, "What do you seek?" Then, and only then, will there be a dialogue between friends.

BIBLICAL TEXT

Calling forth the first disciples (Jn 1,35-42)

"The next day, John was back there with two of his disciples. As he saw Jesus pass by, he said, 'Here is the Lamb of God'. The two disciples heard him and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and, seeing them following him, said to them, 'What do you seek?' 'Rabbi (which means "teacher"). They answered, 'where do you live?' 'Come and see,' he responded. And so, they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day. It was more or less the tenth hour.

"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who had heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his brother, Simon, and said to him, 'We found the Messiah (which means "Christ").' He then took him to Jesus. When Jesus looked at him, he said, 'You are Simon, son of John. You will be called "Cephas" ("Stone").'"

a) Lectio

The Baptist's faithfully-given testimony about Jesus being the Messiah when he first appeared before the people of Israel (1, 19-34), led to some of the Precursor's disciples to now follow Jesus. It began the discovery of the mystery of Jesus, establishing personal contact with him and confessing one's faith in the Son and God. In a few verses, we hear the double story of vocation with three elements repeating in each one. First, a qualified witness testifies about their faith in Jesus (The Baptist before his disciples (v. 36) and Andrew to Simon (v. 41)). Then, there is the encounter where the future disciple had a personal experience with Christ (vv. 39 and 42). And finally, the newly-called pronounces his confession of faith (v. 41).

In the beginning, we have the Baptist as the qualified mediator between the one seeking clear answers and the Messiah's fascinating response. Jesus enters the world and story like any man, coming to listen to the Baptist while lost in the crowd. However, some are sharp enough to recognize, identify, and point him out as the Christ, just as what the Baptist did. *"This is the Lamb of God"* (v. 36). Nowhere in the biblical text does it show where this happened, where Jesus came from, and where he was going. It does not even say why he was there. To John the Evangelist, *it was already the Church's time*. Christ sojourns through our world and humanity, wherever and however he wants... Who could recognize him? And who could point him out as the Father's envoy?

The Baptist's words upset two of his disciples, who start following the Messiah. The word "accompaniment" means to become a disciple, to follow the teacher... However, why do they really follow him? They do not know and will have to discover it when they meet him. And Jesus is transparent. He turns his loving, penetrating gaze and asks them, "What do you seek?" The disciples are invited to respond freely, mainly to clarify to themselves on what they truly seek in life. This question shows the conversion process needed to take place in deepest motivations of the heart in Christ's accompaniment. Each disciple has to clear up the last sense of his internal path and feel the fundamental need to get ahead of the Lord, to whom he commits his whole life.

The disciples respond with another question, "Teacher, where are you going?" That is, "Where can we meet and experience you?" In other words, they wish to attend the Teacher's school to personally learn from him a lifestyle that gives their life meaning. And Jesus does not hesitate to answer, "Come and see". That is, "Give yourselves a chance to engage and speak with me." Coming to Jesus and seeing where he lives to stay with him,

show an invitation to have a direct and personal experience with him. They describe the itinerary of faith that Jesus' disciple must follow all the time. Lastly, the disciples who now follow Jesus, not out of following someone else's instructions but because they are fascinated with his personal experience, then turn into witnesses of this lifechanging encounter.

b) Meditatio

Anyone who comes across this story is surprised, from the beginning, by the mystery of the personhood of Jesus, and his great humanity, which fulfills and satisfies man's fundamental aspirations. Therefore, the first impression one gets from reading this Gospel text is the need to look for who Jesus is in their own life, and to recognize him in the testimonies of those who called themselves his disciples. It is important to realize that Jesus, like any man, could be met through engagements and relationships others—disciples—have established with him. Penetrating the mystery of Christ involves observing the world around us and discovering the manner in which he himself speaks to us, especially through others.

Jesus, who comes from the Father and lives in the Father, calls each and every one of us personally, just as he did with his first disciples. He passes through the real life stories of every human being. And he especially did it from the testimonies of those who recognize and announce him.

The following questions can help you in your meditation:

Who has been the "John the Baptist" or "Andrew" in my life?

Which character in the text do you identify with the most, Andrew, Peter, John the Baptist...?

Always be brave enough to listen to Jesus' question to his disciples: "What do you seek?" "What is the meaning and horizon of your life?"

Ask yourself in what stage are you in your itinerary in accompanying Christ:

"Where you listen to 'some' Baptist's testimony?"

"Where you follow the Teacher in search for answers?"

"Where you accept the invitation to go with him and spend time together?"

"Where you have a direct, intimate experience with Jesus?"

"Where you are on a mission, that is, acting as a messenger for Christ to others with your own life testimony?"

c) Oratio

I cannot be silent...

I cannot be silent.
Do not ask me to be silent!
I would not be able to be silent...
I testify: your forgiveness and love, oh Lord,
have burned me like a flame in the heart,
and I must always tell everyone about it,
even though they may not believe me;
even though they may not believe me...
It is true. We can have much of everything,
but we will always be poor in love,
perhaps because we think too much of ourselves.
And so, I shall say that you are the wealth of and for all,
and that you are simply thus: generosity and overabundance.
I shall proclaim that your love depends not on us,
that you love us equally, even if we do return it.
I will even dare say that
among the most sinful,
you love us the most,
because you know
that it is when we need you the most.
You are the voice that always calls at every door,
with your own precise, unmistakable name.
And you give yourself
and wait for the right time,
enduring our fragile response.
You do not force people's rhythms.
You tire not, but neither do you tire of luring us,
for your love renews each day.
Your loving nature
breaks your heart
when we do not seek you.
For that, I shall shout with all my strength
that it is enough for me to look at you with childlike eyes,
to see you when you love the most,
in the poor, the hungry, and the needy,
To recover my condition and dignity
as a child, brethren, and someone blessed.

Lord, warm up my heart,
with the spark of your divine love,
and let me not tire of
lighting that fire in others.
Amen.

d) *Contemplatio*

Lord, when I am with you, alone and face to face, I feel you present deep in my heart and experience your warm existence. I close my eyes and feel your gaze..., and there you are, enough for me to sense in faith, that your nearby presence makes my heart beat once more strongly and excitingly. I have been cared by you mercifully. Why, my God, why...? I know not why. All I can just say is thank you for loving me.

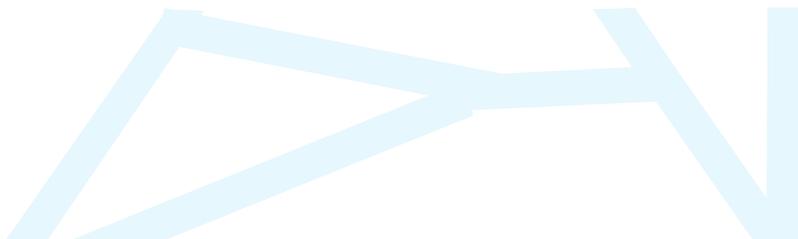
You love me, Lord. I can sense it without a doubt in my heart. What would I be without you?

Today, that question resonates in me once more, at the banks of the lake of my life, with your penetrating gaze full of tenderness: "What do you seek?" And once again, my answer is, "Where do you live? Where can I find you?" Your answer, Lord, is "*Come and see*".



VOCATIONAL HOLY HOUR

"The pursuit and encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist"



VOCATIONAL HOLY HOUR

"The pursuit and encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist"

A SONG FOR THE EXPOSURE TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT

ACCEPTANCE

MODERATOR - One of the most well-known aspects of St. Augustine's life is his tireless pursuit for The Truth. This is how it had been almost since he had first gained use of reason, but especially since his adolescence. He finally found the Truth that he longed for. It was God.

SONG (I CAME TO LOVE YOU LATE)

MODERATOR - Augustine finally found the path that led him out of the forest of countless doubts without finding a solution and having to take so many failed attempts. He searched and found the light suitable to rid himself of so much banality. For him, the Word of God was both the light and the way. Like St. Augustine, let us seek the Lord.

MODERATOR - Let us listen attentively to the Lord, who speaks in our hearts:
Jn 1, 35-42.

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION - All enjoy a moment of silence.

READER 1 - Like those Greek pilgrims who arrived in Jerusalem and told Philip that they wanted to see Jesus, the men and women of our time ask today's Christians, to not only tell them about Jesus, but also to show him to them in some way. Give us, Lord, the grace of appearing in the world through brotherly dialogue.

SONG

READER 2 - Jesus is the Word that existed from the beginning, a creative and invigorating Word. This life was the light of men: "That true light that shines on every man, came to this world" (Jn 1,9). And the Word became man, just so we could observe and touch him (cf. Jn 1.14) and we shall share his plenitude (cf. Jn 1, 4.16). May your presence, Lord, shine on all nations and cultures.

SONG

READER 3 - Through the Incarnation, the Apostles stared in the face of the Son of God and in him, the face of the Father – "Whoever sees me, sees the Father" (Jn 14, 9b). John testifies of this experience when he tells us, "What we have seen and heard, we also proclaim to you, so that you will also be in communion with us" (1 Jn 1, 13). Give us the grace, Lord, to search and find you, to find and observe you.

ALL - We want to see your face, Lord. Oh, Mary, teach us how to see Jesus.

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION - All enjoy a moment of silence.

READER 1 - Jesus is here. He is truly present in the Eucharist, the light of his face shining upon us (SI 67.2). As both God and man, he also reveals to us the true face of man, as well as revealing to man his own self.

READER 2 - The search for the Lord is present in the hearts of every human being, but especially in those who, have been touched by God through faith. This desire to observe the face of God is not in vain, for God did not leave. He just fulfilled his promise.: "And remember! I am with you every day until the end of the world" (Mt 28,20).

MODERATOR - "...because this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father who is in heaven" (cf. Mt 16,17). Observing the eucharistic face of Jesus, we want to answer his question "Whom do you seek?" with our own lives, our own desire to follow him, with a response that is vocational, free, aware, and generously given, as did the first disciples.

ALL - Lord, we seek your face. Show us your face, Lord.

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION - All enjoy a moment of silence.

READER 1 - The face that the Apostles saw after the Resurrection was the face of the Jesus with whom they had lived for three years, and who was now giving evidence of the shocking truth of his new life, showing them his hands and side.

READER 2 - It certainly was not easy to believe. The disciples of Emaus only believed Jesus after he walked and shared bread with them. (cf. Lc 24,13-35). The apostle, Thomas, only believed after being asked to touch the Resurrected (cf. Jn 20, 24-29).

READER 3 - And yet, it is not enough to believe by sight or touch. Faith alone can unveil the mystery. This was the experience that the disciples already had in Christ's mortal life, clarified daily by his miracles and words.

ALL - I know that Jesus is truly reached through faith. Oh, Mary, teach us how to see Jesus.

SONG

READER 1 - Jesus can only truly be reached through faith, along a path on which we are guided by the Gospel in the famous scene in Caesarea Philippi. Peter proclaims, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God". And Jesus responds, saying, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh or blood, but by my Father who is in heaven." (Mt16, 16-17).

READER 2 - Peter was able to affirm his faith in Jesus. – "To whom shall we give glory, Lord? You have the words of eternal life!" (Jn 6,64) – for it came not through human manner, but he received that grace of God. Thus, it is not through the senses that we truly perceive Jesus and are close to him.

READER 3 - Now more than ever, it is important to point out that only the experience of silence and prayer offers the right environment for the growth and development of a more authentic, faithful, and coherent awareness of the mystery of the search – an encounter.

ALL - I believe, Lord, but increase my faith. Oh, Mary, teach us how to see Jesus.

SONG

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION - All enjoy a moment of silence.

PETITIONS

Jesus, Word of God, *give us faith.*

Jesus, Son of God, *give us faith.*

Jesus, Son of Mary, *give us faith.*

Jesu, Overcomer of death, *give us faith.*

Jesus, Overcomer of sin, *give us faith.*

Jesus, Glorious Lord, *give us faith.*

Jesus, Healer of the sick, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Friend of the oppressed, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Teacher of wisdom, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Herald of the Kingdom of God, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Worker of miracles, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Fountain of peace, *give us hope.*

Jesus, Lamb of God, *give us love.*

Bread of life, *give us love.*

Bread of heaven, *give us love.*

Bread of true liberty, *give us love.*

Bread of liberation, *give us love.*

Bread of reconciliation, *give us love.*

Flesh for the life of the world, *give us love.*

Wine of salvation, *give us love.*

Wine of joy, *give us love.*

Wine of forgiveness, *give us love.*

The true drink of God the Spirit, *give us love.*

Lord of our future, *give us love.*

Granter of immortality, *give us love.*

PRAYER

LEADER - Jesus, Lord and Savior, the nourishment and center of our lives, let us participate joyfully in the table of your Word and Sacrament, and show us how to understand all of human reality under the light of the Eucharist. Oh, Jesus, the living sacrifice of praise, wash us with your blood of redemption. Oh, victim of human reconciliation with God, let us live in peace with one another. Jesus, Bread of Life, Wine of Salvation, transform us all into your Body. Inspire us to be in communion with your Church "in spirit and truth". Amen.

SONG

ALL - Oh, Father, let rise the many, holy vocations to the priesthood among Christians, to keep the faith alive and preserve our cherished memory of your son, Jesus, while preaching his words and administering the sacraments with the additions you add to them. Give us holy ministers of your altar, attentive and fervent guardians of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the supreme gift of Christ for the redemption of the world. Call the ministers of your mercy so that, through the sacrament of Reconciliation, they may spread the joy of your forgiveness. Oh Father, let the Church gleefully receive the multiple inspirations of the Spirit of your Son and, docile in its lessons, manage vocations to the ministry of the priesthood and to consecrated life. Let the Church help the bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated, and everyone baptized in Christ to faithfully fulfill their mission in service to the Gospel. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen. Mary, Queen of the Apostles, pray for us.

A BLESSING WITH THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT

SONG

V. You gave them bread from heaven.

R. May it be full of delight.

LET US PRAY

LEADER: -

Oh God, who left us the memorial of your passion in this admirable sacrament; we ask you to let us venerate, in such a way, the sacred mysteries of your body and blood, and to let us constantly experience the fruit of your redemption in ourselves. You, who lives and reigns through centuries and centuries. Amen.

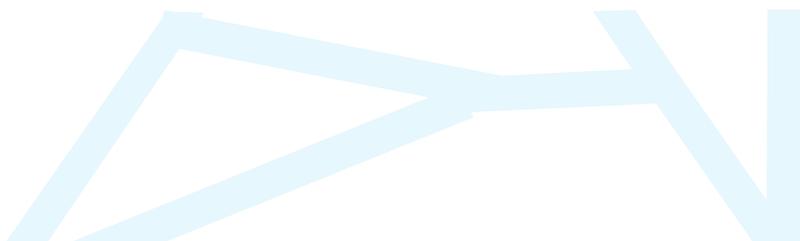
ACT OF PRAISE

- Blessed be God.
- Blessed be his holy name.
- Blessed be Jesus Christ, the true God and true man.
- Blessed be Jesus' name.
- Blessed be his Most Sacred Heart.
- Blessed be His Most Precious Blood
- Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar
- Blessed be the consoling Holy Spirit.
- Blessed be the Great Mother of God, Most Holy Mary.
- Blessed be her Sacred and Immaculate Conception.
- Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
- Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.
- Blessed be God, in his angels and saints.

FINAL SONG



AUGUSTINIAN CATHECHISM ON THE PURSUIT



Let's seek the Truth together

Saint Augustine



AUGUSTINIAN CATHECHISM ON THE PURSUIT¹

I. THE AUGUSTINIAN EXPERIENCE

“One must strive in search of the truth so that finding it may lead to greater satisfaction. And one must struggle to enjoy it to keep finding it again with new zeal.”

(San Agustín, *De Trin.* 15,2,2).

One of the most well-known aspects of Augustine’s life is his tireless search for the Truth, almost from when he first gained use of reason, but especially since his adolescence.

When he finally found it, it turned out that the Truth that he had been searching for, for so long, was God. However, this was only after he went on a long tenacious journey spanning 15 years, full of obstacles and mistakes, as well as small discoveries that caused him to keep asking, always anxious and unsatisfied with himself.

He had everything

What was Augustine missing? Nothing. Nothing of human value. He had a family that loved him very much. He was able to study at a time and place where it was only a privilege to a select few. He had a group of friends that he was very fond of, with whom he got in some little mischief, but also, enjoyed very pleasant moments. He was able to work in a profession that was his own and which he loved. He was and felt admired by the many who knew him. He enjoyed the loving affections of a wife and son. He was also endowed with a keen, brilliant intellect. He was not rich, that is true, but he did not need to be. He had an entire life ahead that seem peaceful and secure.

So, why was he so anxious and restless? What was missing? How did he feel inside or what was feeding his anxiety and unease? Even he did not know.

What he was missing was God, even though at that moment, he did not know. He would only realize it later when he was fortunate enough to find him. And “the Truth is you”, as he would realize one day (*Conf.* 4, 9,14).

¹ BAZTÁN B. Teodoro, *Búsqueda y Encuentro. Apuntes para una espiritualidad laical agustiniana.*, Editorial AVGVSTINVS, Madrid, 2000, 55-65.

Emptiness inside

"I was disgusted with safety and got bored with the trapped-filled road. Inside, I felt a hunger from being away from a kind of internal nourishment: You, my God." (Conf. 3,1,1).

He was living a safe life, and the path that he was taking at that time was calm without any setbacks or obstacles. Any other Young man like him would have been content with that, but not he. He was disgusted and bored with it. A great void was burning him inside. He had everything, yet he still hungered.

He then, added, *"However, despite this hunger, I was not in a mood to eat."* He was hungry. At that moment, that hunger was just a feeling of emptiness and an unsatisfied craving. It was only a need for great nourishment. So much so that it was the first step he needed to take to aspire for the noblest step, which could only be filled with all the deepest aspirations of man.

You know that conformity is always paralyzing and impoverishing. The beast needs three things to be satisfied: shelter to stay in, food to fill his stomach, and a mate to procreate with. It aspires for nothing else because it needs nothing else.

I repeat to you that any other young man would have thrown the towel, but not Augustine. He was born from another mold. In his opinion, there had to be something that transcended the limits of family, something fundamental about all humanity, something beyond or further within – not even he knew – all human reality, that sustained it and gave it meaning.

He knew that things did not exist just by themselves or without reason, same with man. There had to be a reason to so many unanswered questions. Yet, most of all, there had to be something that satisfied man's most vital needs, that calmed their most intimate anxieties and uncontrollable desires; something or someone that was its rest and plenitude. The Truth.

He looked around him and did not find anything. He asked, and the responses he received were vain and deceitful. He sighed in futility. He enjoyed moments of pleasure, but was never happy.

The beginning of the pursuit

From that point, his appetitive for the Truth became excruciating, growing at a geometric rate, to put it explicitly. And he was searching for it, not only because he needed to find what, according to him, he was missing, but most especially because he loved. It was evident and demanding. According to Fr. Capánaga, one of the best Augustinologists in recent years, in Augustine “the pursuit did not end because it did not have love”.

Augustine’s search was not that of a philosopher: intellectual and cold, speculative and curious, rational and theoretical. It was that of a man who wished to know his roots, his “reason and purpose for being”, the cause for the evil that is human limitations. He wanted to love and be loved, to be completely at rest by finding the complete Truth—that is, God, whom he sighted, whom he longed for, but did not know.

“Lord, you have made us for you, and our hearts will remain restless until they rest in you” (Conf. I, 1,1). As you can see, the issue comes not so much from the mind but from the heart. In other words, it is rooted in the most intimate and sensitive fibers of man, in his vital being, where his sentiments dwelled, and where his noblest aspirations grow, spread, and are set.

Yet, as the heart needs to be completed, when one does not find what can complete it, they may sometimes find happiness and solace with whatever lies in their path, in moments of meager, and almost always frustrating, pleasure.

“Time does not take vacation, nor do days pass over our senses without no action... Gradually, my emptiness was being filled by my old pleasures” (Conf. IV, 8,13). Yet, he did not find a place to rest here, for *“my sorrow was folding into itself upon their return” (Conf. IV, 4, 7).*

He sought to love and be loved by friends. I do not know if there has ever been a saint, a man of the Church, or a simple believer, who has been shown to have valued friendship as much or has enjoyed it as intensely and faithfully. And yet, he was not yet at peace here. “With them, I loved what I loved in your place: a colossal myth and an endless lie” (ib).

He, himself, would later recognize that “friendship is inauthentic if you, Lord, do not make yourself adhesive among those joined to you out of love spilled onto our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has given itself to us” (Conf. IV,4,7).

To the source

Once more, he lacked God. Every frustration led him to continue searching harder. Every obstacle was a whip that spurred him on and pushed him towards higher, more difficult goals. He never backed down in his efforts. Why was he not content with what he had, with the pleasures of life, both small and great, that he had, even though it was the wrong path for him to take? This question was not included in his wealth of unease.

In his Confessions, Augustine stops referring to God for a moment and, speaking from his experiences, issues "a warning for navigators". He speaks and says to us, "Sinners, turn your hearts and stick to That which created you. Remain in his company and you will find safety. Rest in him and you will find peace... What interest do you have in wandering through difficult paths and hills? You will not find rest where you seek it... You are pursuing a happy life in the land of death. It is not there. How could there be a happy life in a place where life does not even exist?" (*Conf.* IV 12,18).

This is not the advice of someone who had been a saint since childhood, nor of someone who had converted to Christianity after another religious confession. Neither is it the advice of someone who had entered the priesthood and episcopate after a more or less healthy and sensible youth.

These are the words of someone always thirsting for the best, who had tried the water flowing from every river in his way, and yet was never satisfied, for the sole simple reason that throughout his always relentless search, he never found the source, where the water is pure and good.

There is a point to this allusion to a metaphorical source and its water, since even Jesus used it when he said, "Whoever drinks the water of life that I give, shall never be thirsty, except that the water I gave will turn into a fountain of water that rises for eternal life" (*Jn* 4,14).

Pride stopped him

"I did not know any of this back then," added Augustine. He was lost in a tangled forest with a thousand paths that lead nowhere, unable to know which one led to the exit.

He was not humble enough to recognize that he was reaching light through the road of simplicity; that he had to let go of his arrogance and pride to descend and find at God's tracks in the little details of life, in the face of his fellow brother, suffering in the poverty of style in the Sacred Scripture, in the clean love of the small, and in the generosity of those who truly love. He was not humble.

"I tried to approach you, but felt you refuse me, to relish the taste of death, and, furthermore, because you rejected the arrogant" (Conf. V, 2,2).

Back then, he was about 26 or 27, and he did not realize that the path to the Truth started in himself. He had to tear it out of his heart, and watch from them, with clean eyes with which he could see better. However, he was looking from his mind scattered in thoughts. One only looks at God with the heart. Yet, he, Augustine, was walking farther from himself.

"Where was I when I pursued you? You were certainly right there in front of me, but as I had fled from myself, I was not there. How was I able to find you?" (Conf. V, 2,2).

But God was leading him by the hand imperceptibly, occasionally frightfully, but always safely. And he let himself, or better yet, he barely showed resistance. He was reaching the end of the tunnel. It is not always true that "the seeker finds it", because he could do it incorrectly or halfway only. However, when the object of one's pursuit is God, the road to him comes from the heart and it does not stop despite everything, eventually finding him. "You will pursue and find me when you ask with all your heart. I will let myself be found by you" (Jer. 29,13).

And Augustine put a lot of his heart into his pursuit. It was not just a matter of curiosity or needing to find a way to relax his intellectual concerns. It was also about calming his heart. Here was where God let himself be found.

He continued to ask questions. That is, he continued searching. For example, he was unable to reconcile God's goodness with the existence of evil; the origins of man made by God with his "natural" inclination for sin; a man's desire for happiness with his resulting impotence and frustration; the attraction that God exercised on him with the carnal desire that pushed him to other paths; a beggar's joy with his own anguish and misfortune; and the reality of death with the desire to live forever in the path.

And he continued asking questions, finding signs of the truth along the way, small glimmers of the only Light. He found beauty and goodness in things and in some believers who took him closer to the Good, the origin of all that is good.

For reflection and dialogue

1. What do you aspire for in life? What are you content with? Are you happy with who you are or what you have?
2. Which are your deepest worries or what do you desire most in this life? What are you doing to assuage them or to find what you desire?
3. Are you discouraged easily, or do you still look despite everything?
4. Do you share your worries, needs, and hopes with others like what Augustine did?
5. What is prayer's role in your pursuit? And studying?
6. You say that you have found God, but does he complete you? Have you found the peace you needed or the impulse to continue searching more determinedly in him?

II. HE FINDS SOMETHING BUT CONTINUES SEARCHING

"The search for God is the search for happiness. And the encounter with God is happiness itself" (San Agustín, De mor. Ecc. Cath. 11,18).

His encounter with the Word

However, in the end, he found the path – there were many of them – that would take him out of the forest filled with countless unanswered doubts and failed attempts. He found the right light to lead him out of the many bushes. The Word of God was for him, the light, and the path.

"And so it was, I took, with all my eagerness, the Holy Scriptures of your Spirit, preferring those of the apostle, Paul, and all those problems where I sometimes seemed to find contradictions and incoherence, started vanishing" (Conf. VII,21,27).

He was not only seeking to believe in God, but to rest in him as well. Dios was beyond any doubt. The Augustinian pursuit now took him to other paths. It was no longer about searching for answers, but what to do to meet the newly found Truth. He started walking with his heart—rather than with his mind—frequently content or calm with half-truths or with answers that made no promises.

Because for Augustine, the Truth was also and most especially the fountain of life. And to satiate his thirst in this fountain gushing at the top of the mountain, he needed to throw the excess weight of his instincts and vanities overboard and set off quickly on his journey. "I was sure that it was better to surrender myself to your love than to succumb to my instincts. One was tempting and I was able to overcome it. The other also appealed to me but tied me to it... Both going and arriving there only involved wanting to go, but I needed to want to do it with all my heart, and I could not go with my will partly stagnated nor could I keep on bustling from here to there." (Conf. 8,8,19; 11,25).

He now felt hungry and thirsty, and he already knew where there was an abundance of good water. It was a food source that he could never run out of no matter how much of it he ate, and a water that sprung forever. "Whoever eats this bread shall live forever", said Jesus (Jn 6,51), and "Whoever drinks this water which I gave, will never be thirsty" (Jn 4,13).

So described Augustine in this moment of his life, "I said to myself, 'Quickly! Go forth! Right now!' As soon as I spoke, I set forth to take action. I was about to do it, and yet I did not. I tried again, but was even less successful. My goal was almost within my grasp, and it (The Truth) was almost mine" (*Conf.* 8,11,25).

It had been more than 15 years since he set off on a journey without return, despite the twists and turns, and he was arriving at the end of an era, which he caught sight of nearby. It was almost within his reach.

"Deus Semper maior"

One last push, and... There it was, the finish line. He reached it like a good athlete. And it was there that he bumped into the whole Light, into the Truth without deceit, with the Good and the Beauty, with endless, immeasurable Love. He got in touch with God. Better yet, it was God who reached out to him. They both found each other. And he became happy forever.

Amazingly, however, he continued his quest, never stopping at all. He was tireless and tenacious. If he had already found the Truth that he had longed and suffered so much who, why continue? Let us take gold seekers for example (we might as well use such a low comparison). As soon as they find a nugget, they start looking for more, until mine is emptied. They are insatiable!

Augustine's "Deus Semper Maior" is "The God that is always a bit further beyond". Hence, the road to him may as well be called "restlessness", for the end of each path is the beginning of another, and "seeking to find" always ends in "finding something to seek". This is because at every bend in the road, God pretends to want to meet you, only to have you chasing again.

Like the horizon on a bright day full of light, he is almost in your grasp and you climb to the top of the mountain to catch him. And once you get there, he is so close, but so far. Always close and beautiful, yet always unreachable. That is how God is. He is always at a distance.

Augustine repeated himself while inviting us all along, saying, "Let us search for him to find him, then search for him again." (*In. Jn.* 63,1). And this is exactly what he did for his entire life, until his eventual encounter with God, in the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, and the peace of dusk. (*Conf.* 13,35,50).

In search for his brother

He also searched for man as a way to God and to turn him into a brother and friend; so that together, they may possibly build a community where God was their only source of wealth and heritage; where love was basic law, and where there was no poverty but a communication of goods; and where prayer created community, and where there was unity despite of differences.

And if the other were an enemy, he sought to reconcile with him. If he were poor, he would share what he had with him. If he were a stranger, he would take him up as a brother and a friend. He searches for another because he knows that he is the best way to Christ.

“But you, who do not see God yet, you will become worthy of seeing him by loving your fellow man. You will love him as you clean your eyes to see God... Love your brother and find within you the source of this brotherly love. It is here you will see God in the way that you can.”
(*In. Jn.* 5,7).

It was in the other man that he discovered God's face. He honored God, he says, when he honored his brother. He also searched for a brother because he needed to love and be loved, and to serve. That was how he was, “My heart burns, though not only for myself, as I am eager to serve with brotherly love” (*Conf.* XI 2,3).

Augustine, the eternal seeker. It is a saying. If you prefer, he was an eternal seeker, because he loved endlessly and immeasurably. At least, he tried with all his might.

Inside himself

He was also a seeker within himself. Surprised? In the case of Augustine, you should not be. He was a master at looking inwards, a seeker within himself, an expert on human mysteries, but also of his own greatness.

This was because on one hand, man, according to Augustine, is a bottomless well, an enigma and mystery. On the other hand, and more importantly, he is “God's currency” who carries his image, “a great wonder”, and “absolutely more sublime than the entire world”. All this and other praises.

Nevertheless, says Augustine, “Men go sight-seeing to admire mountain crests, the imposing waves of the sea, the easy and copious course of the rivers, and movements of the stars. And yet, they ignore themselves. They do not look inwards.” (*Conf.* 10,8,15).

He asked himself, "Who are you?" And I answered, 'Man'. He could find no better praise. He entered himself in order to explore himself, day by day, tracing his own footsteps, looking at and observing himself, realizing that by knowing himself, he was following a path that led him to know God. "May God who never changes, let me know myself and you know yourself" (*Sol.* 2,1,1).

This was the gist of the Augustine's experience in his pursuit of God, brethren, and himself. I will end with some words from the Saint, "The price of live is you yourself. Thus, go and find yourself. Then, give yourself onto yourself." (*Sermon.* 34).

For reflection and dialogue

1. Are you missing God in your life? When and in what circumstances?
2. Where or through what paths are you searching for God? Do you think that they are the most suitable? When? Why are you searching for him?
3. If God is a treasure for you, have you found him yet? Where did you notice him?
4. If you have found him, would you keep the good news for yourself alone? If you decide to tell someone, to whom?
5. What kind of God are you searching for when you pray? Do you not search for yourself when prayer? And if you think you have found it, what effect does it produce in you (peace, joy, discomfort or unhappiness, satisfaction, the desire to keep looking for it)?
6. Do you think that your brother, whoever he may be, is a way to search for God? Why?

III. THREE PATHS

“God is the great unknown and you encounter him more than you find him. He himself satisfies whoever does their best to look for him. He also increases the capability of whoever finds him to keep searching for him.”

(San Agustín, *In. Jn.* 63,1)

You will not be able to reach the top of the highest mountain if you do not know the different paths that lead to it. You would get lost amidst the bushes or in a completely dark forest with no paths.

And if there was only one path, there would be different ways to hike to the top through it. It is like a scientist investigating the origin, the reason, and the purpose for everything he finds, or a poet who enjoys the beauty of everything he sees, or just a simple traveler, etc. These are all different, yet all valid and beautiful ways to reach the top, and enjoy and rest there.

God is the peak of everything and the mountain itself. You are already in him as you climb up towards him. His footsteps are everywhere. You search for the light that guides you, and there will be a lot of that over there. It is there that you may find rest after a long journey, as well as certain security, eternal goodness of everything, and the source of happiness that you have desired for so long.

Now, Augustine, a traveler who has journeyed on many paths, proposed three paths for us to take to reach God, or better yet, three types of traveling. Each responds to so many other aspects of many paths where our eyes may find the image of God.

Let me remind you first before going forward, that God, because of his infinite simplicity, cannot be selected in multiple facets and features. He is, in and by himself, Unity. Thus, he is Beauty, Good, and Love—all in one and inseparable. You cannot take away these aspects from who he is. He is all one single reality.

But given man’s limitations and scarce intellectual capacities—as great it is due to being a splendid gift of God—must separate and divide what is but one being, to see him bit by bit.

On the other hand, God is immeasurable because he is immense, and because he is immeasurable, man’s hands cannot grab him, nor can intellect “understand” him. He is like the horizon on a bright day. As I said

before, no matter how close you get to him, you will never catch him with your hands nor enclose him in your small mind. You cannot even touch him, nor could you barely imagine him for he is many, and yet, that may be the only way you can get to know him.

Augustine proposed three paths or ways to travel, among others, to reach an understanding or knowledge of God, or to even reach God himself. He presented God as *principium nostrum, lumen nostrum, bonum nostrum*. In other words, God is like our beginning, our light, and our good; or God is the author and origin of everything. He is the truth and light that it carries, as well as the source of all happiness. I invite you to know and follow each of these paths.

Principium nostrum. The origin of everything

"If God is the wisdom for which all things were created, the true philosopher is the lover of God". (*De. Civ. Dei* 8,1). By etymology, a philosopher is a lover of wisdom; and since wisdom, to Augustine, is ultimately God, then man pursues God, whom he loves, through the things he created.

These will serve as a stairway to the creator of everything. Nothing exists by itself and for its own sake, at least in the beginning. That is because, afterwards, once nature leaves God's hands, it takes its own course and, through its own strength or man's intervention, it is reborn day after day.

The love for truth takes the philosopher, and every believer, to search for the reasons for everything that exist, for the beginnings and origins, where there is not only a creating power, but also the love that they are all founded on.

Intellectual curiosity for coldly knowing the origins of things is not the only thing in play, but also the unsatiable search for a firm, supreme will that is, first and foremost, LOVE, to join himself with..

"I love you, Lord. I do not doubt it and I am sure of it. You wounded my heart with your words, and I loved you. Heaven, earth, and everything in it, from all directions, tell me to love you, nor do they stop telling everyone else this, so that they have no excuse... If that were not the case, both and heaven and hell speak your praise to the deaf." (Conf. 10,6,8).

You can observe the world through a scientist's eyes. If you are moved by a noble spirit, with no foolish prejudices or wretched aims, you may find the creator of everything. "This is the complete science of man: knowing that nothing is the way it is by itself and that everything that it is, is also God's and for God." (*In. ps.* 1,1).

You can look through the eyes of a poet, enjoy what you see, and savor the beauty that you find in nature. A painting's beauty leads you to find the painter's signature. You admire its color harmony and imagine the sounds in the valley and nearby mountains, and you conclude that someone superior to you and all other men created it or had been imagining it for a long time with the patience and care of the best artists.

The beauty of all creation leads you to search for what is the greatest BEAUTY. "The beauty of the universe is like a book. You look at it, examine it, and read it from cover to back. God did not create block letters for you to know them. All that he did was place his creations before your eyes. Why are you searching for a more eloquent testimony? Heaven and earth are calling out to you, saying 'We are God's creation'" (*Sermón. Mai 126,6*).

Nature is Good, as everything made by God's hands is good, as reflected in the Bible, when it referred to the act of creation. And if it seems to be deteriorating in its rivers and forests, in the air that we breathe and the ozone layer, which already has a hole, that is because of Man, who, instead of reviving it, preys on everything that God has entrusted in his hands.

Despite the large damage, there are still many twinkles of a constant, virgin beauty along with signs of uncreated goodness present in all that surrounds us. Man just has to track them down and discover them.

Once more, Augustine is an experienced master in this task. He tirelessly followed the tracks left behind by the creator of all that existed.

"I asked earth and it answered, 'It is not I.' I asked the sea, its depths, and the creatures that swim in them, and they answered, 'We are not your God. Search above us.' I asked the air and it said, along with all its inhabitants, 'I am not your God.' I asked the sky, sun, moon, and stars, and they all said, 'We are not the God that you seek.' They all cried out, 'He made us.'" (Conf. 10,6.8-9).

Lumen nostrum. The light of the Truth

Animals act on their impulses. Their instincts show them which path to take to defend themselves and survive in a hostile environment, to procreate, and to eat. Their intellect is low. They ask no questions. In their lives, there are no truths or lies, but needs, satisfied or not, or a bit more.

Man is another matter. Besides being an animal, he is intelligence and will, reflection and thought, reason and judgment. One of the most notable differences between him and an animal is his ability to ask and be asked questions, as well as his belief that he needs light—light from all other light—to go through life following a firm criteria and solid principles.

The human spirit goes around through a series of absolute, necessary, and universal truths, from mathematical and geometric truths to metaphysical truths. The law of gravity, body sizes, “nothing can be loved without being known first”, things exist, death is the end of life... Everyone understands this, whether it is you, or the Chinese or the Eskimo that lives thousands of kilometers away, or the man of yesterday or today.

“A diversity of peoples and races knowing similar truths, says Fr. Capánaga, is a phenomenon that captivated Augustin early in his philosophical meditations. It convinced some philosophers that all knowledge, that is, all men understand the same thing, or that similar truths become universal. Yet, that is not true. Each person has their own understanding of something, if they come from one single source” (*Buscando a Dios con San Agustín*, Ed. Avgvstinvs, p.27).

There is, or there must be, a Truth that backs up all the rest, or a Light that illuminates our understanding so that we could know human truths that are necessary and universal.

Augustine, like any man if he considered it, was able to climb up to the first Truth, the Light of all Light, and it was there that he found God. “Where I found the Truth, I found God, who is Truth itself” (*Conf.* 10,26,35).

And he invited us to follow the same path to find the Truth, love it, and rejoice in it: “I promised to show you, if you remember, that there was something superior to our mind and judgement. There you have it, the Truth itself. Embrace it if you can, rejoice and it be happy with the Lord, who will fulfill your heart’s aspirations” (*De lib. arb.* 2,13).

***Bonum nostrum.* Our Good**

Go out into the Street and ask people if they want to be happy. Nobody—unless they did not care about anything, were resigned to and disillusioned about life, and were absent-minded—will tell you that it is not something worth thinking about. Nobody.

Even if that were not the case—and once more, the exception confirms the rule—all men and women wish to be happy. And when “things are not serious”, there is no moment of pleasure, no matter how intense it may be, that may satisfy them. Other than the person never being fulfilled, there is always a fear of losing it hidden within them, which is followed by a longer moment of disenchantment and frustration.

Man, like the deer in the psalms, is always on a search for sources of water that may satisfy the thirst burning within him and for which he longs for day and night.

We all want to live better lives, to never suffer, to love and be loved, to enjoy everything, to never fear anything or anyone, to be successful in all our plans, and to happily live “an unending life”. Or is that not it?

And this is because there is something stuck within man himself with indelible traces, something written within him, that always makes him feel in need and helpless. What happens then? He lacks something, and that something must exist somewhere.

The boy cries when he is hungry or wants to eat. It is his way of asking. He wants something that he needs, something that, although he does not know it, must exist for his growth and development. In other words, to be a man. And his eyes need light to be able to see. If not, what good are eyes?

Every human being, throughout his life, from youth, to adulthood, to old age, wishes to be happy. There is a force in him representing an uncontainable desire that can never be quenched. “All men without exception wants to be happy. There is nobody who does not want to, and everything he wants leads to reaching this goal” (Sermon 306).

And this is as decided by the will of God himself. In other words, we could ask, “Should we admit that God made man with frustrated desires and vital needs that could never be satisfied, whose only vocation is to suffer without ever finding something stable, complete, and definitive?” If God is love—and indeed he is—that is impossible.

Then, Augustine concluded, full, definitive happiness must have existed along with a happy life and, by necessity, someone who gave it. In other words, God. “Accompanying God is the pursuit of happiness and possessing him is happiness itself” (*De mor. Eccl.cath.* 1,11,28). Anything else was perishable, no matter how good it was. Then, it would not be a permanent source for anything.

However, do not stop half-way in this pursuit of happiness, that is, when you experience moments of joy that always happen, in acts of pleasure that never fulfill, and in a life reassured with a conscience silenced. Remember the story of the donkey: For today, I think about hay for sleeping tonight and the room temperature.

Your future is clearly God, who is already present in you. Yet he is also you today. In other words, you can be happy right here and now as humanly possible, and even more than you can imagine if you get in touch with him as your source and if you work to make others happy. God and the rest form one single path towards the pursuit of LIFE. You will find it and rest.

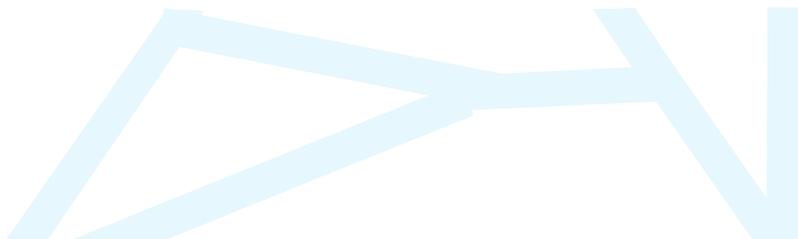
For reflection and dialogue

1. When you want to meet God, what path should you take? The one inside you? Through things? Through your brethren? Through books? Through occurring events? Through your pain and suffering as well as those of others?
2. What does the nature of everything made tell you? Are you used to watching it with curiosity, respect, and admiration? What do you see in it? What does the harmony, order, and beauty that you see in it tell you?
3. Do you ask yourself the reason and purpose for all of God's creation? If so, what conclusion have you reached?
4. There is an insatiable thirst for happiness inside you. What do you seek to quench it? What sources are you looking for? As far as they go, do they make you happy or do you only use them to enjoy moments of pleasure and fun?
5. What place does God occupy in your pursuit of happiness? One is happy to the extent that he makes others happy. Which is your experience in this sense?



THE AUGUSTINIAN PATH TO VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

St. Augustine also discerned his vocation



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St. Augustine referred us to the wonderful, passionate voyage that he took to being certain of what God was asking him for in his heart, "For a long time, I was occupied in many different matters, and spent many days trying to know myself and figure out what I should choose and reject, when one day, I heard a voice call out to me. I did not know where it came from, from inside or outside. It said to me, 'To whom shall you entrust yourself to move forward?'" (St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* I,1).

Besides following St. Augustine's vocational itinerary with interest, with this material, we gain access to a set of experiences that, without a doubt may have valuable clues that could lead us to making decisions about our vocations. Therefore, we must look back on some important intuitions on the saint's spiritual experiences, in a way that could shed light on our lives and show us a path of pursuit and vocational discernment. Let us go...

1. Listen to your heart: *Which is your most profound dream?*

a. "Because in the heart, I am what I am" (St. Augustine, Confessions X,3,4).

b. "Hear, oh God, the cry from my heart" (Psalm 61).

i. I return to the heart. This refers to going on a passionate trip to the center of one's life, to the heart itself of the human being occupied by God. It involves following what is hidden inside oneself until you reach the sanctuary, where the intimate Teacher himself is. This inner quest is the key to recognizing true dreams buried in fear, insecurity, and cowardice. Without a doubt, returning to the heart requires courage and boldness to leave behind one's superficial comfort and false security.

ii. I prepare the heart. This refers to arranging the inside of one's own conscience to allow the emergence of fundamental questions that would push them forward and activate true paths for their pursuit. It is important for you to stay silent inside and outside yourself, as only then could you hear the whispers of your own heart. To be able to present your heart's cry to God, you must first discover what your heart wants most, at what rhythm it beats... Think. What is the cry of your heart?

iii. I open up my heart. You open yourself up completely in the presence of God, that is, you manifest yourself before him through your most personal and intimate reality. A heart-to-heart encounter takes place when you take in the beauty of your internal reality, including your vulnerability, and faithfully put yourself in front of a Presence that you will keep you alive and fill you with his blessing. Do not be afraid of showing yourself with your light and darkness before the splendor of his mercy.

iv. I climb up my heart. Looking inwards does not end when one arrives at the center of their heart. You reach the center of the heart to climb up it, where you meet God. How do I know that I am climbing up the heart? When before his Presence, you raise your pleading cry, your most intimate desire, your most genuine petition. The human heart is the capacity of wishing for the infinite and only God's infinity can fulfill it. Among the biggest is your desire and among the most authentic is the cry for your affection. You widen your inner self further and open yourself more to the dream that God shows to your heart.

Ask yourself: Which is God's dream for you? How do you dream?

2. Know yourself: *Who am I for myself?*

a. *"This is my prayer: Oh God, who is always the same! May you know me and yourself"* (St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* II,1,1).

b. *"Lord, search me and know my heart"* (Psalm 139).

i. I return to the heart. Knowing oneself is a brave bet on a better future. It takes time and comes with difficulties and obstacles, but it frees the heart to make good decisions. Return to the heart because you will gather a lot of valuable information about yourself in your inner journey, that would later be very useful in life. Keep in mind that returning to the heart will allow you to recognize your most genuine essence as a human being and will help you grow freely.

ii. I prepare the heart. Prepare your heart to recognize the truth of your life. You are what you are mostly because of what you have experienced, selected, and valued deep inside. Ignorance of oneself is incompatible with assertively searching for the meaning of your existence. Ignorance of your inner world will be your biggest obstacle in taking your life into your own hands and making the best investment with it on your happiness. Therefore, decide to know yourself today, to love yourself and, of course, to overcome yourself.

iii. I open up my heart. Getting into yourself has much to do with knowing yourself, but especially knowing yourself in God. To be able to know yourself as God knows you is one of life's most wonderful experiences. Remember that your most profound identity is connecting with seeing your life story and that God, as a provident Father, has been by your side in this little story from the beginning. If you open yourself up to recognizing God in your heart, you will realize that is indeed knowing yourself, as you are his image and likeness. His signature is written in your DNA.

iv. I climb up my heart. You can use the plea from Psalm 139 to climb up your heart to God, "Oh God, feel my out and know my heart. Examine me and know my thoughts. See if I have erred in my path and guide me towards the good". Reaffirm to yourself that God knows you and that he knows you in your "personal" history, as he has accompanied you throughout it. It is a story of love and salvation. Lift up your heart and be grateful for the gift of God's presence in your life. And learn to look at yourself as God looks at you, with tenderness.

Ask yourself: Do I know myself? Why must I know myself?

3. What is most useful and necessary is love: Do you love and are you loved

a. *"I searched for love by loving to love" (St. Augustine, Confessions III, 1, 1).*

b. *"Lord, my heart is not ambitious, nor are my eyes arrogant. I seek not greatness that exceeds my capabilities, but to silence and moderate my desires like a child in the arms of his mother" (Psalm 131).*

i. I return to the heart. Return through the inner path until you reach the most intimate part of yourself, as there, you could identify what personal resources—gifts—in your disposal that you could use to bring value to the world. In life, sooner or later, we realize that we reach transcendence when we get out of ourselves. Nothing empowers a disciple of Jesus Christ to realize the truth in love, more than taking this journey to the depths of oneself and listening to God's voice speaking to their heart and assigning them a mission. Thus, recognize God's voice and decide to donate your little grain of sand to making this world a better one.

ii. I prepare the heart. What is most useful and necessary to become human is love. To prepare your heart, start by recognizing what moves you the most in life. The pursuit of success? Desiring recognition? Becoming somebody important? Making a lot of money? If you truly

want to know somebody, do not ask what he is thinking about but what he loves. Where is your treasure? Because that is exactly where your heart will be (cf. Matthew 6, 21). Identify the true reason for your existence and which has given your heart a lifetime plan to be happy.

iii. I open up my heart. The only force capable of renewing us as human beings and seriously entrusting us with the task of transforming this world, is the revolution of tenderness; authentic love. This love is neither produced by people, nor is it purchased in the supermarket. Instead, we receive it as a gift from God. Open up your heart to the Fountain of Love itself, where you could quench your thirst. Only when you deeply know that you are loved will you discover that life is a gift that is oriented towards being a good for others. Thus, open up your heart before God to learn to experience the reason of this gift as a disciple of Christ.

iv. I climb up my heart. Climbing up the heart refers to performing an act of withdrawal and confidence in God, Father, and Mother. Let us remember that the Kingdom's delights are introduced to the humble and the small (cf. Matthew 11, 25). As you climb up your heart towards God, you perform a gesture of confidence, that involves arrogance and disdain. It is precisely there in the heart of your Father that you will experience calm and rest, joy and peace. Nothing will open you to vocation like living in the heart of God. (cf. John 1,38-39).

Ask yourself: What is most important to you? How important is it to leave room for love in your life?

4. Weigh different options well: *What possibilities do you have?*

a. *Command and order me, Oh God. I ask you what you want but heal my ears to hear your voice. Heal and open my eyes to see your signs. Dispel all ignorance for me so that I may recognize you. Tell me where I should look to see you, and I hope to do all that you command me"* (St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1,1,5).

b. *"The Lord arranges the path of the one who sincerely loves him"* (Psalm 1).

i. I return to the heart. One's lifestyle in society almost unconsciously imposes life projects based on interests that do not do justice to the totality and beauty of being a person. It is necessary to end the inertia of a rhythm of life that fails to consider different options and to help make good decisions. How? By returning to the heart once more. Whoever returns to his heart and calmly and lucidly measures himself deep inside, with different possibilities and options ahead, will be able to plan a better life project for himself. Therefore, return to your heart, carefully consider the different possibilities, and ask yourself what your best option is.

ii. I prepare the heart. You can do many things in life. Specifically, liberty consists in the capability and responsibility of making essential choices. The human heart can be seen being courted by many requests and interests. For this reason, it is important to prepare the heart to learn how to interpret the value that can have what he wants for his own life. The heart also needs to be trained to organize the many interests pursuing it, from unnegotiable values: truth, friendship, good, generosity, liberty, and love. Likewise, it is important to educate the heart to be able to renounce whatever contradicts the beauty of the values you chose to walk in life with a purpose.

iii. I open up my heart. In this Augustinian path to vocational discernment, it is important to open our hearts, that is, to lower our guard to reveal the heart's deepest intentions. Opening up one's heart is the most genuine gesture of authenticity, as it reveals real motivations –conscious and unconscious– nudging one towards one option or another, before God, and perhaps one's vocational companion. In fact, many motivations can be identified, but not all are valid and enough for one to prefer one life choice over another. In this sense, opening up one's heart helps us clarify deep motivations and enter, if necessary, into a process of purifying them.

iv. I climb up the heart. Every road has its crossroads, and we cannot follow them all at once. It is necessary to be determined to pick one path. But, which one? See and decide for yourself. Your decision will have important consequences for your life. For this reason, it is important to climb up the heart to God and ask for light, so that you may carefully consider the different options and choose what you consider to be the best for yourself. The faithful believer is certain that God takes care of the paths of those who sincerely love him (cf. Psalm 1). With Christ, it matters not that the road you take has many paths. All that matters is that you advance with him, the true Path. Whoever follows the Teacher's footsteps knows that once joined to him, any path they take leads to happiness.

Ask yourself: What inspires you the most? What would you gamble it on? What should you choose bravely and freely?

5. Speak, Lord. Will you let the Word of God burn your heart?

a. *"You wounded my heart with you Word and I burned in your love"* (St. Augustine, *Confessions* X, 6, 8).

b. *"The Lord's words are right and make the heart happy" (Psalm 19).*

i. I return to the heart. St. Augustine was certain that he loved the Lord. How did he come to the profound conclusion that his heart clicked with God's? Definitely by returning to the heart. In this regard, his words were truly expressive: "After you admonished me, I entered into myself guided by you; and I did it because You helped me. And I noticed how far I was from you in the region of differences. You cried out at me from afar, and I heard it coming from inside my heart without a doubt" (St. Augustine, *Confessions* VII, 10, 16). Return to your heart and listen inside to the voice of God so that you may not doubt that he is talking to you and that you may understand the mission he assigned to you in this life.

ii. I prepare the heart. To confidently go on the path of pursuit and vocational discernment, it is necessary to allow yourself to be reached by the Word of God. The Sacred Scriptures keep and show the passion of the Father, the passion of Jesus for the Kingdom, and the embracing flames of the Holy Spirit. Thus, use your heart to experience dancing in the heart of the Trinity through the revealed Word. Keep in mind that here lies the main key to the path to vocational discernment: the response to the one being called is configured and transfigured in their encounter with God through his Word.

iii. I open up my heart. What is the passion of your life? What makes you quake with emotion? What is your plan to make a difference in this world? The revealed Word is always an open window in our hearts to the heart of God. Open up your heart to encounter the passion of God's heart through his Word. In fact, Jesus' words contain the heart's invitation to the infinite. Jesus' words place you before the utopia of the Kingdom. If you truly want to embark on the adventure of your lifetime, let Jesus' words resonate in your heart, so that it may burn in the fire of the mission that he himself assigned to you.

iv. I climb up the heart. The revealed Word is the stairway to one's heart in their encounter with the living God. In faith, your encounter with the Word is already an encounter with God, who speaks to your heart. The Word allows us to stand on the ground, but also with the desire for things from God, in Jesus' cause: passion for God, passion for humanity. Responding to vocation has a lot to do with climbing up the heart to meet with God, who lets us understand his plans of love and his divine will. Thus, climb up your heart to the Top so that your life may shine like gold in compassion, charity, and service to the poor, according to the calling that you discovered God made inside you.

Ask yourself: Do you meditate about the Word of God with the desire to fund his plans for your life? Do you brighten the path of your pursuit with the light of his Word?

6. I let myself be accompanied: *Who do you want to accompany you in your journey?*

a. *“As for my life in this world, it was full of hesitation, and I should have purified my heart of the old yeast, and I was even happy with my path—Christ himself—, but I was too lazy to walk through its narrowness. You then inspired me with the idea—which I found excellent—of going to Simplicianus, who appeared before my eyes like a good servant of yours and in whom shined your grace, for his help” (St. Augustine, Confessions VIII, 1, 1).*

b. *“The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in him. He aided me, and my heart is happy and sings to him gratefully” (Psalm 28).*

i. I return to the heart. The process of going inside oneself allows you to direct your attention to the intimate Teacher, who educates you and shows you the truth in your heart. When you recognize his presence in the sanctuary of your conscience, you understand that only he can show us the true path. However, for you to allow him to show you the path, you have to grant him authority over your life. That is the only way where what you understand to be his request from the heart, will become indispensable, because you know that he is your greatest ally in your pursuit of happiness. Therefore, return to your heart and experience it as a privileged disciple of Jesus. Furthermore, identify around you brethren who have followed the way of faith—experienced teachers—, and can guide you in selecting your vocation.

ii. I prepare the heart. Usually, the teacher appears when the disciple is ready. To prepare your heart and understand the importance of accompaniment, sincerely ask yourself this question, “To whom will you grant authority over your life?” Whether consciously or unconsciously, most of us will surrender some weight over our decisions, for good or bad, to those who are significant in our lives. Prepare your heart to identify whom you would grant authority to and consider who they are and why you love them enough for them to influence your decisions. Also make sure that your heart chooses God, the Lord, to show you the path for your vocation.

iii. I open up my heart. Do you know the root of the word “authority”? It means “auctoritas” and indicates a person’s capability or ability to help others grow. Far from referring to executive power, control, or manipulation, it refers more to a true generative force through which we help people bring out the best of themselves. When Jesus met with the youth, in any state or condition they were in, even if they were dead, he would say to them in one way or another, “Arise! Grow!” And his word fulfilled what he said (see Mc 5, 41; Lc 7, 41). Thus, open your heart to the Lord and let his warm, safe presence confirm that project taking place inside you.

iv. I climb up my heart. When you climb up your heart and rest in God’s, the presence of someone encouraging you to choose your vocation, appears sooner or later like a blessing. Never doubt it. God will place good friends and spectacular guides on your way to vocational discernment. At this point of the journey, St. Augustine is already one of them... On the other hand, never regret finding and accepting aid from an older brother or sister in faith, with whom you can share the bread of your discoveries as you follow your own vocational itinerary. Thus, climb up your heart to be able to recognize those people whom God put in your and are serving as lighthouses for you, so that you could discern and respond to your calling.

Ask yourself: Do you let anyone accompany you? To whom do you ask for help and guidance in your vocational pursuit?

7. You will have the strength of the Almighty: *Do you trust the Holy Spirit?*

a. *“I did not feel moved by bringing out the best until the Holy Spirit was conceived in my heart” (St. Augustine, Confessions XIII, 38, 53).*

b. *“Lord, I shall run on the path of your commands when you widen my heart” (Psalm 118).*

i. I return to the heart. Without God’s help to us in the presence of his Holy Spirit in our hearts, how would we know where to advance in the path of vocational pursuit? To whoever goes on this journey, as you return to the heart, you will identify the Sweet guest of the soul, who will be your biggest ally in illuminating your vocation. Therefore, on your way back to your heart, like the anxious seeker that you are, stop before the presence of the Holy Spirit, the true Teacher inside, for as long you can. Its divine light shall leave you peace in your heart and the power to make the best decision.

ii. I prepare the heart. St. Augustine said, “Crowded is the house of my heart for to you come to it: Enlarge it. It is in ruins, so repair it” (St. Augustine, *Confessions* I, 5, 6). God’s gift to those who ask for it is very great. It is the gift of gifts, from the life of God himself, the same giver of life. Thus, preparing one’s heart has much to do with growing in God’s desire. This is what creates enough space in the heart for such a wonderful gift. Preparing the heart also involves repairing the cracks inside ourselves; those fissures that prevent us from containing, housing, and maintaining the greatness of God’s gift within ourselves, the Holy Spirit.

iii. I open up my heart. Jesus’ disciple is truly on a path to discernment when he lets the Holy Spirit shine on his vocation and mission in his own heart. It precisely because of this that we converse with the Teacher within us, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is what lets your heart receive God’s most personal call for you to follow Christ and serve others in a specifically Christian way of life. Thus, open up your heart to his shining Presence and let the different pieces of your affirmative response to vocation fall in place harmoniously.

iv. I climb up the heart. Psalm 118 can assist you in making vocational decisions and climbing up your heart to reach God: “Lord, I shall follow your will when you expand my heart”. Ask the Holy Spirit to come in your aid and entrust him in helping you in this incredible adventure. St. Augustine said, “Charity was disseminated in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us, and with a view to spiritual things, it shows us the wonderful path of vocation to love” (St. Augustine, *Confessions* XIII, 7, 8). Therefore, yield to the Holy Spirit’s actions in your heart, as that will be only way you could embrace your vocation to complete a mission with all your heart, strength, and being.

Ask yourself: Do you put into practice your ability to discern? Do you allow the Holy Spirit’s presence in your heart to be you inner Teacher?

Conclusion

Many say that they managed to discover their vocation thanks to a testimony that touched their hearts. St. Augustine can touch our hearts because he speaks from the heart and frankly shares his own path of vocational pursuit. For him, this journey led him to embrace God’s call for him to be a “servant of God” or monk with all his heart. How about you? What is God calling for you to do? What is your mission in this world? What kind of fire burns in your heart? What is your life’s passion?

Christ IS MY NORTH