

A Primer in
**Augustinian
Spirituality**

Communion, Participation, Mission



NEW CITY PRESS

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Joseph T. Kelley

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In Memoriam
Kevin W. Salemme
Frater Cordis Nostri

*Cito de terra abstulisti vitam eius
et securior eum recordeo*
—Saint Augustine, *Confessions*



Published in the United States by New City Press
136 Madison Avenue, Floors 5 & 6, PMB #4290
New York, NY 10016
www.newcitypress.com

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Cover design and layout by Miguel Tejerina
Cover photo: Anthony Aneese Totah Jr (edited)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Library of Congress Control Number: 2026931622
ISBN: 978-1-56548-740-6 (paper)
ISBN: 978-1-56548-741-3 (e-book)

Printed in the United States of America

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Foreword

When an author is not only knowledgeable but also finds it enjoyable to write about a particular topic, it is immediately evident in the style, content and creation of the finished product. In this book, *A Primer in Augustinian Spirituality: Communion, Participation, Mission*, Joseph Kelley invites us into his vast knowledge of Saint Augustine and the Augustinian tradition. At the same time, he shares with us the joy that exploring Augustinian Spirituality brings to his heart.

From the beginning pages of this book, we are welcomed into the world of Saint Augustine of Hippo and introduced to the spirituality that emerged from his life and writings, and that has endured throughout the centuries. As readers, we are invited to explore some of the most important themes in the life of Aurelius Augustinus. Kelley highlights the spirituality that grew from Augustine's restless search for fulfillment, preserved for us in his *Confessions* and developed in his preaching, letters and many books. From Augustine's fourth to fifth-century ministry as bishop of the ancient port city of Hippo in North Africa, Kelley then traces the early development of the Order of Saint Augustine in the middle of the thirteenth century in Italy, and shows how the Augustinian tradition continues to attract, inspire and assist people around the globe today.

Joseph Kelley has many years of experience of research, teaching, and writing in his academic career of over five decades at Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts (USA). He offers a unique viewpoint informed by his direct participation in organizing and implementing a *Pellegrinaggio* (Pilgrimage) that follows the footsteps of Augustine along a path of conversion which culminated in a garden in northern Italy. Kelley's distinctive perspective has also been shaped by his many years of involvement in various academic symposia in North Africa, and enriched by his

love for all things “Augustine.” He brings the fifth-century Bishop of Hippo alive in such a way that the modern reader, student, searcher, and pilgrim can find points of relevance today.

The title of this book indicates that this is a *Primer*, written to introduce the reader to the fundamentals of Augustinian Spirituality. Dr. Kelley structures the book using the three-fold process of the synodal way, which the universal Catholic Church has been developing over the past few years. The themes of *Communion*, *Participation* and *Mission* assist the reader to explore in a thematic way some of the most important aspects of Augustinian Spirituality.

In the first part of this book, *Communion*, our author begins with the central focus of Augustinian Spirituality, and in fact any Christian Spirituality, Jesus Christ. Augustinian Spirituality is Christocentric and so the first three chapters of this book present us with some of the most relevant aspects of Augustine’s relationship with Christ. Pope Leo XIV’s motto *In Illo uno unum* recalls the words of Saint Augustine, which he preached on the *Exposition on Psalm 127*, insisting that “in the one Christ we are one.” For Augustine, Christ is what unites us into true communion with God and one another. The incarnate Word was the One to ignite Augustine’s heart in the process of his call to conversion from darkness to light, from the search to satisfy his own desires to putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and finding true fulfillment in living in communion with Christ and with others on the common pilgrimage on his way to God.

In the second part, *Participation*, each theme presented could be treated in a separate book. In the past few years, there has been so much discussion, research and writing about Artificial Intelligence, in short, AI. It is a reality which touches and influences all aspects of what it means to be human. In the Augustinian world, we like to offer an alternative meaning to AI, and invite those with whom we share our common pilgrimage to think of AI not as Artificial Intelligence, but rather as Augustinian Interiority. Christ is the center of Augustinian Spirituality. The work of going within and exploring the interior sacred space of each person is the way and the goal of discovering Christ. This *Primer* explores the

themes of Listening, Memory, Interiority as the building blocks of entering within to discover God. It is from the sacred space within where one is able to truly know oneself and therefore truly know God. From the resulting discoveries of the journey within we can then discover how we participate as the Body of Christ through Friendship, Hospitality and Forgiveness. Augustinian Spirituality is both interior and social, and so these themes become critical parts of the framework in building the external structure of an Augustinian spiritual journey. The final section of *Participation* unfolds by encouraging the reader to embrace Humility, Poverty and Peace as sacred gifts that enlighten the journey from the interior exploration of Christ's mystical presence within, to the external graces and virtues expressed in the relationships we develop with our brothers and sisters.

The final part of this *Primer* develops the third synodal theme of *Mission*. Although Mission also includes all of the previously developed themes in this book, the theme of Hope offers a fitting conclusion to this thoughtfully developed structure. Hope, which “does not disappoint” (Romans 5:5), is one of the critical themes for Augustine’s ministry as Bishop of Hippo and theologian. It is the bedrock upon which rest all the other themes of Augustinian Spirituality that help construct a vibrant way of living out one’s relationship with Christ and with the world in concrete ways. In reality, the theme of Hope is present throughout each part of this *Primer* but deserves special mention and finds its proper place as the concluding section.

One of the early stages of initial formation as an Augustinian is called the Novitiate. It is a complete calendar year dedicated to discernment, prayer and discovery of Augustine, the vowed life, the history of the Order, and Augustinian Spirituality. The person living that stage of formation is rightly called a Novice. For those who are attracted to this book because it is a *Primer*, I believe that the style, structure and content which Dr. Kelley selected will offer you as a “novice” in Augustinian Spirituality the correct tools and vocabulary to ignite a spark within, which will encourage further research and discovery. For those who are more seasoned pilgrims

on the path of Augustinian Spirituality, you will find a succinct and fulfilling refresher, which will nourish both your mind and heart on your journey toward God.

For Augustine, God is “ever ancient and ever new.” There is no time, no moment which can hold God captive. There is always something new in the God who always is. So, too, with Augustinian Spirituality. The themes presented in this *Primer* are not “new” in the sense that they are recently discovered. Rather, the themes presented here are even more ancient than the protagonist whose name is attached to the spirituality that they represent. However ancient they may be, these themes are also new in two ways. They are new in the way they touched the life of a fourth and fifth-century man on his restless search for God. And they come alive in new ways when the modern reader is invited to apply these themes to the lived reality which he or she experiences each day.

As you explore the following pages, imagine yourself on a pilgrimage with each theme representing a signpost giving you direction on which way to proceed. I encourage you to spend some time allowing each of the signs along the way to take root within so that they become useful tools to aid you along the journey. May every theme presented in the sections on *Communion*, *Participation* and *Mission* inspire you to explore more intimately a spirituality that will lead you further along the path to self-discovery and your relationship with God. You do not necessarily have to follow the order presented in this *Primer*. You can begin by finding one that speaks most to you and after exploring all that theme has to offer, allow your discovery to point you to the next step along the journey. Allow the themes to speak to your heart and you will be surprised by what they have to offer.

Very Rev. Joseph L. Farrell, OSA
Prior General
Order of Saint Augustine

Preface

My first Augustinian memory is of a priest who regularly came to our parish for Sunday Mass. I was only about eight or nine years old at the time, but I remember how his sermons held the congregation's interest. After Mass, people would discuss what he had said. My dad told me that he was such a good preacher because he was an Augustinian, a teacher at Villanova University, which was just a few miles away. I later learned he was Father Robert Sullivan, OSA, Dean of Arts and Sciences. I don't remember anything he said, of course. But the effect he had, so many years ago, on the people of Saint Monica Parish in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, has stayed with me ever since.

Eventually, I was fortunate enough to study with teachers like Father Sullivan, first at Augustinian Academy in New York City, and then at Villanova University. I joined the Order of Saint Augustine and lived in community as a friar for fourteen years, years I still cherish for the spiritual formation and lifelong friendships they provided. For fifty years, I was privileged to teach theology at Merrimack College, an Augustinian College in Massachusetts. Little did I realize, as a child who observed Father Sullivan from a distance, that I would so closely follow his Augustinian path.

Now, as a husband, father, grandfather, and lay affiliate of the Augustinians, the writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo continue to enrich my own faith and help me navigate the challenges of life. As a student of his thought, I have introduced Augustine to hundreds of my own students. In this little volume, I introduce you to him, or, more accurately, I introduce you to my understanding of his spirituality.

During my last ten years at Merrimack College, I taught in the graduate programs of spirituality and spiritual direction. Our students, most of whom were transitioning to second careers related

to spirituality, came from a vast variety of religious affiliations, professional backgrounds, and points of view. One thing they all had in common was a desire to understand what spirituality is and how it relates to people's lives in today's world. They represented a wide spectrum of faith and experience, from Cameroonian Catholic priests to American Unitarian women. Many were religiously affiliated; some were not. But they all shared what Augustine called a restless heart seeking to probe the mysteries of life and the soul. They often came to mind as I was writing this book.

Presenting the thought of someone as prolific and insightful as Saint Augustine is a formidable task. The limitations of my own perspective and experience are all too evident to me. To background my own thinking, and foreground Augustine himself, I quote him prodigiously. As far as possible in an introductory book like this, the words of such an influential writer, rhetorician, and saint should be allowed to speak for themselves, even as we seek to understand and interpret them. At the end of this preface, there is a list of abbreviations for the titles of Augustine's works that I cite throughout the book.

One of the great resources for English-speaking Augustine scholars is *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, published by New City Press, a division of Focolare Media, in collaboration with the Augustinian Heritage Institute. Almost all of the citations from Augustine in this book are from that translation. I am also indebted to the Italian Province of the Augustinians for easy access to Augustine's Latin text at www.augustinus.it.

The excellent book by Bishop Luis Marin de San Martin, OSA, *The Augustinians: Origins and Spirituality*, brings together much of the recent scholarship on the Augustinians and their spirituality (Institutum Historicum Augustinianum, 2012). I recommend it for those who wish to delve further into this topic. I also recommend the newly published book by Father Arthur Purcaro, OSA, *Building a Better World: A Contemporary Augustinian Perspective* (Focolare Media, New City Press, 2025). He applies the spirit and counsels of Augustine's *Monastic Rule* to integral environmentalism and extends Augustinian spirituality into the pursuit of justice and peace.

I wish to thank the many collaborators whose keen insights, corrections, conversations, and suggestions have enriched this text immensely. They include Gary Brandl, at New City Press, a longtime associate and superb editor; Augustinian friars from different countries, including Ifeanyi Hilary Basil, Antonio Carrón de la Torre, Andrew Batayola, Kevin DePrinzio, Raymond Dlugos, Allan Fitzgerald, Bitrus Galadima, Bryan Kerns, Daniel Madden, Gary McCloskey, Blair Nuyda, Jude Ossai, Ian Wilson, and Philip Yang; Augustinian Sister Sara Cozzolongo, from the monastery of San Salvatore at Lecceto, Italy; and Augustinian laity from across the world, including Vicki Blaszak, Mary Burke, Catherine Conybeare, Maureen Cunningham, Judith Duncan, Adrienne Franciosi, Trish Gannon, Timothy Hart, Edward and Kathy Hastings, and Mary McCormick. I am grateful to the Rev. James Ennis for his valuable Evangelical Christian perspective, and to my friend, Dr. Yehezkel Landau, whose devotion to and leadership in interreligious and inter-spiritual dialogue is a constant inspiration. Finally, I heartily thank Father Joseph Farrell, OSA, for his encouragement, wisdom, and friendship of many years.

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Abbreviations of Works Cited

<i>Against Lying: To Consentius</i>	<i>Ag Lying Con</i>
<i>Answer to Faustus, a Manichean</i>	<i>Ans Faus</i>
<i>Argument with the Skeptics</i>	<i>Arg Skps</i>
<i>City of God</i>	<i>CG</i>
<i>A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians</i>	<i>Com Ep Gal</i>
<i>Confessions</i>	<i>Conf</i>
<i>Exposition of the Psalms</i>	<i>Ex Ps</i>
<i>The Grace of Christ and Original Sin</i>	<i>Gr Chr Org Sin</i>
<i>Homilies on the Gospel of John</i>	<i>Hom Gos Jn</i>
<i>Homilies on the First Epistle of John</i>	<i>Hom 1 Jn</i>
<i>Instructing Beginners in Faith</i>	<i>Instr Bg</i>
<i>Letter</i>	<i>L</i>
<i>The Life of Saint Augustine, by Saint Possidius</i>	<i>Life</i>
<i>Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician</i>	<i>Misc Smp</i>
<i>Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions</i>	<i>Misc 83</i>
<i>Monastic Rule</i>	<i>Rule</i>
<i>Nature and Grace</i>	<i>Nat Gr</i>
<i>On Order</i>	<i>Ord</i>
<i>The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins</i>	
<i>and the Baptism of Little Ones</i>	<i>Forg Sins Bap Lit</i>
<i>Questions on the Gospels</i>	<i>Ques Gosp</i>
<i>Questions on the Heptateuch</i>	<i>Ques Hep</i>
<i>Revisions</i>	<i>Revisions</i>
<i>Sermon</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Sermon to the People of the Church of Caesarea</i>	<i>S Ch Caes</i>
<i>Soliloquies</i>	<i>Sol</i>
<i>The Teacher</i>	<i>Tchr</i>
<i>Teaching Christianity</i>	<i>Tchg Ch</i>
<i>The Trinity</i>	<i>Trin</i>
<i>True Religion</i>	<i>Tr Rel</i>
<i>The Work of Monks</i>	<i>Wk Monks</i>
<i>Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian</i>	<i>Ans Jul</i>

Introduction

Many spiritual traditions have enriched the Catholic Church over the centuries. One of the oldest is Augustinian spirituality. It emerged early in the history of the Church, in the life and writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430). In his *Confessions*, Augustine famously shared the struggles and questions, the doubts and difficulties that pervaded the long process of his conversion to Christ. In a very real sense, Augustinian spirituality was conceived in Augustine’s restless heart and birthed during his journey toward faith. It developed and matured as Augustine continued to reflect on his faith in Christ and on the nature of the Church, which he served as priest and bishop for forty years.

Augustine would not have distinguished among what we identify today as the separate but related disciplines of spirituality, theology, and philosophy. Rather, he spoke and wrote about philosophy as the “love of wisdom” (from the two Greek words *philia* and *sophia*). He thought of himself as a “Christian philosopher.” Like other ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, his quest was not limited to intellectual abstraction. It was a search for wisdom that promised happiness and fulfillment, and a program for how to live one’s life. When reading Augustine’s many writings, we find spirituality, philosophy, and theology intermingled, enriching and defining each other in this pursuit of wisdom.

Ultimately, Augustine’s restless heart found this wisdom in Christ, the Incarnation and revelation of God’s love for humankind. It was in the light of divine love that Augustine read Sacred Scripture, taught Christian doctrine, and led liturgical worship. For Augustine, then, the source and summit of spiritual life is the mystery of divine love, a mystery discovered in the depths of the soul and shared in communion with others.

Life of Saint Augustine

Aurelius Augustinus was born on November 13, 354, in North Africa. His town was called Thagaste, today the modern city of Souk Ahras, in Algeria. In those years, it was at the southern edge of the Roman Empire, far from the centers of power and influence. Monica, his mother, was a devout Christian of indigenous Berber ethnicity. Patricius, his father, was a mid-level Roman official who converted to Christianity only at the end of his life. Augustine had at least one brother and one sister that we know of.

The family spoke Latin and perhaps were familiar with the local Berber dialect. However, they identified as Romans. Monica and Patricius recognized the intelligence of their son and wanted him to achieve success in the Roman fashion by training to become a rhetorician. Knowing how to speak effectively, how to sway audiences and influence people, was the way to achieve status and power, and maybe to escape the remote outback of Africa.

His parents saved and borrowed money for Augustine's education. At age seventeen, he left home to study in the great city of Carthage, in what is today Tunisia. He excelled in his studies. However, it was a tumultuous time personally. The young Augustine met and moved in with a girlfriend. They soon had a son whom they named Adeodatus (gift of God). He also joined the Manichean sect, a curious mix of Persian, Jewish, and Christian religions. At some point during these same years, his father died. When he returned home to Thagaste, with companion and son in tow, bragging about his newfound religion, his recently widowed mother, Monica, was not amused. At first, she refused to let him in the house. Eventually, fondness for her bright, ambitious, but charming son gained him entry. She resolutely continued to pray that he would become a Catholic Christian.

After a year or so, Augustine returned to Carthage, this time to teach. Then, when he was about twenty-nine, he left Carthage for Rome, where the students were supposedly more serious and of a higher quality. Having spent an unprofitable year in Rome, he won the post of rhetorician in the imperial court, which in those

years was in the northern Italian city of Milan. He had realized his parents' dream. At the age of thirty, he held one of the most influential posts in the Empire. But he was not happy. His public duties, along with his teaching, weighed heavily on him.

Monica eventually joined her son in Milan. She pressured him to send his longtime female companion back to Africa and arranged a proper marriage to a wealthy but very young Milanese heiress. In the midst of this personal turmoil and professional anxiety, Augustine met Ambrose, the Catholic bishop of Milan. Under Ambrose's influence, Augustine began to reconsider the Bible, which he had previously rejected as inferior literature. He was also introduced to the community of learned Christian philosophers in that city. In their company, he started to read what is called Neoplatonic philosophy and discovered its emphasis on interiority. In the spring of 386, he had a profound experience of divine grace while reading Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans and decided to be baptized. Together with his son, Adeodatus, and his good friend Alypius, Augustine was baptized in Milan in April of 387. He was thirty-two.

Augustine chose to forgo marriage, to resign his position, and to return to Africa in order to live a life of prayer and study. Monica died and was buried in the Roman port city of Ostia on their return journey. Eventually, Augustine arrived home in Thagaste, where he established a community of like-minded Christian friends. But more changes awaited him. His beloved son, Adeodatus, died not long after they had returned. A few years later, during a visit to the coastal city of Hippo, today Annaba in Algeria, Augustine was recognized as the famous rhetorician who had become a Christian. The people "seized him" during Mass, as he would later write, and presented him to the bishop for ordination. He had to give up his dream of a quiet community life in Thagaste.

By 395, Augustine was bishop of Hippo, where he served the Church until his death on August 28, 430. During his years of ministry, he was a prodigious writer. We have almost four hundred of his sermons and three hundred letters to a great variety of people, as well as over two hundred books, including the classic texts *Confessions*, *City of God*, *Trinity*, and *Teaching Christianity*.

He left us five million words in all, more than any ancient author. From these works, his spirituality emerges with insights into human meaning and purpose, in the light of God's love.

The Origins of Augustinian Spirituality

In the months before his conversion, in one of the many conversations about God and faith that he had with his friends, Augustine learned about an earlier Christian spiritual movement that had begun in the late 200s. In their hunger for a deeper spiritual life, many third and early fourth-century Christians withdrew from the world to dwell in remote regions of Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Land. Leaving society behind, they sought to lead lives of intense prayer and sacrifice in the wilderness. Augustine marveled at the conviction and dedication of fervent souls such as Antony of Egypt, a leader of this movement. Upon hearing the Gospel of Matthew, Antony took the words to be addressed to himself. "Go and sell all you possess and give the money to the poor: you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21; *Confessions* VIII.12.29).

The story of Antony's life had a profound effect on Augustine as he struggled with his own decision to become a Christian. It stirred a spiritual fervor in his own soul and turned his always passionate nature to the possibility of a life infused by the Spirit of God. Ultimately, it inspired him not only to request Baptism but also to seek a spiritual path similar to Antony's. He, too, wanted to forsake all and follow Christ, to devote his life to prayer and contemplation in imitation of the holy hermits who had joined Antony in Egypt.

However, Augustine did not choose the desert as the locus for his spiritual life. When he arrived home, instead of withdrawing into African wastelands, Augustine founded a community that gathered around the garden, the open, peaceful enclosure around which houses in the late Roman Empire were built. Over the years, communities inspired by Augustine's example became centers of

spirituality and contemplation, new gardens of Eden redeemed by Christ and peopled by Christians, living out their faith amidst the busy population centers in Roman North Africa.

His vision of committed Christian men and women, lay and ordained, living in simple houses of prayer among the People of God, inspired a new kind of Christian spirituality. It combined the contemplation of the desert with an active ministry in town or city. It integrated spirituality with service, contemplation with community, and humility with hospitality for all who sought God. Even after he was called to be priest and then bishop in the busy port city of Hippo, Augustine himself continued to live in prayerful community and shared poverty with his fellow clerics.

These new communities sought Augustine's counsel and guidance as they strove to live out the Gospel. His response to their request came to be known as his *Monastic Rule*. It is a relatively short document of eight brief chapters that emphasizes love of God and love of one another, and calls for imitation of the first Christians, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32).

Augustinian spirituality thus germinated during the process of Augustine's conversion to Christ. It matured in his desire to live out his Christian faith in a community of believers, living together in harmony, "intent upon God" (*Rule* 1.2). It spread roots and bore fruit during Augustine's forty years of service to the Church as priest and bishop. In his many books, sermons, and letters, Augustine explored and elaborated the nature of Christian life and the spirituality it engendered. Sixteen hundred years later, his spiritual insights continue to inspire men and women in countries and cultures across the globe.

The Augustinian Tradition

After Augustine's death, his example and writings continued to guide small monastic communities of men and women. However,

the troubled political history of North Africa slowly suppressed Christian communities and institutions in that region. Monasteries that followed Augustine's *Rule* and embraced his vision of the spiritual life either closed or migrated north across the Mediterranean. Soon, groups of lay people and clerics in Europe found inspiration and direction in Augustine's *Monastic Rule* for new monastic foundations. His *Rule* was also adopted in many places across Europe by priests who chose to live a more intense spiritual life in community with their bishop. These diocesan communities became known as Augustinian Canons. Augustine's *Rule* was the "canon" or statute that ordered their life together and inspired their common prayer.

There was a significant spiritual movement across Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The political and economic life of the continent developed at a rapid pace in these years. Urbanization and social change left thousands of people seeking a deeper spiritual life, beyond routine religious belief and customary observance. Francis of Assisi, in the Italian region of Umbria, is perhaps the most famous of these hermits who left everything and inspired others to follow the Gospel and join him in a life of evangelical poverty.

West of Umbria, in the region of Tuscany, there were also many hermit communities that gathered adjacent to the new burgeoning towns and cities in central Italy. In 1244, Pope Innocent IV organized these Tuscan hermits into a new mendicant order and gave them the *Rule of Saint Augustine* to follow. Thus, the Order of Saint Augustine was born. It expanded significantly in 1256, in what was called the Grand Union with other communities of hermits across Italy and Europe. The new order of mendicant friars fashioned itself according to Augustine's original vision, combining contemplation with ministry, spirituality with service, prayer with community, and simplicity of life with hospitality for others. The *Constitutions of the Order of Saint Augustine* state, "Our Order from its very beginning has recognized Saint Augustine as its father, master, and spiritual guide, not only because it has received the Rule and the name of the Order from him, but also because it has received from him its doctrine and spirituality" (*Constitutions* I.1.2).

The Order grew quickly. Augustinian friars became preachers of the Gospel, university professors, spiritual directors, and guides. Their various ministries provided a whole new impetus for the spread of Augustinian spirituality. The early saints of the Order, such as Nicholas of Tolentine, Clare of Montefalco, Rita of Cascia, and Thomas of Villanova, among many others, became exemplars of that spirituality.

Today, the Order of Saint Augustine, both the friars and contemplative nuns, along with the men and women of the Augustinian Recollects, the Augustinians of the Assumption, the Discalced Augustinians, as well as the many other religious congregations that follow the Rule of Saint Augustine, are the contemporary guardians and emissaries of Augustinian spirituality. The wider Augustinian family includes many lay people associated with one of the Augustinian orders in different ways. There are multiple lay fraternities, societies, and Third Order Augustinians who continue to find in Augustine inspiration for their spiritual lives.

The Reception and Renewal of Augustinian Spirituality

Across the centuries, different generations of Christians have read and received Augustine's thought differently, influenced by the perspectives and problems of their own time and place. That has left us with many different readings of his ideas. As we have seen, during the so-called Dark Ages of Europe, it was his *Monastic Rule* that influenced European monasticism, along with *Confessions* and *Teaching Christianity* that remained perennial favorites for devout Christians seeking to live a spiritual life. Centuries later, the intensive philosophical and theological debates at the medieval universities in Europe favored a more doctrinal and apologetic reading of his philosophy and theology, sometimes eclipsing the spirituality at the heart of his faith.

By contrast, the Renaissance discovered a more humane Augustine. The fourteenth-century Italian poet Francesco Petrarch

found a rich source of Christian humanism in Augustine's appreciation of classical Greek and Roman culture. What we might call Petrarch's humanistic spirituality drew from his intense reading of *Confessions* and a deep appreciation of Augustine's keen psychological insights. Petrarch regularly carried a small "pocket edition" of *Confessions* with him, a gift from his confessor, the Italian Augustinian friar Denis de Borgo San Sepolcro. Unlike medieval hierarchs and professors, however, Petrarch was not much interested in Christian apologetics.

Two centuries later, the German Augustinian Martin Luther once again brought Augustine's theology to the fore. On a personal level, Luther found much comfort and guidance for his troubled conscience in Augustine's understanding of divine grace. He avidly studied Augustine's interpretation of Saint Paul, which highlighted the primacy of grace for the spiritual life of a Christian. Luther, of course, preached and wrote about reform in the Church and was a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation. However, given the ecclesial and political situation of his time, as well as his own personal theological proclivities, Luther did not address many Augustinian themes such as interiority, contemplation, and sanctification.

After the Reformation, the sixteenth to seventeenth-century Dutch bishop, Cornelius Jansen, espoused a Catholic version of Augustine's theology of grace. Jansen actively opposed the French Jesuits' emphasis on free will, which he thought obscured the need for God's grace. It was a passionate theological debate with profound implications for the spiritual lives of untold numbers of Catholics. The Abbey of Port-Royale, outside Paris, promoted a severe reading of Jansen's interpretation of Augustine. This influenced the education of thousands of French clergy and Irish clergy who studied in France, since Protestant England prohibited Catholic seminaries in Ireland. Generations of these priests educated in a rather dour Augustinianism spread their particular understanding of Catholic spirituality across France, Ireland, French Canada, and America. It left Catholics in these regions with a spirituality devoid of the empathetic humanism that Petrarch had so admired in Augustine.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was a resurgence of interest in Patristics, which is the study of the Fathers of the Church, that is, the influential bishops, priests, and theologians of the first six centuries of Christianity. This renewed interest in Patristics attracted attention to the wider corpus of Augustine's writings and encouraged new consideration of his thought in its proper historical context. Scholars began to study the writings of Augustine that had been ignored by previous generations. There was renewed interest in his *Sermons* and *Letters*, his *Expositions of the Psalms*, his *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, and *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*. As a result, dimensions of his thought expressed in these writings have received much more attention in recent decades. What has emerged is a new appreciation of Augustine's own spiritual life, of his interpretations of Scripture, and of his relationship with Christ. This research has also surfaced the spiritual guidance and pastoral care he offered his people.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) encouraged all religious orders to revisit and revive their founders' spirit as they responded to the social conditions of the times (*Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*, no. 2). In light of this call, the Augustinians engaged the advances in Augustinian studies to enrich their spiritual lives and to share a newfound appreciation of Augustinian spirituality with the wider Augustinian family of lay people.

Augustinian Spirituality Today

This volume draws from the revitalization of Augustinian thought since the Second Vatican Council. My approach also takes courage from the Council's call for continuing dialogue with "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" of the "whole of humanity" (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Joy and Hope* nos. 1, 2). The assumption in these pages is that Augustinian spirituality uniquely addresses our "place and role in the universe, the meaning of our individual and collective strivings, and the

ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity” (no. 3). In that spirit, the book takes three approaches to the topic, three ways of organizing the immense breadth and depth of Augustine’s spirituality and its development in the Augustinian tradition: communion, participation, mission.

Communion is the heart of Augustinian spirituality, an interior life lived in mystical union with God and communion with others. Chapter one investigates how the restless human heart discovers and receives the revelation of divine love in Christ. Chapter two explores conversion as surrender to and sacrifice with Christ. Chapter three presents Augustine’s understanding of Church as the Body of Christ, and as shared contemplation of the mystery of union with God and with each other in Christ.

Participation looks at practice, at the personal and communal dynamics that comprise Augustinian spiritual life on a daily basis. These include three triads: listening, interiority, and memory, in chapter four; friendship, hospitality, and forgiveness, in chapter five; and humility, poverty, and peace, in chapter six. These nine practices incorporate the interior mystery of communion with Christ with the habits of daily life.

Part three presents the theme of *Mission*. Chapter seven explores what Augustinian spirituality offers to the wider Church, to other religions, and to those who do not subscribe to any religion. It proposes that Augustine’s insights into the human condition and his faith in God’s love for humanity inspire hope for our shared future.

Because of the experience, vision, and perspective of its originator, Augustinian spirituality has a universalism about it, a passionate urgency that enriches Christians and others who seek to understand human purpose and meaning. Augustinian spirituality is both deeply rooted in the mystery of Christ and radically open to human restlessness and spiritual striving. “Augustinian spirituality, developed over time, and enriched by the example and teachings of our forebears, ought to be lived according to the circumstances of time, place, and culture and in harmony with our charism” (*Constitutions of the Order of Saint Augustine* I.2.16). We can expect Augustinian spirituality and its reception to continue

to evolve, as the Church and the world advance toward situations and questions that await us in the future.

While this book draws on the academic work of many scholars, it approaches Augustine's thought from the perspective of spirituality. That means it examines human meaning and values; it asks about our ultimate purpose or end; and it explores relationship with God, the source of our being. Spirituality is a highly subjective topic to which we all—you, me, and Augustine—bring our own experience, perspective, and predilections. In his book *The Trinity*, Augustine calls the relationship between author and reader a “covenant both prudent and pious” (*Trin* I.1.5). To honor such a “covenant,” I suggest slow, meditative reading that allows you the time to reflect on the many quotations from Augustine, and the space to evaluate his ideas in light of your own insight and judgment. The goal is not to convince you, but to engage you.

Accordingly, this book nurtures a twofold hope. The first is to evoke responses from the worldwide Augustinian family, with its great diversity of cultures, languages, and experiences across six continents. There is not one homogenous understanding or uniform experience of Augustinian spirituality, at any given time or place in its history. This volume, shaped in a contemporary American Catholic context, will benefit from ongoing dialogue among Augustinians everywhere.

The second hope is for wider dialogue. The nature of Augustine's understanding of the restless human heart invites insight from those whose spiritualities are lived beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church or any Christian Church. Such dialogue will enrich the spiritual legacy of the Bishop of Hippo. All those whose hearts are restless in the pursuit of truth are worthy dialogue partners in conversations about Augustinian spirituality. They all witness to God's loving providence that carries us along our pilgrim way (*Conf* IV.16.31), caring “for each of us as though each were the only one, and for all alike with the same tenderness you show to each” (*Conf* III.11.20).

Pope Leo XIV has become the most famous Augustinian in the world today. He brings to the Petrine ministry an Augustinian

life of contemplation in community, spirituality amidst service, and humility with hospitality for all who seek God. Augustinian spirituality shaped him as a friar and formed him as a pastor. He now brings this spirituality to the notice of the Universal Church and indeed to all who look to him as a moral and spiritual leader. His pontificate opens a new chapter in the Augustinian tradition and provides a global context for Augustinian spirituality. He has invited all of us, Augustinians, Catholics, Christians, members of all religions, and all people of goodwill to walk forward together with hope, following the pilgrim path that is our earthly journey into the fullness of God, “the Sabbath of eternal life” (*Conf* XIII.36.51).

