

Adult Education – St. Luke’s Church – Sedona, AZ – Class 19
Introduction to the Doctors of the Church – St. Augustine of Hippo
October 27, 2019

Note: for ease of accessing the web sites referenced in this handout, download your own PDF copy here: <http://www.episcopalnet.org/DBS/Sedona/AdultEducation2019.html> and click on the live links in that copy. Questions or comments? Email me at dmc89az@gmail.com. Follow St. Luke’s on Facebook: “St. Luke’s Church Sedona AZ”.



St. Augustine, by Champaigne

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/st-augustine-debunked-major-heresies-in-his-day.-his-writings-are-as-releva>

I. Opening Prayer

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord, that we remembering with gladness the righteousness of thy Saints, may at all times and in all places feel the effectual succor of their intercession. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.** (*Secret, Common of a Confessor Bishop, Anglican Missal, p. F23.*)

II. St. Augustine – Overview

- Augustine was born November 13, 354 in the Tagaste, in Northern Africa (now Souk-Ahras, Algeria) to a pagan father (Patricius) and a Christian mother (Monica)
- He had a younger brother (Navigius) and one or two sisters whose names are unknown.
- He received a Christian education but, according to the custom of the time, was not baptized until after his dramatic conversion in his early thirties
- He led a dissolute youth, described in remarkable detail in his *Confessions*
- In 372, Augustine’s father died (shortly after converting to Christianity). About that same time, Augustine took up a concubine who is never named but with whom lived for 14 years, fathering a child (Adeodatus)

- Augustine taught rhetoric in Carthage, Rome and Milan (where he was introduced to and was highly influenced by Ambrose)
- Before his conversion, Augustine belonged to the sect of the Manicheans. Disillusioned, he later became a half-hearted adherent of Neo-Platonism
- Even after he was convinced of the truth of the Christian faith, he was reluctant to accept it because he continued to struggle with sexual sin
- However, in the summer of 386 (at age 32), Augustine underwent a dramatic conversion that, among other things, involved a child's voice and a "random" Bible verse. (See more in Section IV below)
- The next year, having finally witnessed her son's conversion – after decades of fervent, tearful prayer on Augustine's behalf – Monica died in Ostia, Italy
- Augustine returned to Northern Africa, hoping to live a quiet, monastic lifestyle
- He studiously avoided cities that lacked a bishop, fearing he might be pressed into service (as had happened to Ambrose)
- While visiting Hippo, Bishop Valerius expressed a desire for Augustine to stay on because Augustine was capable of preaching in Latin better than Valerian – a Greek – was capable of doing
- The congregation took up the bishop's cause, and Augustine was ordained as a priest in 391 despite his great reluctance – although he also saw it as the will of God
- He was subsequently consecrated bishop, and he succeeded Valerius in 396
- Augustine was Bishop of Hippo for 34 years (396-430)
- He died on August 28, 430 while the city was under siege by the Vandals
- He was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 (along with Ambrose, Jerome and Gregory the Great)
- He is frequently referred to as the Doctor of Grace and the Doctor of Doctors. He is commonly listed as the patron saint of theologians, brewers and those who are struggling against strong vices or habits which they wish to break
- His Feast is celebrated on August 28
- Recommend video: *Augustine I: Biography, Historical Context and Importance* (Ryan Reeves, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XplwbTqzSc>) (39 minutes)

III. Confessions

- Augustine began writing *Confessions* c.397 at age 43 and completed it in 400
- It is addressed to God as essentially one long prayer
- It is highly personal – almost shockingly frank (unprecedented for its time)
- Books I-IX – Confession of his sinful and philosophically misguided life; the account of his conversion; and the death of Monica
- Book X – Confession of the struggles of post-conversion daily life
- Books XI-XIII – Confession of God's glory by undertaking a lengthy exposition of Genesis 1; possibly intended, in part, as a refutation of Manichaean dualism

IV. Conversion

- Shortly before his conversion, Augustine was essentially an emotional and spiritual wreck because of his struggles with lust and his unsuccessful search for Truth:

- “As a youth I had been woefully at fault particularly in early adolescence. I had prayed to you [God] for chastity and said ‘**Give me chastity and continence, but not yet.**’ For I was afraid that you would answer my prayer at once and cure me too soon of the disease of lust, which I wanted satisfied, not quelled. I had wandered on along the road of vice in the sacrilegious superstition of the Manichees, not because I thought that it was right, but because I preferred it to the Christian belief, which I did not explore as I ought but opposed out of malice.” (*Confessions*, Bk VIII, ch 7)
- At the time of his conversion: “I was frantic, overcome by violent anger with myself for not accepting your will and entering into your covenant. Yet in my bones I knew that this was what I ought to do....I tore my hair and hammered my forehead with my fists; I locked my fingers and hugged my knees.” (*Confessions* Bk VIII, ch 8)
- “[While outdoors]...weeping all the while with the most bitter sorrow in my heart...all at once I heard the sing-song voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say, but again and again it repeated the refrain ‘**Take it and read, take it and read**’....I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall....[Retrieving a nearby copy of Paul’s epistles], I opened it, and in silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell: **Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature’s appetites.** [Romans 13:13, 14] I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.”
- “Then we went in and told my mother, who was overjoyed. And when we went on to describe how it had all happened, she was jubilant with triumph and glorified you, who are powerful enough, and more than powerful enough, to carry out your purpose beyond all our hopes and dreams. For she saw that you had granted her far more than she used to ask in her tearful prayers and plaintive lamentations You converted me to yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith, where you had shown me to her in a dream so many years before. And you turned her sadness into rejoicing, into joy far fuller than her dearest wish, far sweeter and more chaste than any she had hoped to find in children begotten of my flesh.” (*Confessions*, Bk VIII, Ch 12)

V. City of God

- Augustine began writing *City of God* in 414 and completed it in 427
- Inspired in part by the sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410. Exiles arriving in Northern Africa were asking Augustine to explain the apparent collapse of the Christian Empire, possibly viewed as punishment for abandoning pagan worship
- “Saint Augustine responded by asserting, to the contrary, that Christianity saved the city from complete destruction and that Rome’s fall was the result of internal moral decay. He further outlined his vision of two societies, that of the elect (“The City of God”) and that of the damned (“The City of Man”). These “cities” are symbolic embodiments of the two

spiritual powers – faith and unbelief – that have contended with each other since the fall of the angels. They are inextricably intermingled on this earth and will remain so until time’s end.” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-City-of-God>)

VI. Augustine’s Influence

- Hugely influential theologian. Voluminous body of writings, still read and studied today
- Arguably the most influential Christian outside the New Testament
- Mounted vigorous defenses against heresies: Manichaeism, Donatism, Pelagianism
- Recommended video: *Augustine II: Theology* (Ryan Reeves, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI-DYrWLVsg>) (30 minutes)
 - Sin, grace and predestination
 - Sacraments and the church
 - Christians and culture (Christians and the state; Just War)

VII. Closing Prayer

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications: that we, whom thou dost suffer to put our trust and confidence in thy mercy; may, at the intercession of blessed Augustine thy Confessor and Bishop, obtain of thy goodness the wonted effects of thy compassion. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.** (*Collect for the Feast of St. Augustine*, Anglican Missal, p. E109.)

VIII. Sources

Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Augustine of Hippo (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>).

Christian History Institute. St. Augustine: Did you know...

(<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/augustine-did-you-know/>) (interesting trivia about St. Augustine, including a copy of the oldest known portrait of him, which is believed to be taken from his signet ring)

Rengers, C. *The 35 Doctors of the Church (revised ed.) Kindle Edition*. Charlotte, NC: TAN Books 2014.

Saint Augustine – Works. (<http://www.augustinus.it/links/inglese/opere.htm>) (an online resource which includes links to most of Augustine’s writings)

Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. NY: Penguin Books 1961.

City of God. NY: Penguin Books 2003.

Schaff, P. (ed.) *The Complete Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Collection of Early Church Fathers: Cross-Linked to the Bible*. Kindle Edition. Amazon Digital Services 2016.

Schaff, P. (ed.) *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*. Kindle Edition. Amazon Digital Services 2011.

Wallin, R. *Chronology of the Life of Saint Augustine*. (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~rdwallin/syl/GreatBooks/202.W99/Augustine/AugustineChron.html>)

Next week: Saint Jerome.

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