OUR AUGUSTINIAN HERITAGE

An introduction for new members of staff

Edited by
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Dear Reader,

This publication was conceived as a resource to orientate staff new to our Augustinian Schools in Australia. This edition is adapted more particularly to Villanova College.

Both at St Augustine’s in Sydney and at Villanova in Brisbane many staff are committed to the Augustinian ideals of the Colleges. New staff are welcomed and often quickly come to identify with these ideals as a lived reality. This publication is intended to give such new members of staff a capacity to know something of the content of such ideals, the philosophy underpinning them and the life of the community that has nurtured them at the local, national and international level.

Since producing a draft of this publication, it has been seen by various other members of both our College communities who have expressed interest in using it. These include members of College Council, other staff and various parent groups.

Some of the material in the book is drawn from the work of members of the communities of Australian Province of the Order both lay and religious including Fr Pat Codd o.s.a., and the Leadership team of Villanova College. Other material has been drawn from the work of members of other Augustinian communities around the world, most notably Villanova University and Merrimack College in the United States.

In what spirit is the information in this book offered? It really is meant as a starting point. We have, as Augustine would put it, to check what we read against our own inner wisdom. This inner wisdom has been learned from the interplay of our experience and with the power of our own understanding assisted by the experience and insight of others. Therefore, if we are to approach this publication in an Augustinian way, it is a point from which to start in developing our own individual and communal understanding of an Augustinian way of education.

Michael Morahan O.S.A.
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I. The Augustinian Tradition

Introduction

Villanova has a unique reputation as a school. Among the characteristics that set it apart are the spirit of community which exists amongst staff, students and parents and the good relationships between these groups. The close relationships of many members of the parent body with the teaching and support staff is another feature of the College. It also has a reputation for graduating students who are innovative, confident, creative and well rounded. Many of these marks of the College have their roots in the spirit of the members of the Order of Saint Augustine who founded and continue to sponsor Villanova College at Coorparoo. The Augustinians find inspiration in Augustine’s life, thought and work. From their own community life over the centuries, their teaching and study in colleges and universities down the centuries to their current educational, and pastoral ministries, the Augustinians seek to promote a search for leaning, love and a community life based on friendship that is in the spirit of Saint Augustine himself.

In his classic biography of Saint Augustine, Henri Marrou reminds us that over sixteen centuries separate us from Augustine's era. But Marrou questions the term "separate." The intervening centuries are not an empty gap; rather, they are permeated with Augustine's presence, greatness, and influence, to say nothing of the debates that have been generated by the interpretations of his thought.

Villanova finds in the life and writings of St. Augustine a compelling legacy. The fifth century bishop, philosopher and theologian passionately believed the search for understanding and truth to be a common quest, leading seekers ultimately to God, the source of all truth and wisdom. As an Augustinian college, Villanova is a community of teachers, students and parents who support and challenge each other in their learning and study, who need the diversity of experience, faith and perspective that enriches the life of the College and its mission to educate young men, and who affirm with Augustine that faith and reason together are reliable guides in the human search for understanding.

Augustine’s thought and writings were part of a life spent in the service of the people in his North African diocese amidst the political and social ferment of the late Roman empire. His considered activism provides the members of our community with a model for using our knowledge and expertise to effect change in our human society. At Villanova we seek an education that leads “through knowledge to wisdom,” to a commitment to justice, peace and service of society, and to the values disclosed in the Christian gospel.

Villanova educates by seeking to engage students in active learning that frees them and empowers them to engage in reflection and discussion on the many aspects of human life and society. Education at Villanova seeks to deepen the human vocation to know one’s self, to contemplate and care for creation, and to embrace an active responsible role as a citizen of our country and the world. As a school preparing students for life roles in various callings, Villanova seeks to prepare students to be innovative, ethical and skilled members of society. Students are challenged to integrate theory and practice, to test and try ideas in diverse and demanding contexts, and to prepare for their careers.
Augustine of Hippo

Aurelius Augustinus was born on November 13, 354 in the North African town of Thagaste, the present Souk Ahras in Algeria, about forty-five miles south of the Mediterranean coast. His magnanimous and hot tempered father, Patricius, was one of the thousands of proud but impoverished gentry of Rome’s African Province of Numidia. His mother Monica’s name suggests that she was a native Numidian, a descendent of the indigenous peoples closely related to the modern day Berbers. Augustine had perhaps two sisters and at least one brother, Navigius.

When North Africa was the prosperous, pleasant and secure home of Augustine’s youth, it had already been a province of the Roman Empire for almost five hundred years. Africa provided wheat, corn and oil for the Roman world. Its citizens were proud of their important role in the economy and culture of Rome, even if their more urbane cousins across the sea in Italia might have considered these southern colonials curious in their accent and extreme in their civic and religious passions.

Augustine’s youth.

We know much about Augustine’s youth from the early chapters of his Confessions. Doted on by his mother at home, he was bright and arrogant in school. He hated the quick hand and sharp cane of his teachers. The adventures and stories of Roman heroes like Aeneas excited his imagination and his feelings. Homer’s tales were less accessible because Augustine had such distaste for Greek grammar. Augustine strove hard to be accepted by his peers as he grew into his second decade, engaging in juvenile pranks which provided him much thought.

After finishing his primary education in the local school of Thagaste he went to the town of Madaurus, fifteen miles to the south, for four additional years of studies. His parents could not afford more than that, however, and he had to endure a stormy sixteenth year back home until Patricius secured a patron, an influential family friend named Romanianus. In 371 Augustine left for the port city of Carthage, about two hundred an fifty kilometres east on the Gulf of Tunis. He admits that his motives for going on to “higher education” were mixed at best. “So I arrived at Carthage, where the din of scandalous love-affairs raged cauldron-like around me. I was not yet in love, but I was enamoured with the idea of love ....” (Confessions III.1). The classical education waiting for him there, however, was one of the few tickets out of the poor, back country life in Thagaste.

During his student years in Carthage (371-374), Augustine began living with a girlfriend who was to be his constant and faithful companion of some twelve years or more. They had a child, Adeodatus, born during Augustine’s student years in Carthage. He also became a “hearer” or novice in the Manichean cult, and suffered the death of his father – a tumultuous and difficult “university” career in any century. Augustine reports, however, that during his second year at Carthage he fell in love with learning. He was inspired to pursue wisdom upon reading Hortensius, a now lost work of the Roman orator and philosopher Cicero. From the vantage point of his later years, Augustine understood this to be the beginning of his search for truth, a search that led ultimately to his conversion to Christ.

The cult which Augustine joined, the Manichean sect, was a combination of Christian teaching and Persian dualism, founded by the second century Persian teacher Mani. Manicheans preached two ultimate principles of good and evil: the spiritual world was good; the material world was evil. These two forces were in constant conflict, even and especially in human beings: our soul being good, but our body and its needs evil. Augustine seemed to have found in this dualistic mysticism a compelling approach to the problem of evil – but only for a few brief years. Though he maintained social contact with them up to and during his year in Rome, Augustine admits that after meeting the Manichean teacher, Faustus, when the latter came to Carthage in 382 or 383, he found the sect’s intellectual base weak and flimsy. Later, as bishop, Augustine spends significant time and energy in refuting the Manicheans whose influence in Europe lasted for several more centuries.

Professional years in Italy.

In 383, after teaching rhetoric in Carthage for seven years, Augustine left for Rome where he heard that the students were better and less disruptive. In Rome, however, students had the habit of not paying their bills. Augustine, who was struggling financially, was frustrated by the situation. His unhappy year in Rome was made more miserable by a serious illness. His talent for rhetoric and teaching, however, had been noticed by Symmachus, the pagan
Prefect of Rome. Through contacts and connections of Symmachus, Augustine was offered the desirable, prestigious and lucrative position of Rhetor in Milan and speech writer for the Emperor. This meant a move to the imperial capital of the western empire which by the fourth century was in Milan. Augustine moved there in 384 where he was soon joined by his woman companion, son, mother Monica, brother Navigius and assorted cousins and friends.

Several important currents in Augustine’s life converged in Milan. In this cosmopolitan city he was introduced to the thought of the Neo-Platonists. Augustine found this philosophical school very compelling. Plotinus (d. 270) had retrieved, revived and reframed Plato’s philosophy. It appealed to Augustine’s growing metaphysical hunger and it challenged his intellect.

The second current of his Milan experience was the Catholic bishop of the city, Ambrose. This distinguished gentleman of noble background was a powerful rhetorician as well as a student of Neo-Platonism. Even the critical and discerning Augustine could admire and strive to emulate Ambrose. Augustine would go to the cathedral church where Ambrose preached in order to listen to and learn from his rhetorical style.

Since Ambrose was speaking about the Christian faith, however, Augustine began to hear the bishop’s content even as he studied his style.

The third current of Augustine’s life in Milan was a crisis of meaning and an enervating episode of life weariness. He had been responsible for supporting a family and the friends who would visit and stay. His intellectual hunger and it challenged his intellect.

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The third current of Augustine’s life in Milan was a crisis of meaning and an enervating episode of life weariness. He had been responsible for supporting a family and the friends who would visit and stay. His intellectual search, always infused with passion and restlessness, was beginning to wear on him. Monica, never happy with his woman companion, finally prevailed upon Augustine to send her back to Africa. She then arranged a proper marriage for him, a marriage delayed, however, by the young age of the girl. This sent Augustine off on another romantic cul-de-sac. Finally, the competitive, corrupt and deceptive world of fourth century Roman politics, especially fierce in the imperial court, drained his energies.

**Conversion and return to Africa.**

Augustine recounts that, amidst all this inner turmoil and outer stress, he experienced a call to “Take up and read” *(Tolle lege! Tolle lege!)* the New Testament. There, in his garden in Milan, he picked up Paul’s letter to the Romans and read the end of chapter 13. “Not in dissipation and drunkenness, nor in debauchery and lewdness, nor in arguing and jealousy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh and the gratification of your desires.” This conversion experience was the beginning of his life in Christ. The next month, in September of 386, an exhausted but newly confident Augustine left his position in Milan and retired to a villa in the village of Cassiacicum in the foothills of the Alps. There, with son, mother, and friends, he hoped to regain his mental and physical health. The following spring of 387 he was baptized by Bishop Ambrose during the Easter Vigil on April 24-25.

He soon made plans to return to Africa. Augustine’s party, travelling by ship back to Africa, was delayed in the Roman port city of Ostia because the harbour was closed by a military blockade. It was at Ostia, that summer, that Monica died and was buried.

Back in Africa Augustine set up a religious commune on the family land he inherited in Thagaste. He intended to live a simple life of prayer and study with like minded intellectual Christians. During the first or second year of this community living his son Adeodatus died, marking the third great personal loss in a few short years for the 35 year old Augustine.

**Bishop of Hippo.**

In the spring of 391 Augustine visited the port city of Hippo, about eighty kilometres northwest of Thagaste. He was interviewing a potential new member for his community back home. The Christians of the city knew he was in town and during a service in the cathedral presented him to their bishop Valerius, himself of Greek background, who had been seeking a Latin-speaking priest.

The recent convert was reluctant to leave his quiet community life of prayer and study. Augustine, however, moved to Hippo and was ordained to the presbyterate in 391. He gathered a community around him in Hippo, as he had done in Thagaste, and thus was born one of the first Christian urban monasteries. In 395 Augustine became bishop of Hippo, a ministry he continued for the next thirty-five years.

Bishop Augustine cared passionately for his people. He now employed his famous rhetorical skills and literary
gifts for the preaching of the Gospel. In his many letters, sermons and books, he addressed difficult questions of Christian doctrine and discipline. He confronted the issues raised by the Manicheans (his former associates), by the schismatic Christian sect of the Donatists (the radical Christian purists of North Africa), and by the British monk Pelagius (whose teachings on divine grace and human effort were not up to Augustine’s standards). In addition to his writings, done mostly at night, and his daily pastoral duties, Augustine regularly acted as a judge and heard civil cases brought to him by Christians and others for his discerning judgment.

His three greatest works, Confessions (397-399), On the Trinity (419), and City of God (423-427), are undisputed classics in Christian and world literature. Augustine’s teaching again and again raises the centrality of God’s freely given love and forgiveness, the universal presence and power of Christ, the importance of the Scriptures in Christian life and learning, and reliance on God and God’s grace as opposed to civilization and human institutions.

Augustine died on August 28, 430 in his beloved Hippo which was under siege by the Vandal tribes that were sweeping across North Africa after crossing over from the Iberian Peninsula. To the good fortune of posterity, Augustine’s library was saved by his friend Possidius who was also his first biographer. Catholic Christianity died in North Africa shortly after Augustine, since the invading Vandals were Arians.

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The Order of St. Augustine

The Rule of St. Augustine.

In 397 Augustine wrote a rule of common life for lay Christians. Upon his return to Africa, he lived in his community of lay Christians who sought to support one another in prayer and study. When he first moved to Hippo, he founded a new community of laymen there with whom he shared life and prayer. Then, as bishop, he invited his presbyters to live a common life with him. The rule which he wrote, if not specifically for one or another of his own communities, certainly expresses his ideas about living in such an intentional religious community.

The Rule of St. Augustine is one of the oldest monastic rules still in existence. It is short on regulations and ascetic admonitions. Augustine rather puts forth a set of inspiring principles which serve as the foundation for a common life based on love and harmony, with Christ as the centre of the community. He grounds his rule in the Acts of the Apostles 4:32: “The whole group of believers was of one mind and one heart. No one claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common.” Christians come together to establish and enjoy a real and loving common life, centred upon God, striving for God. Material and spiritual goods are to be shared in humility, which is a necessary condition for love. Augustine is less interested in external observances than in inner transformation: seven times the rule invites the hearer to move from external action to interior conversion. The essence of the rule is to value community life as a victory over self-seeking, and as a practical model for the transformation of wider society.

This rule seems to have spread quickly as a guide for communities of Christians wishing to live out the Gospel together in mutual support. The rule was known to be used across Europe from the fifth century on by small groups of hermit monks and nuns, as well as by diocesan clergy living, like Augustine’s presbyters, in cathedral communities of prayer and study with their bishop. It was the practical Christian life companion piece to Augustine’s intellectual and doctrinal influence.
The Mendicant Movement of the Thirteenth Century.

In the thirteenth century Europe was in the midst of great social change. The new class of merchants was becoming an influential economic and political power, as their expanding wealth enabled them to rival the nobility. Urban centres were growing up around these mercantile endeavours, and new centres of learning or “universities” were organizing in these growing cities.

The Church’s response to these social changes included new forms of religious communities. Monks had lived mostly hidden within the cloister; active clerics had clustered in the enclave of the court or environs of the cathedral. During the early thirteenth century, however, a new breed of religious community was emerging in Europe. These religious witnessed to their faith in the growing urban centres, among the merchants and their stalls, attending to the poor and to those dispossessed by the changes in European society. They did not retreat to grand monasteries, nor attach themselves to a bishop’s cathedral. They preached the Gospel wherever they discerned the need, and they lived off the generosity of God’s people. Because of this dependency on alms, they became known as mendicants or beggars.

There were four major mendicant orders, all founded in the first half of the thirteenth century: the Dominicans in 1216 in Spain, the Franciscans in 1223 in Umbria, Italy; the Augustinians in 1244 in Tuscany, Italy. The Carmelites, who originated in the Holy Land, spread throughout Europe in the latter part of the twelve hundreds. Dominic Guzman and Francis of Assisi are the well known founders of their respective Orders.

The Augustinians, however, were founded from a number of groups of Tuscan Hermits some of whom followed the Rule of Saint Augustine. Pope Innocent IV wished to affirm and to further the good works and preaching of the growing mendicant movement in Tuscany. He gathered groups of hermits living in various communities throughout Tuscany, gave them all the Rule of St. Augustine, and encouraged them to combine their eremitic life with active service of God’s people. Alexander IV gathered more such communities into the new Order of St. Augustine to expand and strengthen it in 1256. Some who did not wish to follow Augustine’s rule withdrew from the union. The Augustinians thus saw Augustine as their founder in as far as he had written the rule they followed and looked to him for insight and example in their religious life as well as for his insight into the Christian life in general.

Incumbit nobis - the papal bull of Innocent IV that formally marks the beginning of the Augustinians dated 16 Dec 1243. The actual document on vellum is presently in the archives of the Augustinians in Rome.

Augustinian Monastery, S. Gimignano, Tuscany - one of the original monasteries of the Order. Now a place for Augustinians and others involved in ministry with them from all over the world to come for reflection and refreshment.
Many members of the new mendicant orders quickly became leading scholars at the growing universities. The Augustinians, after the example of their spiritual father Augustine, dedicated themselves to study and writing as part of their service of the Church. As early as 1245 there was an Augustinian house of study in Paris affiliated with the university.

By 1248 the new Order had established a community in the town of Clare in Suffolk, England where they became known as the Austin Friars. (Canterbury Tales mentions their mendicant status in a somewhat condescending remark about “Austin friar” by Chaucer’s less observant monk.) From Clare Priory they founded houses of study at the newly organizing centres of learning at Oxford (1266, now Wadham College) and Cambridge (1289, now Corpus Christi College). As the fourteenth century dawned, the Augustinians had also established houses of study at Bologna, Padua, Rome, Florence, Prague, Strasbourg, Cologne, Vienna, Erfurt and Magdeberg among other places. These houses of studies, which granted degrees of bachelor, licentiate and doctor, were an important part of the university movement, and Augustinian friars were among the renowned scholars and teachers of scholasticism in the high middle ages.

The Order continued to spread during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Reformation in Germany and in England closed most houses of the Order in those lands. Augustinians from Spain and Portugal, however, led a revival in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the Order expanded in Latin America. They also reached the Asia Pacific establishing themselves in the Philippines, India, China and Japan.

Ireland, United States and Australia

Despite persecution by the English, the Order also grew strong again in Ireland. They maintained a community in Rome during the years of persecution so that young men could train to be Augustinians and return home to minister to the people.

It was the Irish Augustinians who sent friars to the emerging United States in the late 1700’s to assist Bishop John Carroll in establishing the new Diocese for the new country. After years of travelling to small Catholic communities in Boston, Brooklyn, and Baltimore, Rev. Matthew Carr O.S.A. established the Parish of Saint Augustine in Philadelphia in 1801 and a grammar school in 1811. In 1842 the friars opened a monastery and school at the Belle Air estate about fifteen miles west of the city and named it in honour of the 16th century Augustinian bishop Thomas of Villanova. From this new academy Villanova University has grown over the past century and a half. The Augustinians who founded Merrimack College in 1947 came primarily from Villanova. The Villanova community also founded a University in Havana, Cuba, now closed, and Saint Thomas University in Miami, Florida (now sponsored by the Archdiocese of Miami).

Currently in the United States there are two institutions of higher education sponsored by the Order of St. Augustine: Merrimack College in Massachusetts and Villanova University in Pennsylvania. The Order of St. Augustine is also one of the sponsoring communities of the Washington Theological Union and the Chicago Theological Union.

The Order conducts a number of schools throughout the country. These include Villanova Prep and St Augustine’s in California, St Rita’s High School in Chicago, Cascia Hall in Oklahoma, St Augustine’s Prep in New Jersey and Malvern Prep in Pennsylvania. A full list of all the Augustinian schools and Colleges throughout the world can be found on Villanova College, Cooparoo’s web page (www.vnc.qld.edu.au).

The Irish Augustinians also came to Australia in the 1800’s with James Alypius Goold O.S.A. arriving in 1838. As a pioneering priest he established the Church in various areas including Campbelltown. He was to become the first Archbishop of Melbourne and was instrumental in the founding of the Catholic school system in Australia.

The Augustinians in Ireland continued to support the emerging Australian church by sending priests to northern Victoria and North Queensland where the Augustinians largely ran the dioceses of Bendigo (Sandhurst) and Cairns for many years. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s they came to Brisbane and Sydney where they set up two boys
The Augustinians during the Middle Ages

Augustine’s writings had immense influence on the development of Christian theology from the fifth century on. His teachings on grace and freedom, on the sacraments and faith, on sin and redemption, and on Christ and the Church, as well the Platonic influence in his theology, had formed much of the accepted canon of Christian theology into the second millennium.

The thirteenth century, however, was characterized by new discovery and debate in theology and in philosophy at the new universities. The Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas, a teacher at the University of Paris, employed the newly rediscovered Aristotle in his exploration of theology. He demonstrated that one could rethink, revise and re-frame Christian thought by using a set of philosophical principles and categories different from the neo-platonic-Augustinian ones canonized by previous centuries of acceptance.

One of Thomas’s students was the Augustinian friar named Giles of Rome. Eventually joining the Paris faculty himself, Giles showed in his teaching and writing the considerable influence of his former teacher. Often described as “a student but not a disciple” of Thomas, Giles adds new emphases and arguments to those of his teacher. Following Augustine, Giles affirms in a very non-Thomistic way that will is superior to intellect, and that the study of theology involves learning that is ultimately neither speculative nor practical, but affective. The goal of theology is afectio, that is, adhering in love to the supreme truth. The effect of theology on the student’s life should be caritas, that is, love for one’s fellow human beings.

Other Augustinian ideas emerge with new emphasis and clarity in the writings of Giles. He stresses the personal union of the human being with God in grace, and he emphasizes the need for a more psychological description of the relationship between grace and freedom. He takes the reality of sin and evil in society and culture quite seriously, as Augustine had, and returns constantly to the primacy of love and grace. He reflects Augustine’s admonition in De Trinitate to grow per scientiam ad sapientiam, through knowledge to wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge or intellect transformed by love, directed toward the final good by good choices.

Giles’s influence at the University of Paris and his religious and intellectual leadership of the Order of St. Augustine, establish him as the founder of the medieval Augustinian School of Theology and Philosophy. Scores of Augustinian friars came to Paris to study under him. Later, as Prior General of the Augustinian Order, Giles was responsible for encouraging the establishment of houses of study for members of the Order throughout Europe. He saw learning and study to be at the heart of the mendicant mission of the new Order.

From Paris the method and content of Giles’s work spread across Europe throughout the Augustinian houses of study at the universities. This Augustinian school of thought was an important and dynamic part of the scholasticism of the high and late middle ages.

Among the more notable Augustinian scholars were Giles of Viterbo (d.1532), poet, Hebrew philologist, philosopher and theologian; Jerome Seripando (d.1563), prior general, theologian and later Cardinal legate to the Council of Trent; and Fray Luis de León (d.1591), who held the chair of theology and scripture at Salamanca and was one of the most famous literary figures of the Spanish Golden Age. They are among a long list of teachers and scholars who, in the succeeding centuries, distinguished themselves in the fields of literature, history, archeology, and the sciences.

The English Augustinian, John Capgrave (d.1464), wrote scriptural commentaries and historical works. His Chronicle of England is the first history of England written in the vernacular. Onofrio Panvinio (d.1568) is considered the forerunner in the science of Christian archeology and Angelo Rocca (d.1620) founded the Angelica library at Saint Augustine’s in Rome, the first public library in the city and the fourth in Europe. In Mexico, Alonso de la Cruz, (d.1584), one of the founders of the University of Mexico, also author of Relectio de dominio infidelium in defence of Indians' rights. In 1559, the Augustinian friar-navigator, Andrés de Urdaneta (d.1568) was commissioned by Philip II “to discover the Islands of the setting sun,” that is, the fabulous and hidden empire of China. Instead of landing in China, however, Urdaneta, in 1565, landed in the Philippines and was credited with tracing the sea routes between Mexico and the Philippines that were followed for the next 300 years.
schools: Villanova College Coorparoo and Saint Augustine’s College Brookvale. Both schools have named their houses after the pioneering Augustinian Australian bishops of Melbourne, Bendigo and Cairns: Goold, Reville, Crane, Murray and Heavey.

The Irish also re-founded the English province and have been instrumental in replanting the Augustinian charism in Africa especially in Nigeria and Kenya as have the Belgians in the Congo. In the twentieth century Augustinians from Australia, England and the United States established communities in both Korea and Japan.

There are currently around 3,000 Augustinian friars worldwide, and scores of other religious communities which follow Augustine’s rule of common life.

**Education Today**

There are Augustinian universities, tertiary colleges or institutes in Mexico, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, the Philippines and the United States, as well as primary, secondary and post-secondary schools throughout the United States, Africa, Latin America, Europe, Japan, the Philippines and Australia. In addition there are several other religious communities related to the Augustinians including the Augustinians of the Assumption, the Augustinian Recollects, and the Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation which have founded and continue to sponsor many schools and universities throughout the world. The total number of schools that identify themselves as Augustinian is estimated to be 400. There are increasing efforts at mutual support and interchange of which Villanova Coorparoo is an enthusiastic participant.

**Conclusion: Distinctive Characteristics of the Augustinian Heritage.**

The life and work of St. Augustine, the charism, experience and writings of the Augustinians since they began to flourish in the Middle Ages comprise a notable and distinctive tradition in Western Christianity. The main characteristics of this intellectual, spiritual and pastoral tradition include: the primacy of love; the mystery of Christ; the efficacy of grace; the importance of Scripture; and a critique of human power and institutions.

These characteristics are certainly not unique to the Augustinian tradition. Augustine’s understandings of love and grace, his witness to Christ, his reading of Scripture, and his critique of social structures have all entered the mainstream of Western Christianity as foundations of its theology and spirituality. Recast in their original settings, however, and woven together in the fabric of Augustinian history, the subtle and varied hues of Augustine’s thought present rich material for a cohesive and compelling contemporary spirituality. This Augustinian spirituality offers much to deepen and broaden the life of an community such as ours dedicated to the education of young men.

**Sources**

Adapted from *Catholic and Augustinian Heritage* by Joseph T. Kelly, College Vice President and Head of the Centre for Augustinian Heritage and Research at Merrimack College, a tertiary institution similar to a small Australian university, founded by the Augustinians at North Andover, Massachusetts. The small sections that relate to Australia, Ireland and the Asia Pacific have been added by Michael Morahan O.S.A. who has also altered some details to clarify them for an Australian audience. The material in the boxes has been adapted from a booklet *The Mission and Heritage of Villanova University*, Pennsylvania., likewise used to orientate new staff.

**Some further reading**


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**Abbey of Brünn - Gregor Mendel O.S.A.**

In the nineteenth century, in what is now the Czech Republic, Augustinian friars from Saint Thomas’ Monastery in Brünn (Brno) played an extraordinary role in the Czech national revival and in the development of the intellectual and public life in the country. Perhaps the most notable member of the monastery, however, was Gregor Mendel (d.1884) because of his unique contribution in discovering the laws of heredity.

Using thirty-four different kinds of peas which had been tested for their genetic purity, Mendel tried to determine whether it was possible to obtain new variants by crossbreeding. Mendel established two principles of heredity that are now known as the law of segregation and the law of independent assortment, thereby proving the existence of paired elementary units of heredity and establishing the statistical laws governing them. He became the first to understand the importance of a statistical investigation and to apply a knowledge of mathematics to a biological problem. Mendel’s findings on plant hybridization were presented in two lectures before the Society for the Natural Sciences in Brünn in 1865. His paper, “Versuche über Pflanzen-Hybriden,” was published in the Society’s Proceedings in 1866 and sent to 133 other associations of natural scientists and to the more important libraries in a number of different countries. His work, however, was largely ignored until, in the spring of 1900, three botanists, Hugo de Vries (Holland), Carl Correns (Germany) and E. von Tschermak (Austria) reported independent verifications of Mendel’s work which amounted to a rediscovery of his first principle. It was then that Mendel’s work was recognized, giving birth to a new branch of biology - genetics.
II. Villanova, an Augustinian School
Villanova - An Augustinian School

As part of the Order that recognises St Augustine as its founder, the College promotes his ideal of community where the members are ‘one in mind and heart on the way towards God’. An Augustinian approach to education seeks to create a community context in which learning can occur. The community extends to students, staff and parents. The work of the school involves a partnership between student and teacher and a partnership between teachers and parents. It also extends to the other members of the community including past students and parents. Many of these continue to be involved socially and support the College through voluntary work and donations. However its function is not to become a closed club but rather to reach out to serve others in the local community. Also, as an Augustinian school the College is part of an international network of schools and universities. The cross cultural exchange of ideas and friendships amongst staff and students from different countries enriches College life.

The fundamental work of the College is that of education. Education in the Augustinian tradition is concerned with building a firm foundation of knowledge for personal and spiritual life as well as a basis for professional or work life.

Real education is characterised by a searching for knowledge and understanding that is integrated with personal experience. This view of learning is opposed to any which sees education as the mere acquisition of facts and information from outside for the purpose of regurgitation. The process of integration of knowledge is essential.

St Augustine speaks about the teacher within who can test the truth of what is being taught. This teacher is the presence of God within the person. Processes of interior reflection and evaluation are part of this. The College motto, ‘Truth Conquers’, is based on the phrase from Augustine’s writings ‘Nothing conquers except truth and the victory of truth is love’. Ultimately our lives need to be based on truth. Truth is true knowledge, not ignorance. Truth is living rightly, not according to false values. Ultimately it is God who is both Truth and Love. Almost as a consequence of this, an Augustinian education also seeks a balance in learning between different kinds of subjects, be they humanities or sciences, career oriented or focused on spiritual, personal and interpersonal growth. Truth cannot be found along a narrow path.

Since its beginnings the College has treasured open, friendly and caring relationships between teachers and students. As an educator himself,

St Augustine found this an essential element of good teaching and learning for both student and teacher.

As a consequence of the community ideal, the pastoral care of students, parents and staff is a very important part of the character of the school. At all times, but in times of crisis or difficulty especially, all members of the community are encouraged to reach out to those in need. Amongst students, the College seeks to instill a sense of self discipline. On one hand students are called to account for their actions - one of the first Rector’s (Fr O’Donnell) well remembered phrases was ‘Follow the rule or the rule will follow you’. On the other hand, the ultimate ideal is one of self directed right behaviour. Again the Augustinian ideal is of ‘free people acting under the influence of grace rather than slaves under the law.’ (Rule of St Augustine)
A Brief History

Six young Irish Augustinian priests, led by Fr Ben O’Donnell, established the College at Whinstanes in the suburb of Hamilton in 1948. They had been welcomed to Brisbane by Archbishop Duhig who had a vision for a College which offered a classical education and promoted the finer things in life. He was a frequent visitor to the College in the early days. Fr O’Donnell was a quiet friendly man and his companions were young and full of energy. They quickly established links with many members of the local Catholic community which rallied to support them. This close cooperation with parents of students and friends of the College was valued by these first Augustinians and was to be the basis of the growth of the College. In 1954, due to the lack of prospects for expansion at Whinstanes, the school was transferred to Coorparoo.

Since its early days the College has been associated with fostering the Arts. Its second Rector (Principal), Fr John Hanrahan, founded the official Brisbane Catholic Drama group, the Villanova Players. He also lectured at the University of Queensland in the Classics department. Music, drama, and the visual arts are an important part of the curricular and co-curricular programs at the College.

In the sixties, the decade that saw of the first man on the moon, brought an expanded emphasis on science at Villanova. Several young Augustinians returned from study at Villanova University in the United States and introduced new courses particularly in Physics and Chemistry. The Commonwealth government was funding science laboratories and new syllabi that encouraged experiment.

The sixties saw a great expansion of the facilities with help from both parents and the Commonwealth government. A library, science laboratories, new senior classrooms and a new brick primary block became part of the campus. With continued growth of enrolment, many non-Augustinians joined the staff. Fr Kevin Burman, the third Rector, sought graduates who could further enhance the academic strength of the College while at the same time contributing to the wide spectrum of activities which are part of College life.

The sixties also saw the addition of co-curricular facilities including a swimming pool and sporting fields at Tingalpa. Villanova was a founding member of TAS and has always participated competitively in all sports of the association. Other co-curricular activities included cadets, debating, dances and meetings of the Young Christian Students movement. The emphasis was on a balanced education encouraging the academic, sporting, spiritual and social dimensions of the student.

During the seventies and early eighties the College was ably led by Fr Laurence Mooney, a past student of the College. Under his leadership there was a more explicit articulation of the College’s Augustinian heritage. He further fostered the sense of community within the College. The role of all students was emphasised in the foundation of the Student Council. The particular leadership role of all members of the senior class was recognised and this led to the abolition of the prefect system and the election of captain and vice-captains by the class. There was a further expansion of the physical facilities including an impressive Gymnasium/Assembly Hall, more classrooms, new science laboratories, technical drawing room and Art rooms.

The eighties and nineties have seen dramatic change under the leadership of two former Old Boys, Fr Peter Wienke (Rector 1987-1994) and Fr Michael Morahan (Rector 1995-present). The number of Augustinians diminished dramatically. However, the collaborative traditions of the Augustinians were continued when the governance of the College was entrusted to a College Council composed of staff, parents, Augustinians, past students and friends of the College. The provision of facilities for career oriented courses in computing, catering and hospitality, the creation of campus wide computer networks, and the large numbers of computers in classrooms are a few external signs of a transformation taking place as the College responds to the changing needs of its students. On the sporting scene TAS split with Villanova joining the boys schools involved to form AIC composed largely of the founding schools of the TAS organisation. TAS transformed itself into a coed sporting organisation.

As the new millennium begins the College is taking stock of its needs for facilities planning to build a new drama and music facility incorporating a 500 seat theatre as well as teaching and practice spaces. At Villanova Park Tingalpa a new conference and hospitality pavilion and new fields are also in the process of being constructed. This facility will be used for the College’s involvement in the A.I.C. and C.I.C. competitions as well as a place for class camps, retreats and staff professional development.
Our Relationships with the rest of the Order

Australia

The two Augustinian schools in Australia [Villanova and St Augustine’s College in Sydney] cooperate in various ways to enhance their Augustinian identity and receive support from the Augustinians themselves in order to do so. On the social level a key element of this identity enhancing relationship is the annual inter school tour during which students from one school travel to the other to compete in Rugby, Soccer, Basketball and Debating. Members of the Core Leadership Teams have met together from time to time to plan shared activities such as the Conference for Pastoral Care and Curriculum leaders held in 2001.

Internationally

Villanova has also been involved with other Augustinian schools and communities at the International level. AFAS, Australian Filipino Augustinian Solidarity, is a organisation founded by Villanova staff members to encourage solidarity between Augustinian communities in the Philippines and Australia. Villanova students and staff have engaged in activities with students from Augustinian schools in the Philippines. Villanova students have raised money and travelled to the Philippines to work on aid projects with communities there who run schools for the poor.

Villanova students and staff regularly travel further afield to share in the life of other Augustinian communities worldwide. Several study tours to Italy have taken Villanova students and staff to various Augustinian communities in Italy. Members of staff have visited and worked in Augustinian schools in Ireland and England and Villanova has welcomed staff from those schools.

At the international level the Order has a Commission whose role is to support its educational institutes around the world. Fr Morahan is a member of that Commission. In collaboration with the Augustinians world wide the Commission has planned conferences on a regional basis (Asia Pacific, North America, South America, Europe) over the next few years for staff from Augustinian schools and universities. An international conference will be held in Rome in 2005. Amongst the topics to be considered is “What it means to be an Augustinian school”.

The Order in Australia

The College is now incorporated independently of the Order and governed by the College Council which is the Board of Directors of the non profit company. However it remains part of the Augustinian Order and looks to it for leadership and direction. The Order continues as it can to support the College with its own resources in personnel, property and acting as guarantor of loans etc. Some few members are on the College staff full time while others assist on a part time basis more especially in celebrating the liturgy and sacraments with the students and staff. However the overwhelming majority of the teachers and administrators are not professed Augustinians but lay persons. For the Order this is a challenge as it seeks to support the schools more in terms of collaboration than of proprietorship. Various initiatives are under way to provide support especially to those lay people on staff or part of the College communities who consider themselves Augustinian.

Firstly, the Augustinians in Australia serve as members of the Villanova and St Augustine’s College Council as well as being facilitators for staff in-service and various ministry activities with the students in the Colleges. The Augustinian Spirituality centre at Greystanes in Sydney plays a key role in this welcoming staff for in-service opportunities at Greystanes and by providing personnel for activities on-site at both schools.

Secondly, the Augustinians in Australia have initiated, with the assistance of lay co-workers an organisation called Augustinian Friends. It is open to all co-workers and friends who work with the Augustinians or who are attracted to the ideals of Augustine. It provides education and other resources to its members as well as encouraging social interaction between them. The Augustinians act as resource personnel to the organisation. Similar organisations exist around the world and the Australian Friends are in touch with these other Friends.

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

St. Augustine, The Instruction of Beginners XII, 17
What makes an Augustinian School?

The Head of the Augustinians speaks to the Augustinians involved in Augustinian Schools.

This article is an extract from a letter to the Augustinians involved in education by Miguel Angel Orca-sitas OSA who at the time in October 1993 was the Prior General, world leader of the Augustinians.

He begins quoting the constitution of the Order:

“The specific purpose of our schools is the Christian formation and education of the students. It follows that this apostolate should always be regarded as an essentially pastoral activity, so that we teach the truth with love, and the students acquire, along with a human and scientific culture, a knowledge of the world, of life, and of humanity that is enlightened by faith.” (Constitutions of the Order of Saint Augustine, n.179).

Education is about the whole person and done in a community context

“In using the term education, we speak of a global reality that embraces the whole person and involves the entire educational community. As a global reality it contributes to the development of the multiple dimensions of the human personality. In other words, an education which transmits culture in an honest way, does not neglect the substance of the faith and, as well as that, awakens social responsibility.

In order to make clear the Augustinian purpose in the educational field, it is necessary to have a community that radiates our spirit with its whole heart. Thus education is imparted by the activity of a community which professes and proclaims certain specific values. This community has as its inspiration the bountiful wellspring of Augustine. This is the nourishing source and, at the same time, the ultimate horizon of our education.

Our Teaching Style

In contrast to a directive teaching style, which would foster passivity and dependence, St. Augustine imagined the human being as a seed capable of development. “God would like to sow in every soul the seeds of intelligence, of wisdom” (Serm.117,11). The function of the external master (parents, educators...) must be to channel the release of this hidden potential. That intimate place, which is made up of feelings, restlessness, and search, is precisely where St. Augustine locates the encounter with God (Ena.74,9).

Features of an Augustinian School

As Augustinians, we must offer to society the characteristic features of the Augustinian School, its inspiration and its approach. Teaching communities in different countries are involved in this task today. It would be an enrichment to have a fraternal exchange of those texts which are used as material for study, as well as of the experiences which are born of their application in the classrooms.

The main features of an Augustinian education are:

A commitment to LOVE. The process of humanization operates through LOVE, the most profound power of human nature (In Epist. Jo.2,141). St. Augustine describes it in metaphorical language: “God has built a stairway in your heart for you to climb. The more you love, the higher you climb” (Ena.83,10).

To train in and for LOVE brings us to other central ideas of Augustinian thought. One trains in love by bringing the human person to identify with his own self - INTERIORITY - so that from its depths “one withdraws into oneself and remains apart in the embrace of one’s own being” (De ordine 1,1,3). To train for LOVE leads to COMMUNITY and SOLIDARITY. A love which does not result in sharing freely is a lifeless love.

A RESTLESS SEARCH. Whoever carries in the centre of his life the supports of love and of sharing, changes his personal history into a restless search (“We walk behind that which we seek and our search goes in pursuit of our love”: In Epist.ad Gal.54). Love, in the graphic phrase of St. Augustine, is “a restless flame” (Ena.31,2,5).

TRUTH. Another central idea in Augustinian thought is TRUTH. Far from St. Augustine, however, is any cold or static concept of truth. He understands it as a sharing (Ena.103,2,11), dwelling in the depths (“springing up from the humble sources
in the valley” Serm.104,2,3) and includes INTERIORITY (“One rejects truth when one lives in distraction or dispersal”. De beata vita,2,9).

Fidelity to the TRUTH - which includes God, humanity itself, life, history in a process of change - the understanding of reality demands new analyses and new syntheses. Fundamentally however, TRUTH is a commitment to live it out rather than merely to discover or speak it: “It is of little value to speak the truth with the lips and not with the heart” (Ena.14,3).

In this time of pessimism, the best service that the Augustinian School can render to the new commitment of the Christian community to bring the good news to humanity is a crystal-clear statement of values. The effect of this effort will be a renewed Augustinian School, a healthy ferment in the midst of the human family.

COMMUNITY. At the heart of the Augustinian School is located the community. No ministry eliminates the basic equality of all the baptised. “All of you form only one family and we, in the end, are only the providers who belong to that same family” (Serm.101,39). The only Lord and Master of the community is Jesus Christ. Perhaps there are still some of our schools and Colleges that need to take that first step: to turn themselves into genuine educational communities. A school of this kind can be brought about only if teachers, parents, and students, are united in one and the same approach to education.

PARTICIPATION AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. We have a large number of qualified lay people in the teaching staffs of our schools, in parents’ associations, and as catechists... Without the clear and active participation of the laity, the Church of Jesus Christ and the Augustinian School will not present a complete picture. In this context, participation and shared responsibility are crucial.

Learning through being and doing. An essential goal is the transformation of the teaching community into a Christian community. The witness of harmony between the life and the teaching of an educator is her or his most powerful lesson (De doc. christ. 4,29,61). As well as this personal modelling, the Augustinian School must offer specific ways for the development of faith experiences. There is a whole range of youth associations, as well as a variety of group activities, liturgical, charitable, and other out-of-school undertakings that can be channels for personal development as well as for the imparting of the Christian message. All of these instruments must be combined in a pastoral plan, where the students themselves become actively involved in their own growth.

The Augustinian School needs to be renewed and recentred in the Good News of Jesus Christ

Like the Church, which is always in need of evangelisation, and “needs to maintain its freshness, its vigour and its strength for proclaiming the Gospel” (Evangelii Nuntiandi,15), so also the Augustinian School needs to look back, calmly, at its past, and to judge it objectively. Especially it needs to examine itself critically in the context of this present time - which is a time of grace - and to accept the need for the restless search, for CONVERSION.

We must implant the evangelising and pastoral dimension within our educating-teaching activity. This obligation to renew and examine critically the reason for being of our School has today the mark of urgency. Rather than theoretical statements about identity, we need practical translations, plans for action.

The evangelisation of our school calls for the abandoning of all defensiveness, weariness, and evasion. In times past, society itself provided many examples of religious values for children and young people. Today, on the contrary, it is possible that for a considerable number of our students the Catholic School is the only agent of evangelization. Accordingly, the Augustinian School is called on to fulfill this very important mission.

Today’s culture often shows itself oblivious of questions of meaning and value. It is the school that has the entire task of integrating culture and faith, and as such it has a clear evangelising character. That character will afterwards be modified by many other factors within the framework of education. Attention to the transcendent dimension of the human being is demanded by the very concept of integral formation. A school which disregards these attitudes, these ultimate values and questions, does not fulfil its function and is reduced to the mechanical transmission of knowledge. The good of the person and of society itself requires that the school incorporates into humanistic and scientific knowledge the search for meaning. The Augustinian School, being Catholic, is called upon to respond to this need and must include in its search the moral, spiritual, and religious dimension, evaluating the conquests of science and technology within the total perspective of the human person (cfr. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, 15.08.90, n.7).”
Teacher - Student Relationship

I will teach you, remembering and bearing in mind the obligations of my servanthood, so that I speak not as a master but as a minister, not to pupils but to fellow pupils since I speak not to servants but to fellow servants. For we all have one master, whose school is on earth and whose cathedral is in heaven. (Serm.242, 1,1)

Let us then adapt ourselves to our students with a love which is at once the love of a brother, of a father and of a mother When once we are linked to them in heart, the old familiar things will seem new to us. So great is the influence of a sympathetic mind that, when our students are affected by us as we speak and we by them as they learn, we dwell in each other and thus both they, as it were, speak within us what they hear, while we after a fashion learn in them what we teach. (De cat.rud., 17)

The more we love those to whom we speak, the more we want them to like what we speak and so the more careful we are in speaking to them what they need. (De cat.rud., 14)

Teach that Students may become their own Teachers

As the mother loves to feed her child not out of love for its childhood but for the sake of its growth, so it is with us, teachers. Let us feed our pupils with the right food so that time will come when they will be able to provide their own food. (Serm.155, 3, 3)

No one succeeds in raising another to the height where he or she stands, unless he or she steps down something towards the level where the other is. (Epist. 11, 4)

Let Us Adapt ourselves and our methods to the differing needs of our students

The same medicine is not to be applied to all, although to all the same love is due. Different people must necessarily affect the teacher in different ways. the teacher’s talk should, as it were, wear an appearance expressive of the mind from which it issues; it should affect the hearer in different ways according as his frame of mind varies, just as his hearers too affect one another in various ways by their mere presence together.

Not all are given the same medicine, though the same love is due to all ... Some are to be loved gently; others with severity; with love which is an enemy to none, a mother to all. (De cat. rud., 23)

Love, Truth...

Let knowledge be used as a kind of scaffolding to help build the edifice of love and understanding, which shall endure forever even after knowledge itself shall be destroyed. (Epist.55,21,39)

Nothing conquers except truth. The victory of truth is charity. (Serm.358,1)

In vain do men and women toil with all their might from without, unless the Creator works in a hidden fashion from within. (De bon, vid.22)

The first subject students learn is the teacher

Teachers offer themselves for imitation. This is the essence of what people call teaching. (De musica 1,6)

Whatever may be the grandeur of his or her style, the life of the teacher will count for more in winning the learner’s obedience. The one who speaks wisely and eloquently but lives wickedly may, it is true, instruct many who are anxious to learn - but they would do good to very many more if they lived as they taught. There are many who seek an excuse for their own evil lives in comparing what their teachers teach with the way they behave. They say in their hearts, if not with their lips, ‘Why do you not carry out what you ask me to do?’ Thus they no longer listen attentively to a one who does not listen to himself and, in despising the instructor, they learn to despise the word that is taught.

Many are good at preaching what they themselves do not practice, though they would do far better if they practice what they preach.
If men or women can not speak wisely let their life be such that they not only obtain a reward for themselves but give an example to others. Let their manner of living be in itself, so to say, an eloquent speech. (De doc. Christ., 4, 60)

The person who speaks well but lives badly is both a parrot and a thief: a parrot, because he speaks only what he memorizes; a thief, because he does not speak of his own. How can it be his own what he says in words but denies in deeds. (De doc. Christ., 4, 60)

The eloquent are listened to with pleasure but the wise are heard with profit. (De doc. 4, 8)

Motivation

Free curiosity is a greater encouragement to learning than frightened compulsion. (Conf 1, 14)

Whereas teaching is imposed on us by the necessity of love, the sweetness of truth should move us to learn more and more every day. (Question Dulcitius 2, 6)

Let our searching be such that we can be sure of finding, and let our finding be such that we may go on searching. (De Trin. 9, 1, 1)

Grammar

I know many people who, without having any knowledge of the rules of rhetoric, are more eloquent than the ones who learned them. But I know nobody who is eloquent without having read and listened to the debates and speeches of eloquent people. Even the art of grammar, by which correct speech is taught has to be learned by boys if they have the opportunity of growing up and living among men and women who speak correctly. For although children are not familiar with the names of any of the faults of style, their exposure to correct speech will lead them to seize upon and avoid whatever is faulty in the speech of anyone they are listening to. (De doc. Christ. 1, 1)
III. Some Personalities
Saint Thomas of Villanova

His Birth

Villanova College is named after the Spanish Augustinian, Thomas García Martínez (1486-1555), who has become known as Thomas of Villanova. He was born in 1486 in Fuenllana in the province of Toledo, Spain, at a time marked by great changes and fresh challenges when Spain was on the brink of her Golden Age.

The Context

The Golden Age of Spain dawned late in the fifteenth century. It was a time of growth into prominence and power. Under the leadership of the "Catholic Kings," Ferdinand and Isabella, the Reconquest of Spain involving the defeat and expulsion from Spain of the Moors became a reality in 1492. That same year Christopher Columbus, sailing under the Spanish flag, opened the doors to the New World. A new age of discovery had begun, and Spain benefited greatly. Through her new lands and subjects and her military prowess, Spain firmly established itself as a world power. Charles V became king of Spain in 1516, and under his rule Spain continued to prosper. The new sources of trade gave her great riches, and the gold that poured into the country literally made it a Golden Age. For the next century, Spain would be both blessed and cursed; hers was one of the richest, most extensive, and most powerful empires in the world.

Wealth and new-found energy combined to produce an outburst of cultural activities. Writers, dramatists, and artists flourished. El Greco, for example, captured in his paintings the flamboyant intensity of mysticism. Spain was riding high, and this comes through in the literature of the time: the romances based on chivalry that were so popular in the sixteenth century reflected Spain's feeling of bold, boundless confidence.

The high spirit and materialism of the times pervaded the Church, despite the attempts of the Catholic kings and Charles V to foster a universal Christian spirit. Many of the higher positions of the Church were obtained through power rather than through holiness; the men who occupied these positions were used to luxury and did little to enhance religion. More respect was given to the king than to the pope. And the Holy Office, better known as the Inquisition, was in full swing. Still, despite the ambivalent state of the Church, or perhaps because of it, a number of holy men and women appeared such as Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Theresa of Jesus of Avila and Saint John of the Cross.

Early Brilliance

It was into this world and at this time (1486) that Thomas Garcia Matinez was born. Thomas's family came from the city of Villanueva (Villanova in Latin) de los Infantes, from which, according to the custom of his time, he later derived the name Thomas of Villanova. He was only sixteen years of age when he enrolled at the University of Alcalá. The brilliant Thomas obtained his degree in theology in an exceptionally short period of time and was immediately invited to become part of the teaching faculty at this same university. Eventually, his reputation for intellectual prowess spread across Spain to the halls of the renowned University of Salamanca whose chancellor offered Thomas a professorship in 1516. To everyone's surprise, Thomas declined the offer, announcing instead his intention to become an Augustinian friar.

Ambition put aside

Thomas was in his late twenties when he decided to follow his call to the religious life and the priesthood. He did not document, as Augustine did, just how God touched his soul. Perhaps his decision stemmed from his work; lecturing for over a decade on philosophy and theology had no doubt impressed upon him the richness and depth of the spiritual world. In any case, despite many material attractions and career advantages available to him in sixteenth century Spain, Thomas readily surrendered all that he was and all that he had to God. He took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and embraced the religious community life of the Augustinians on 25 November 1517. The following year, at the age of thirty-two, he was ordained to the priesthood.

It could be said that Thomas was an intellectual used to operating by reason, one who was comfortable with the power of his own intelligence. Unlike some intellectuals, he was also gifted in dealing with people. In particular he related well to his fellow community members and exercised leadership in his community. His fellow Augustinians, recognizing both his gifts and his holiness of life, soon chose him to be local leader or prior, and, later, regional leader or provincial. His usual work he did well, keeping careful watch over the spiritual and material affairs of the Augustinians in Spain. But he was also an innovator. Concerned about the spiritual state of the people in the far reaches of the Spanish empire, he promoted the organization of a missionary group of Augustinian friars to minister to the people in the New World.

This farseeing, practical man was also deeply spiritual. He continually sought to follow the example that Christ had set for the world. He therefore lived frugally, eating little and giving away the personal fortune he had inherited from his parents. He made himself available at all times to all people, and spent hours in meditation despite his many responsibilities.
A King's Request Refused, then Accepted

Understandably, he was disturbed when the King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, asked him to become the bishop of Granada. Because he wanted to maintain his simple life, devoted to God and free from matters of money and power, Thomas declined the honour. The king regretfully accepted his refusal.

Several years later, however, the king again offered Thomas the opportunity to be bishop, this time that of the wealthy archdiocese of Valencia. Again Thomas refused. But the king pressured Thomas's religious superior to force him to accept the position. In accordance with his vow of obedience, Thomas reluctantly accepted. On 1 January 1545, at the age of fifty-nine, he became archbishop of Valencia. Although he now wore a bishop's ring and carried a jewelled cross he still remained, at heart, a friar whose way of life centred around the three vows.

Bishop of a Different Mould

In that era throughout all of Europe, many bishops and other prelates were accustomed to luxury, a sign of the times. Some were known to engage in duelling and an astonishing number attended masquerade balls. These misguided men were more concerned with 'royal' prerogatives as 'princes of the church' than with the needs of their people. Not so with Thomas. He sought to give all of his people especially the young ones a chance to create for themselves the opportunity for self-advancement. Therefore, he first visited each of his parishes to see for himself what the needs of his people were. Then he used the income of his affluent archdiocese to set up social programs on behalf of the poor and the rejected. He established boarding schools and high schools. For young girls he provided dowries, enabling them to be married in dignity. For the homeless he provided a place to sleep, offering them the shelter of his own home. It is thus for good reason that the common folk came to call him the Beggar Bishop and Father of the Poor.

In 1545, the year that Thomas was appointed archbishop, he was summoned, as were all bishops at the time, to attend the ecumenical council scheduled to meet at Trent in Italy. This was the council which would reform the Church and renew its sense of the spiritual. Thomas was not able to be present because the needs of his newly acquired diocese which had been without a shepherd for many years were urgent. Six years later, he was again asked to be present at the council; again he was unable to attend, for now he was too ill. In fact, he was so ill that he had already asked the king to allow him to resign from his responsibilities as archbishop. The king denied his request. God, however, revealed to Thomas during prayer that he would not have to worry much longer about earthly matters, for his life was soon to come to an end.

On 28 August 1555, the feast of Saint Augustine, Thomas celebrated Mass for the last time. Over the next twelve days he gradually grew weaker. As he was nearing death, he distributed to the needy what few personal belongings he still possessed; he even gave away the straw mattress on which he slept, asking only that he be allowed to borrow it until his death. Peacefully, on 8 September 1555, Thomas died. He left no will, for he had nothing left to bequeath.

His Heritage

Today, centuries later, a score of schools, churches and universities bear his name. Thomas is still remembered, still honoured, not so much for his acute intellect, nor for his strong administrative skills, nor even for his elaborate and inspiring sermons about the mystical life and the love of God. Instead, Thomas is known primarily for his simple sharing. He once said, "One thing alone I can call my own is the obligation to distribute to my brethren the possessions with which God has entrusted me." And Thomas lived this belief as fully as he could.

As priest and archbishop, Thomas insisted that the material resources of the Church should be shared with those in the greatest need. His life was characterized by the love of learning, peacemaking, and as a reformer of the Church.

Thomas's intellectual legacy is reflected in his constant demand that all learning must be inspired by the desire for God. He celebrated learning as an activity that ought to make a difference in the community and in the world. He emphasized that justice and love are the guiding rules of virtue and learning. In Thomas's writings we find a rich synthesis of the thought of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, especially his emphasis on the innate desire for God in all peoples, the image of God in the human person, the power of grace and a theology of love.
Thomas found himself in a church world that was fraught with turmoil and struggles for power. His scathing attacks on his fellow bishops earned him the title of reformer, but he was motivated by a genuine desire that Church leadership personify the teachings of the Beatitudes. In words that are very contemporary, Thomas challenged all within the Church to serve the least powerful and to discover love and wisdom in the service of others.

It is appropriate then that Thomas is depicted as “father of the poor” in the statue at the front of Villanova College at Coorparoo. The statue in granite is by the famous Brisbane artist, Lenard Shillam, and shows Thomas offering alms to the poor.

The Augustinian Family celebrates his feast on 10 October.


Picture opposite: The Charity of Saint Thomas of Villanova by Bartolmé Esteban Murillo, Wallace Collection, London. Originally painted for the Capuchin monastery of Genoa, Italy

Some web pages:
www.heritage.villanova.edu/thomas.html;
www.osa-west.org/thomasofvillanova.html

Further Reading: The Pelican: A Life of Saint Thomas of Villanova, Siegfried Back, Augustinian Press, Villanova 1987
Rita of Cascia: A Rose Blooms Above Thorns

Thorns of suffering pierce the life of each one of us. Rita of Cascia is Italy’s most popular saint because she rose successfully above life’s troubles and tragedies. The example of her life invites us to do the same.

Our story begins 500 years ago in Italy where our saint lived. Born in the tiny village of Roccaporena, six kilometres from Cascia, Rita’s full name was Margherita Letti. On a visit to Roccaporena you see the house where Rita lived with her husband, and the garden from which a rose was brought to her during her last illness.

Cascia itself, in those days, was an independent city, much bigger and more important as a place of business than it is today. The city did not really recover from the devastation of a 1703 earthquake and now has a mere 1,000 inhabitants.

Rita was an only child. As a girl of fourteen years she was betrothed to her future husband, Paul Mancini, in an arrangement that apparently pleased her.

The years of her girlhood passed and at the age of twenty she was married happily. Despite the claims of later legends, Rita believed her vocation was to be a wife and mother. In time she gave birth to two sons.

The problems of Cascia in Rita’s time were not unlike those of the world’s trouble spots today. Local hatred and jealousies, political strife and family feuds often led to murder and vendetta. Rita’s husband wished the boys out of the way in case they try to avenge their father’s murder. On the other hand revenge of Mancini honour would be instilled into their young minds and two young sons to raise.

The family who killed Rita’s husband wished the boys out of the way in case they try to avenge their fathers murder. On the other hand revenge of Mancini honour would be instilled into their young minds and the boys expected to avenge their father’s murder. Either prospect filled Rita with horror and dread. In her own heart she had forgiven her husband’s enemies although she was not successful in making peace with them. Worse, her efforts for peace even turned her husband’s family against her. In their minds, family honour demanded revenge, not peace.

In such a dilemma, who would blame Rita if she had become completely despondent? But no! Rita was never a person to allow circumstances to rule her life. Proving dauntless, she instead turned freely to prayer. She cast her burden on God, and asked to be relieved of it, if He willed it. As events showed, Rita’s prayer was certainly heard, but not in the way she had hoped for.

Rita lost both her sons in their early teens. How they died we do not know but Rita trusted in God and accepted their deaths as His will for her. It was comfort to her that her sons were not murder victims, nor had they become murderers themselves. However, with the deaths of her husband and both sons, Rita was now quite alone.

This episode of loss of all her loved ones demonstrates that Rita could rise above life’s adversity. In prayer she discovered that the first chapter of her life ending so painfully also opened the way for a new and challenging one to begin. A community of Augustinian nuns lived and worked in Cascia, and the widow Rita began to feel an attraction to join them. She was inclined to prayer and loved peace, so the nuns’ contemplative way of life appealed to her greatly.

Thus Rita asked to be admitted to the convent but to her great disappointment was told that she would not be accepted. There were relatives of both the Mancini family and their enemies among the twelve nuns of the Cascia community. While these families remained in conflict, Rita clearly could not be admitted to the Cascia convent. However if she could bring reconciliation between the feuding families, then the nuns would recognise her as a peacemaker and gladly accept her.

Rita began by approaching the enemies individually and begging them in God’s name to forgive. It proved necessary to persist with this effort for three whole years, but Rita found support in prayer and in the conviction that God would eventually
remove the obstacles to her joining the Augustinian nuns at Cascia. Success came when the two families formally made peace at a public ceremony in Cascia in 1407. Rita was at last accepted into the convent.

By the time her dream for religious life was fulfilled, Rita was already well known in Cascia and the surrounding districts. People considered her a valiant woman but also a sympathetic listener. To them she was a free spirit who accepted life as it unfolded and survived great trials without bitterness. Rita had also experienced the joys of young love, of motherhood and of family life, and so many people could readily identify with her.

Entry into the convent did not remove Rita from her neighbours. Instead she proved to be more accessible to them than ever and was always willing to help them with prayer and advice. It seems that a saint’s holiness is always attractive, and crowds soon beat a path to the convent door at Cascia.

We have seen that Rita’s life until she became a nun had been woven with struggle, disappointment and suffering. Now in her convent life these earlier painful experiences seemed to remain with her, maturing her spirit and faith.

Rita began to think constantly about the suffering of Jesus’ life. Eventually she felt that Christ’s sufferings were taking place within her own life.

So deeply did she share experience with Jesus that her union with Him expressed itself bodily on one occasion. While kneeling in prayer before a picture of Christ risen from death, a wound suddenly appeared on Rita’s forehead. It was a very painful wound and was to remain visible on her forehead for the rest of her life. Later followers of the saint called her wound the hope of glory, a sign of promised joy and resurrection even in the midst of suffering.

Tradition also tells a story of Rita and a miraculous rose. In the garden of her birthplace a single rose bloomed during the winter of her last illness. This unusual blossom was carefully plucked and brought to Rita as she lay dying in 1447. The rose flower thus became the symbol of Saint Rita. (Roses are still blessed as part of the celebrations of Rita’s feast day, May 22nd, and many people devoutly keep them in their homes.)

We do not know one word that Rita actually spoke, although the wide experiences and saintly actions of her life themselves speak loudly to us. In each phrase of her life - as child, fiancée, wife, mother, widow and finally nun - Rita gave herself generously through love. She achieved great freedom over all the limitations that disappointment, tragedy and self pity might press upon her. And she was heroically ready to forgive and to seek peace with others.

Thoms of suffering do pierce all of us, but Rita shows us a saint’s way to the flowering of life in God. Our rose can bloom above the thorns too!

Fr Pat Codd o.s.a.

Further Reading
The Message of Saint Rita of Cascia by Agostino Trape O.S.A. translated by John E Rotelle O.S.A.
Saint Rita of Cascia by Gervase Corcoran O.S.A. Augustinian Press Villanova, PA 1985
Nicholas Gurrutti was born in the village of Sant’Angelo in Pontano, Italy in 1245. His parents, middle-aged and childless, made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Nicholas of Bari, their special patron, to ask his intercession on their behalf. Shortly thereafter, a son was born to them whom they named Nicholas out of gratitude.

At an early age Nicholas was greatly moved by the preaching of the Augustinian, Father Reginaldo do Monterubbiano, prior of the monastery of Sant’Angelo, and requested admission to the community.

He was accepted by the friars and made his novitiate in 1261. Nicholas directed his efforts to being a good religious and priest, and soon became renowned for his charity toward his confreres and all God’s people. His religious formation was greatly influenced by the spirituality of the hermits of Brettino, one of the congregations which came to form part of the “Grand Union” of Augustinians in 1256 whose communities were located in the region of Le Marche where Nicholas was born and raised.

Characteristic of these early hermits of Brettino was a great emphasis on poverty, rigorous practices of fasting and abstinence and long periods of the day devoted to communal and private prayer. As Nicholas entered the Order at its inception he learned to combine the ascetical practices of the Brettini with the apostolic thrust which the Church now invited the Augustinians to practice. At times, Nicholas devoted himself to prayer and works of penance with such intensity that it was necessary for his superiors to impose limitations on him. At one point he was so weakened though fasting that he was encouraged in a vision of Mary and the child Jesus to eat a piece of bread signed with the cross and soaked in water to regain his strength. Thereafter he followed this practice in ministering to the sick himself. In his honour the custom of blessing and distributing the “Bread of Saint Nicholas” in continued by the Augustinians in many places today.

Nicholas was ordained to the priesthood in 1271. He lived in several different monasteries of the Augustinian Order, engaged principally in the ministry of preaching. In 1275 he was sent to Tolentino and remained there for the rest of his life. Nicholas worked to counteract the decline of morality and religion which came with the development of city life in the late thirteenth century. He ministered to the sick and the poor, and actively sought out those who had become estranged from the Church. A fellow religious describes Nicholas’ ministry in these words: “He was a joy to those who were sad, a consolation to the suffering, peace to those at variance, refreshment to those who toiled, support for the poor, and a healing balm for prisoners.” Nicholas’ reputation as a saintly man and a worker of miracles led many people to the monastery of Tolentino.
When in 1884 Nicholas was proclaimed “Patron Saint of the Souls in Purgatory” by Pope Leo XIII, confirmation was given to a long-standing aspect of devotion toward this friar which is traced to an event in his own life. On a certain Saturday night as he lay in bed, Nicholas heard the voice of Fra Pellegrino of Osimo, a deceased friar who Nicholas had known. Fra Pellegrino revealed that he was in purgatory and he begged Nicholas to offer Mass for him and for the other suffering souls so that they might be set free. For the next seven days, Nicholas did so and was rewarded with a second vision in which the deceased confrere expressed his gratitude and assurance that a great number of people were now enjoying the presence of God through Nicholas’ prayers. As this event became known, many people approached Nicholas, asking his intercession on behalf of their own deceased relatives and friends.

Nicholas died in Tolentino on September 10th, 1305. He was declared a saint in 1446 - the first member of the Augustinian Order to be canonized. Saint Nicholas’ body is venerated in the basilica in Tolentino which bears his name. His feast is celebrated by the Augustinian family on this day each September.

Courtesy of Augustinian Press.
Mary, Mother of Good Counsel

Wherever Augustinians serve the people, they place a picture of the Mother of Good Counsel in their churches, schools and priories, and promote devotion to the Virgin Mary under that title.

The explanation of this is that the original picture of the Mother of Good Counsel is venerated in the Augustinian church at Genazzano, a little town less than fifty kilometres east of Rome.

The picture is a fresco, that is, a water-colour painted on the wall before the plaster is dry. The part of it which is visible now through the glass in the metal framework in front of it shows only the head and shoulders of the Mother and Child. The Mother, in fact, is seated on a high chair, but that part of the fresco is hidden behind the ornamental structure.

Many people see a special significance in the direction of the gaze of the Mother and Son. They are not intent on each other, but seem to include the onlooker in their love and concern. It is only since the advent of colour photography that it has been possible to reproduce the picture in facsimile.

Uncertain Origin

The origin of the picture at Genazzano is uncertain. A local tradition says it was miraculously transported from Scutari in Albania, and settled on the unfinished wall of the church in Genazzano on 25 April 1467. The church in question had been built on the site of a fifth century one which was dedicated to God in honour of St. Mary of Good Counsel. There is no doubt it was being renovated in 1467, and there is proof that the picture appeared then. The manner of the appearance, however, is not, documented.

The church had been given into the care of the Augustinians in the year 1356, and a century later they were enlarging and renovating it. A holy widow, who was a member of the Third Order of St. Augustine, was helping them to pay for the work. The money, however, ran out and they were left with an unfinished church. This was the situation when the picture of Our Blessed Mother came to light on a wall. Popular enthusiasm called the image Our Lady of Paradise, but later it acquired the title associated with the original church and became known as Our Mother of Good Counsel.

Between the years 1957 and 1961 the picture was examined and restored by Professor Redig de Campos. He formed the opinion that it was a work of the early part of the fifteenth century, and suggested that it might have been painted by Gentile da Fabriano. He cleaned the fresco, treated it with fixing, brightened the colours by applying trietionolamina acetate, and made it more adherent to the wall behind it. During this work all the Child’s neck, clothing and halo became clear again.

This led someone to notice that, on the edge of the Child’s robe, what seemed to be an arabesque was, in fact,
letters, as if it were a signature. In 1974 Father Geremia Sangiorgi O.S.A. deciphered the signature as that of Antonio Vivarini, 1410-1476. According to the experts some of Vivarini’s early work shows the influence of (la Fabriano, which, in turn, indicates that Professor de Campos was on the right track. That discovery may identify the artist who painted the picture, but it does not explain its sudden appearance on 25 April 1467. We can only surmise the following as a possible explanation. Since the fresco was the work of the young Vivarini, it was not considered of much artistic value. During some maintenance of the church it was plastered over and forgotten. When further work was being done in 1467, the plaster covering cracked and fell away from the wall, revealing the fresco beneath.

The date was the 25th of April, the feast of St. Mark, when many of the local people were gathered to celebrate the feast. The popular excitement caused by the discovery of such a beautiful picture of the Mother and Child can easily be imagined. Funds to complete the church became readily available, and the picture became the centre of great devotion to Our Blessed Mother. Many favours were granted and even cures were claimed, and the shrine came to be considered miraculous. The fresco has survived earth tremors and, remarkably, the bombardment of Genazzano during World War II. Although the high altar of the church was damaged, the picture survived, even though it is just a thin layer of plaster which, at that time, was not very securely attached to the wall.

**International Devotion**

Devotion to Our Mother of Good Counsel has spread throughout the world, and Genazzano has become a place of pilgrimage. There, and wherever the picture is venerated, young and old alike have recourse to Mary to favour them with her counsel as they face the decisions and needs of life. So many of the popes have had devotion to thee Mother of Good Counsel that she has been called the Madonna of the Popes. Pope John XXIII prayed at Genazzano in 1959. In a hall off the church in Genazzano there are pictures of several saints who visited the shrine. Among them were St. Benedict Joseph Labre, St. John Bosco, St. Alphonsus, St. Clement Hofbauer, St. Vincent Palotti and, of course, Blessed Stephen Bellesini, the Augustinian who died of typhoid fever there in 1840 while ministering to victims of the plague.

In Australia the dioceses of Cairns and Sandhurst, and a number of churches and schools are under the patronage of the Mother of Good Counsel. At the Benedictine monastery of New Norcia in West Australia there is a copy of the picture, which is held in great veneration. Its story is well worth recalling. In December 1847 the newly established Benedictine Mission was in desperate danger of destruction by a bush fire. To all appearance nothing short of a miracle could save it. The monks turned to their heavenly Mother to come to their rescue. They took the picture of their Protectress from the chapel, and placed it outside, facing the oncoming flames. The wind changed direction and turned the flames away from the Mission and its exhausted defenders. Since then, this painting has been very special in the lives of the monks and the local people, many of whom are Aborigines. It had been given to the Spanish Benedictines, Fr. Rosendo Salvado and Fr. Junipo Serra, when in 1845 they passed through Rome on their way to establish their Mission in West Australia. The donor was Vincent Palotti, a pilgrim to Genazzano who is now a canonised saint. In recent years many people have made their way to New Norcia to pray to the Mother of Good Counsel before her picture there.

One reason for the attraction of so many people to the image of Mary, as the Mother of Good Counsel is that this image shows her with her Son. The Mother here holds her Son as He looks towards the viewer of the painting; Close to her Son, Mary offers good counsel indeed to those who lovingly seek it.

Pat Codd o.s.a.

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The Good Counsel Building at Villanova Coorparoo was built at the end of the sixties. It originally housed the College Library on the ground floor. On the middle level there was a small auditorium known as GP1. After the new library was built the ground floor was gradually given over to computer labs while GP1 was divided to become the RE Resource centre and a classroom. The top floor was recently renovated in January 2003.

The marble statue outside the building in the small courtyard between Good Counsel and Cascia was dedicated to Mary, Mother of Good Counsel in 1969. Made of Carrara marble it was purchased as the result of an innumerable bottle drives by Fr Joe Walsh O.S.A. and many dedicated dads in the 1960’s.
James Alypius Goold O.S.A

First Bishop of Melbourne (1848 - 1886)

When the young Irish priest James Alypius Goold heard of the great lack of priests in Australia, he felt called to serve there. He promptly applied to the Irish Provincial, gained permission to work in Australia, and arrived in Sydney on the ship Upton Castle on February 24th 1838. On arrival,

Archbishop Polding appointed him to the staff of St Mary’s Cathedral where he assisted Archdeacon McEncroe as chaplain to the jails.

In the years before Goold’s arrival, the Catholic Church in Australia was struggling for official recognition from the Colonial English government. When Goold reached Sydney in 1838, there was governmental suspicion of Catholicism, as possibly offering the Irish convicts and ex-convicts a political rallying point. Catholics in the Colony found it difficult to practise their religion. It was into this political milieu that Goold began his ministry in Australia, using his talents to serve the needs of an emerging minority church. He was the sole member of the Augustinian Order in New South Wales. For Goold and the other priests another challenge they faced was that many of the Irish, who had lacked contact with their church since reaching Australia, were often not willing to embrace it again.

Soon after Goold’s brief appointment as chaplain to the jails, he became parish priest of St John’s, Campbelltown. He built a presbytery, several churches and a number of schools. At his church, Goold always celebrated the Augustinian feast days in a special way each year. The members of his parish would have been farmers, builders, merchants, home-makers, and labourers - basically an Irish-born congregation, in which the very few wealthy Catholics were likely to be publicans or small shopkeepers. Some may have been convicts assigned to private service in the white communities.

After serving the Campbelltown community for nine years, Goold was appointed first Bishop of Melbourne in July, 1847. As Bishop, he cooperated with the ministers of Protestant churches on issues of mutual church, public and political interest. Goold received financial aid from both Protestants and Catholics in funding the completion of St John’s Church in Campbelltown. In 1867, in Melbourne, after collaborating with a Presbyterian minister, he announced that there should be co-operation among Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists in opposing the government’s plans to withdraw all aid from church schools. This kind of collaboration between churches was necessary for the ensuing struggle for State Aid.

Goold had always hoped to establish an Augustinian monastery in his own diocese. However, it was not until after his death that the first Australian community of Augustinians was established at Echuca in northern Victoria.

Martin Crane O.S.A.

First Bishop of Sandhurst, Victoria (1874-1901)

Martin Crane was born at Barrystown, County Wexford, on 11 October, 1818. He received his secondary education at the diocesan College of St Peter in Wexford and then completed his studies for the priesthood in Italy, at the Irish House of Santa Maria in Rome. On 12th April 1841, at 22 years of age, he was ordained a priest. Seven years later he became Prior of the Augustinian Convent of Santa Maria in Rome, and then in 1855 returned to Dublin as Prior of St John’s Lane until 1859. The magnificent Church of St John the Baptist, known as ‘John’s Lane’ was built under Crane’s instructions. In 1863, he was elected as Provincial of the Irish Augustinian Province. During his term as Provincial he founded the Mission of St Monica at Hoxton in London, seeing to it that a priory, church and schools were built. He was thus instrumental in the return of the Augustinians to England after the long absence since Henry VIII.

Leaving behind many friends and fine achievements, Crane accepted his new appointment as first Bishop of Sandhurst in Australia.
He arrived in Melbourne on 13th May 1875. Ten days later, he was installed as Bishop of Sandhurst by fellow Augustinian, Archbishop Goold of Melbourne. Crane endeavoured to solve the problem of a lack of trained teachers in Catholic schools in his diocese by arranging for a community of Sisters of Mercy to come from Ireland to reorganise the operation of the schools attached to St Killian’s Cathedral. The Sisters were very effective administrators and teachers, and in two years, from 1877 - 1879, four new schools were opened. This brought the total number of schools in the diocese to 31, and the number of children enrolled in Catholic schools to 3376. The Sisters of Mercy helped support Crane’s vision that every Catholic child be entitled to a Catholic education. In the four short years since his arrival, Crane’s popularity was at its peak among the Catholic parents in his diocese. During that time he also travelled to Echuca to lay the foundations of a new church to replace a smaller one at Hare Street.

In 1882 Crane visited London and underwent an operation to remove cataracts from his eyes. Unfortunately the procedure resulted in his total blindness. It came as a severe blow to a man who had been so active in planning building sites, travelling the Victorian countryside and handling the paperwork required in administering a diocese. It became obvious that an assistant was necessary and so a co-adjutor bishop was appointed - a fellow Augustinian priest, Fr Stephen Reville. Thirteen years later in 1895, Crane and Reville conceived a plan to build a new cathedral for the diocese. The work began with the first stage built in 1897 and the final stage not fully completed until 1977. Stan Arneil (1992: p 289) describes the cathedral as “arguably the finest in Australia; superbly crafted... with timber from Australia and British Columbia and beautiful Australian stone.” At 83 years of age, Bishop Martin Crane died on 21st October 1901. He is buried in St Killian’s Cathedral, Bendigo.

James Murray O.S.A.

Bishop of Cooktown (1898-1914)

In 1883, Father James Dominic Murray O.S.A. was sent from Ireland to the Vicariate of North Queensland. He served as parish priest at Herberton from 1884 until 1887 and then established a parish at Croydon. He then served at Cooktown until 1890. In 1891, he was transferred to the Northern Victorian town of Echuca, to the Augustinian parish there.

In 1898, he returned to Far North Queensland as Bishop. Cooktown was a ghost town after thousands of miners fled the gold mines at Laura in the hinterland. Murray moved the centre of the Vicariate from Cooktown to what was then the small parish of Cairns. In Far North Queensland, only two centres had Catholic schools run by religious sisters. Murray was concerned that the Catholic population was scattered across an area three hundred times larger than Echuca. With only a few priests, weekly Mass was unavailable. Each district could only manage a monthly Mass or one less frequently. During Murray’s sixteen years in office, he was able to provide four new schools staffed and administered by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and the Sisters of Mercy.

On his visits to the districts, Murray would teach mornings and evenings at the Sunday Schools and he would address each Catholic community at Sunday Mass with his inimitable style of preaching. His sermons were always clear and relevant to the congregation, and he would often quote from Augustine and Latin classical literature. Murray also extended his personal touch when serving the pastoral needs of the Vicariate. He would often make house visits, which was uncommon for a bishop, and in 1911 he apparently attempted, in five months, to visit every known Catholic family in the Vicariate. He soon became a well-known figure in Far North Queensland. He was well liked for being open and approachable to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Murray died in 1914, the thirtieth year of Augustinian involvement in Far North Queensland. His work in developing and reinforcing the Catholic presence in For North Queensland was a significant contribution to preparing it for elevation into a diocese.
John Heavey O.S.A.

First Bishop of Cairns (1914-1948)

 Bishop Heavey, the first Bishop of Cairns, was born in County Wicklow in Ireland in 1868. After his ordination in Rome in 1891, he returned to Ireland. Immediately before being sent to Australia he was teaching Latin and Greek at the Augustinian Good Council College in New Ross. When Bishop James Murray died in 1914, John Heavey was appointed to replace him as the Bishop of the Vicariate of Cooktown. He was ordained in New Ross never having seen Australia

Due to an influx of Italian migrants, the Catholic population in the Cooktown Vicariate rose by 43% during the time of Heavey’s administration. Heavey sought the assistance of Augustinians from Europe to assist the large number of Italians. These include some Spanish and Maltese Augustinians who spoke Italian. It has been said however that Heavey himself was somewhat mystified with the more flexible Italian approach to religion compared to more rigid Irish one to which he was accustomed.

With the assistance of Father Joe Phelan O.S.A., whom Heavey appointed as Vicar General, the number of Catholic schools throughout the Vicariate increased, as did the number of church districts. At 79 years of age, Heavey died on 12th June 1948.

Ben O’Donnell O.S.A.

First Rector (Principal) of Villanova

Ben was born in 1917, at Kilronan, Inishmore, in the Aran Islands, County Galway. He was the fifth child of a family of 13 children, five of whom entered the religious life, three Augustinians and two Brigidine Sisters. Ben’s father was a lighthouse keeper on regular transfer to different lighthouses. Ben’s early education was at four different schools, but his secondary education was completed at St Peter’s College, Wexford. Here he won his Matriculation Certificate in 1934.

Ben was received into the Augustinian order at Orlagh in 1934, pursued his studies at the University in Cork and the Augustinian College in Rome, where he was ordained in 1941. On his return to Ireland in 1942, he began teaching at the Augustinians’ Good Counsel College, New Ross. He was an Irish scholar and actually taught in that language. In 1946, he received First Class Honours for his Higher Diploma in Education at University College, Galway. In 1947, he was sent to Australia.

Fr O’Donnell was the first Rector of Villanova and at the same time, the Prior of the Augustinian Community. All the staff were young Augustinians with Ben the oldest member, and he was thirty! After the trials of establishing the College at Whinstanes, it became obvious that Whinstanes was not a suitable location for the College. Fr O’Donnell then led the negotiations with Archbishop Duhig in 1953, which resulted in the transfer of the College from Whinstanes to Coorparoo. He supervised the building of the new college and visited the local primary schools to recruit boys.

The Augustinian community was a very united one, with a great sense of purpose. The establishment of a good school was their aim and every member felt committed to that aim. Fr O’Donnell was a great leader and set standards by example. He set the tone and pace for all. All difficulties were borne together without complaint.

He embodied the Augustinian spirit of community and friendship and had the ability to communicate that spirit to others. A man of great personal devotion he would often be encountered by boys walking the quadrangle after school with his breviary in hand praying. He had a sense of vision, was a true pioneer, and had a sense of fun.
His unfailing good humour made light of difficulties and made the material privations endured by both the priests and boys tolerable. His spirit and the love and loyalty he won from the families of the students are an enduring part of his legacy to Villanova.

His presence at the Family Mass in February, 1994, linked the establishment of the College to the newest building in the complex at that time. Fr O’Donnell had accepted an invitation from the Villanova College community to open the building named in his honour.

Until the onset of his final illness, he lived in the community of St Augustine’s College, Dungarvan; a valued member, contributing a great deal to the life of the community by his good humour and readiness to help out in any way he could.

Ben died in December, 1996 not long after visiting Australia for the opening of the O’Donnell building.

John Louis Hanrahan O.S.A.

Second Rector (Principal) of Villanova

John Hanrahan was born in Limerick City in 1920. He entered the Order in 1937 at Orlah. After study in Rome and Dublin, he was ordained in 1943. While on the staff of John’s Lane in Dublin, he studied and was awarded a Master of Arts in 1947 and also received the Higher Diploma of Education. He arrived in Australia in 1948, just before school began at Whinstanes.

The second Prior and Rector was a great communicator, a scholar and a man of culture; he introduced drama and speech to the curriculum and fostered choral and instrumental music; he shared the first Rector’s Augustinian spirit and ability to win love and loyalty. In fact, he had creativity and eagerness to spare to maintain his position as a part-time university lecturer in Latin (the first Catholic priest regularly to lecture at the University) and his involvement with the Villanova Players. Yet he accomplished these considerable feats at a cost to the amount of sleep he received.

It is possibly not drawing too long a bow to suggest that in personality, Fr Hanrahan was Saint Paul to Fr O’Donnell’s Saint Peter. Fr O’Donnell, a teacher of mathematics, was more conservative, more matter of fact, more inward looking, while Fr Hanrahan, a teacher of arts and languages, was more liberal, more cosmopolitan, more dramatic, and possessed a more artistic temperament. Fr O’Donnell was more punctual, as opposed to Fr Hanrahan’s tendency to be running late (although usually able to win people’s forgiveness). Fr O’Donnell was more matter of fact to the latter’s good-intentioned scheming and skill at gentle persuasion.

In conversation and when teaching, Fr Hanrahan’s use of language and of humour was entertaining and brilliant. He taught with a sense of the dramatic - a pregnant pause, a quizzical raising of an eyebrow, a puckish sense of humour, and a mock-heroic turn of phrase were all well-used with subtlety.

Assisted by the small numbers then in Villanova’s senior secondary section, a Hanrahan class was an unforgettable delight for a seminar-like experience. Here was a man who loved learning, was completely masterful and in his element when teaching.

After his six years as Rector of Villanova, Fr Hanrahan was elected Provincial of the Australian Augustinians. Driving himself as hard as ever, while Provincial he twice developed major cardiac conditions that tragically forced him to cease all work at the young age of forty-eight years. As mentally agile as previously but barely able to leave his room, he lived in retirement in a nursing home in Ireland from 1969 until his death on 25th January 1981, just sixty years old.

Through these twelve years of retirement that were difficult to bear for such an active man, Fr Hanrahan maintained written contact with his numerous Villanova friends. In all Fr Hanrahan was on staff at Villanova for seventeen years. This constituted the major portion of his active priestly ministry. The warm and gregarious spirit often attributed to Villanova is a part of his legacy that remains strong to the present day.