



THE AUGUSTINIAN



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Publication of the Augustinian Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel—Australasia

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We have a new
priest!!!

story on page 4



The Augustinian Community in Saigon

Message from *The Prior Provincial*

Welcome to the August 2020 issue of **The Augustinian**.

As I write this message, I am conscious that these times are difficult for all. Each of you are aware of the ways the covid-19 pandemic and its implications are affecting our emotions, sense of well-being, sense of hope both personally and communally. We particularly hold in our prayers and concern those directly affected – those who have contracted the virus, the elderly in their vulnerability, those who find themselves alone, those families who are struggling with loss of income, the young whose dreams for the future have been put on hold, medical personnel very much on the front line and leaders who carry heavy responsibilities at this time. As a nation and a global community we together share the pains and anguish of our time.

I recently was reading the novel *The Confessions of X – A Novel* by Suzanne Wolfe. It is a speculative account of the experience of the woman loved by Augustine in his youth who was the mother of their son Adeodatus. The contemporary author writes as though she was the unnamed woman and so writes in the first person. Though the work is one of using what was known from Augustine's own *Confessions* and other sources as a springboard for the imagination, it is a profoundly moving account of the woman's experience of love, cruel separation, grief and acceptance. Towards the end of the novel, after many years of not having

seen Augustine, the woman, now elderly, hears that Bishop Augustine is dying in Hippo as the city is in turmoil with the Vandal invasions. She risks her own safety to travel a great distance to visit him one last time. The havoc in the city of Hippo as she arrives is described in vivid detail. The final scene is her witness of Augustine on his bed praying the psalms as he entrusts his life to God. For the woman this scene is a testament to hope – a hope not unrealistically removed from what can appear to overwhelm us but hope in the midst of the struggle, hope that transforms.



Fr. Sullivan with Vietnamese born Augustinians: Deacon Tuan, Br. Tu, Fr. Tran and Fr. Hoang

In a very different context, as this year's celebration of the Solemnity of Saint Augustine draws near, hope that can sustain us as we grapple with what is chaotic and difficult to comprehend is a gift for which we all yearn and by which we seek to support one another through our acts of compassion and concern.

This is the time of the year when the Order in Australia promotes the **Annual Augustinian Appeal**. We are conscious that many individuals and families in our ministries are struggling so this informing you of the **2020 Appeal** is done with sensitivity. There are three causes for which the Order invites assistance – our community in Vietnam, the Augustinian Seminary and Augustinian Volunteers Australia. You are welcome to choose to which of these you may wish to contribute. However, our greatest need is support for the community in Saigon, Vietnam. Frs Tran, Hoang and Sullivan are doing great work in hosting five young vocation enquirers learning about Augustinian community life and they guide three pre-novices in the formation programme. While of our three causes, this **Augustinian Vietnam Appeal** is not able to attract a tax deduction, we hope you are able to consider helping us in supporting this endeavour.

I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Augustinian** – joyous news on the recent ordinations of Fr. Phạm Quang Tuyền (Tuyền) OSA (priesthood) and Deacon Lê Tuấn Anh (Tuấn Anh) OSA (diaconate), an international perspective of the Augustinian family in the time pandemic from Fr. Tony Banks OSA (Assistant General) and a report from Paul Wilson (Augustinian Volunteers Australia) on the Bigambul project. In our regular features of our ministries, there is a focus on Holy Spirit Parish, St Clair, NSW.

You are all in the prayers of the members of the Order in these days. Best wishes to each of you and your families for this year's celebration of Saint Augustine's Day.

- Fr. Peter Jones OSA



CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

We are pleased to announce the launch of our brand new website! Visit www.osa.org.au to check it out and let us know what you think. We welcome any feedback you may have on how we can further improve the website. We hope you enjoy the fresh look of our redesigned website!

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ORDINATION OF PHAM QUANG TUYEN OSA

On Saturday 1st August 2020 at Holy Spirit parish, St Clair, Sydney, Vietnamese Augustinian of the Australian Province, Pham Quang Tuyen (31), was ordained priest by Bishop Vincent Long, bishop of Parramatta Diocese, Sydney. Bishop Long himself came to Australia at the age of 19 and hails from the same village in Vietnam as Tuyen. Because of the Covid19 restrictions, Tuyen's ordination had already been postponed from last May and at this time only 100 guests were allowed to attend. Fortunately, Tuyen's parents had come to his ordination to the diaconate last August 20th and this time were able to participate in real time from Vietnam as the entire ceremony was streamed. His uncle and two cousins were, however, able to attend as they live in Sydney. Tuyen has been 7 years in formation in Australia and has spent the last 18 months in St Clair parish under the mentorship of Fathers Peter Tangey and Michael Belonio OSA. Tuyen's family is fairly unique in that he has two other brothers who are priests, another was ordained deacon in July this year and his youngest brother has just joined our Augustinian aspirants in Saigon. God willing, that could be five priests from the one family. So Tuyen's parents could rival the parents of St Therese of Lisieux who have recently been canonized saints, the first to be canonized as a couple. All their five daughters became nuns

- Fr. John Sullivan OSA



Congratulations TO OUR NEW DEACON



The Ordination of Brother Tuan Anh Le OSA to the Diaconate on August 15th was a faithfilled experience even under the restrictions placed on us through numbers attending and maintaining social distancing. It was so appropriate that the feast day was the Assumption of Mary as she is also the patron of Tuan Anh's Diocese in Vietnam. Archbishop Mark Coleridge gave an inspiring homily on the victory of Christ 's Redemptive victory over death ..."and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death..." (1 Cor 15-25} making the connection between Mary's Assumption and the Resurrection. While there was a good representation from clergy and seminarians from the Archdiocese, the travel restrictions meant that the Augustinians and affiliates from the southern states were not able to be present. The streaming of the event made it possible for the ceremony to be seen in Sydney, Melbourne and especially by Tuan Anh's family and friends in Vietnam. The parish community of Coorparoo was honoured and enthusiastic to be part of our Brother Tuan Anh's journey to the priesthood. All look forward to the exercise of his pastoral ministry in the months ahead. As Tuan Anh commented to the Archbishop at the concluding speeches..."Archbishop, you have literally made my day." May he continue to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

- Ray Mitchell

FORMATION UPDATE

For about 6 months now our life as a church and as an Augustinian community have been challenged by the Corona Virus pandemic. Many of the activities in our lives have been put on hold including the programs in the life of the Australian Province. Having said that, it is not all 'dark and gloomy' for the students in our formation houses. Milestones happened to some and renewal of commitments to others. I want to share to you the recent events in the life of our students: On Wednesday, 17th June, 2020 Brothers Đỗ Đức Diễm OSA (Diễm), Nguyễn Đức Tín OSA (Tín) and Choi Jae-Yong OSA (Marco) (Delegation of Korea) made their First Profession of Religious Vows at the Asia-Pacific Augustinian Novitiate, Cebu, Philippines after completing a year of novitiate. On the other hand, our brothers Nguyễn Hoàng Huy OSA (Huy) and Nguyễn Văn Tú OSA (Tú) made their Renewal of Temporary Vows on Monday, 22nd June 2020 at Our Lady of Grace Chapel, Brookvale, NSW. Meanwhile, after 8 years of seminary formation, Brother Huyao (John) Zhang OSA is formally appointed as community member of Our Mother of Good Counsel Priory, St Clair, NSW with pastoral formation at Holy Spirit Parish, St Clair commencing on 15th August 2020.

- Fr. Jepsen Bermudez OSA



Brother John Zhang OSA (right) with Fr. John Sullivan OSA at his farewell dinner from the Formation Community



Brothers Đỗ Đức Diễm OSA (Diễm), Nguyễn Đức Tín OSA (Tín) and Choi Jae-Yong OSA (Marco) (Delegation of Korea) during their First Profession of Religious Vows at the Asia-Pacific Augustinian Novitiate.



Brothers Nguyễn Hoàng Huy OSA (Huy) and Nguyễn Văn Tú OSA (Tú) renewing their Temporary Vows before Fr. John Sullivan OSA, Prior of the Formation Community

The Augustinians in the time of the *Pandemic*

Our Order of St Augustine has a different story to most religious yet utterly in keeping with the traditions of the Church and Scriptures. We have no explicit founder yet take our heritage from St Augustine, our background from the original hermits who moved into the cities as mendicants, our response to the people of the time who called us into their cities and our gratitude to the French Pope who saw us as part of the solution to church corruption.

In the midst of a chaotic world and church the Augustinians emerged as a new group bearing ancient messages. They described themselves as communities in which the members are one in heart and mind intent upon God. This new federation of monasteries and communities spread like wildfire across Europe in the latter 13th century and peaked just before the world experienced a pandemic – the black plague.

The Augustinians across the world have confronted the 21st century pandemic and like many other groups have turned to ZOOM and other such programs to be in touch and to tell our stories to each other. In Iquitos Peru our people are the providers of PPE and ventilators, in Cebu Philippines we have programs to help the truly poor, at the UN we advocate for WHO despite its weaknesses, and in Germany run programs for the dispossessed migrants.

Fr. Tony Banks OSA, Assistant General, with the Augustinian brothers in Formation



As did the Augustinians of the past so the men and women of the present are still providing transforming programs to better the lives of others. But this flows out of who we are; the common life defines our being. Our General and Council have heard that across the continents our members have needed to spend more time together. The prayer life of the community has flourished, especially in prayer for those outside our chapels. Meal times have lengthened. Community life has improved. As for many families, so we as an Order are rediscovering what really binds us together.

Our vows take on a stronger sense as we come to value our obedience to the greater will of the whole community which is guided by the Holy Spirit. The sense of our common poverty, wherein all things are held in common for the greater community and for those coming after us has greater awareness as we note the transience of the present. And then there is the call to love the whole world, without any conditions, and to manifest that love in a sense of hope and joy, even in the face of turmoil and terror – by the way we Augustinians call that chastity. What do you value, whom do you serve, where is your love?

Our greatest pain is that the community that is the whole Body of Christ cannot be with us today as we lead prayer and sacrament. But we pledge that the Eucharist we celebrate in our lonely chapels, is not simply for our renewal, but reminds our Saviour of the needs of all the redeemed. Our values are only of use if they are evocative to you of the primacy of God's Kingdom. We are again in the process of discovering the core of our existence.

- Fr. Tony Banks OSA



Augustinian friars at the Mid-Chapter preparatory meeting on Zoom

During the pandemic in Australia, The Queensland group of Augustinian Volunteers Australia (AVA) has been working with Bigambul Aboriginal Corporation of Goondiwindi to help reconstruct their language. This has required much work in research by Volunteers, with regular zoom meetings and phone calls to keep up with the yearning of community members to reconstruct and know their language. To date, some hundreds of words have been recovered from lists compiled by early pastoralists, explorers and even church pastors as they recorded the language they heard in late 19th and early 20th Century incursions into the Condamine area.

AUGUSTINIAN VOLUNTEERS IN QUEENSLAND ASSIST

Language Restoration

The area being discussed here sits on the border between Queensland and New South Wales along a section of the Condamine River. The following map gives some idea of the clans whose campsite (their *ngura*) was situated along the Condamine River. A clan in Aboriginal terms is a gathering usually of extended family. Around the Sydney area, where Augustinian Volunteers learnt their craft as language researchers and teachers with the Redfern community, this would have been no more than around sixty people or so. We can think of these Condamine groups in much the same way.

The expansion of the colony through pastoralists and explorers included also, sadly, those who would destroy both language and culture. Australian Parliaments struggled in their protection of Aboriginal peoples from 1901 to obviate these problems. Today groups like Augustinian Volunteers are now needed to assist communities and Government in the reconstruction of these lost languages.

AVA Volunteers have spent early weeks of the COVID lockdowns in Australia, after responding to a community leader's call for assistance, to follow up all leads to recover the lists of Bigambul words that are still extant in libraries. Volunteers have set these up in a new listing juxtaposed with the lists of nearby communities for comparison. More recently they have begun the onerous task of trying to differentiate between the languages of the various Condamine clans as seen in this map. This is difficult because the communities here are very close to one another. They probably included some family members and may have shared some words because of their proximity to one another. Present day members of Bigambul are keen to identify their precise linguistic heritage, of course.

AVA have the privilege of their own assistant Linguist, Jeremy Steele, who together with the Exec. Officer of Augustinian Justice & Peace based in Sydney, have reorganised the words into a list according to spelling, origins and pronunciation (see table below). These were recorded onto a Mac Itunes app so that the community can now hear pronunciations of the words that were lost to them in early times of the colony. The Officer and Aunty Rhonda Sandow of the

Traditional Custodian Groups of the Condamine catchment



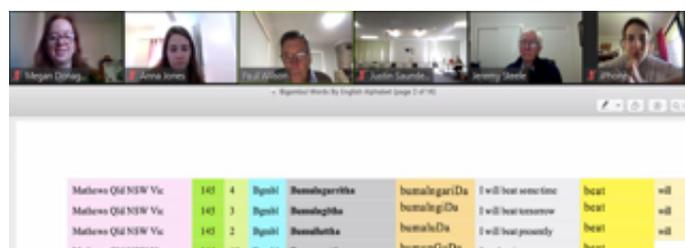


Augustinian Volunteers Anna and Claire in research

community will commence travelling to Goondiwindi soon taking Augustinian Volunteers to meet with Bigambul elders and share their knowledge of the words they have recovered.

Therefore, on Friday 31st July, Volunteers gathered together with Jeremy Steele, AVA language expert and met via ZOOM with Aunty Rhonda, Corporation CEO Justin Saunders and another five Bigambul members of varying ages. After introductions and explanations of what had been achieved so far, the Volunteers played the recording of the 14 pages of Bigambul words secured so far. One could almost say the community members seemed mesmerised. They were hearing words spoken by Jeremy that dated back thousands of years and which had not been heard spoken, for most words, in nearly 150 years. Quite a telling experience for everyone.

At the end of the ZOOM, Aunty Rhonda appealed to her board to secure the necessary resources to set up the new Language Centre and to continue the language work of AVA through its next stages of teaching mentors and young people the language and presenting it to visitors over the next two years. The Volunteers know that all the literature demonstrates how language is a crucial factor for young and old alike in Aboriginal Communities in issues of Identity and Belonging. AVA volunteers look forward to the continuation of this precious work with the Bigambul community. - **Paul Wilson**



The First Bigambul Recovered Language Zoom.

AUGUSTINIAN VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA TRUST FUND

If you would like to know more about what we do, please visit our website. You can also donate via our website or by direct deposit

Website: www.augustinianvolunteersaustralia.org

Account Name: Augustinian Volunteers Australia Trust Fund

BSB: 062 287

Account Number: 1043 4293

Reference: Please include your name



Coronavirus:

A PARISH DIARY

Holy Spirit Parish is centred upon the suburb of St Clair, forty-five kilometres west of central Sydney, and within the Diocese of Parramatta. The Augustinians have administered the parish for twenty-five years, and Michael Belonio OSA has been parish priest there since January 2015.

It was the weekend of 1-2 February 2020 that the first Covid-19 restrictions were introduced. We celebrated that same weekend the 25th year anniversary of the Augustinian presence in St Clair. Part of the restrictions was about the distribution of holy communion under one species and that will be received in the hand. We were also advised to eliminate or avoid physical contact in the exchange of peace. Many people were still not bothered so much about the virus as Australia had a total of only 12 coronavirus cases then, and all of them reported a travel history to China.

As days go by, it was getting serious and people started to become cautious of social distancing. It was the weekend of 21-22 March (4th Sunday of Lent) that only 100 people are allowed inside the church building. I remember we rearranged the chairs in the church that Saturday afternoon with the Men's Ministry according to the 4 square meter rule. Monday 23 March was the last Mass I celebrated in the church, then by noontime of that same day church building was closed since then. The days of uncertainty started to unfold. Usually it was during those times that

we get so busy preparing for the Easter Triduum. It was a sad and weird experience to celebrate Easter Triduum in the priory with just the three of us. Zoom and social media became the venue for meetings and catch-ups.

However, the lockdown became a blessing in disguise because we got the opportunity to do the renovations in the church – sacristy, two parish kitchens and storage room – without any disruption. We had been able to secure grant funding from the Federal Government for these projects just before the lockdown. The Men’s Ministry, Deacon Tuyen, myself and other parishioners kept ourselves busy with the renovations. It was a hard work but we managed to finish it just before the soft-reopening of churches on 18th May.

all caught unprepared as there is no manual or textbook to follow. I suppose all of us have been asking questions like when we’ll be able to go back to normal and how much the church change for a new normal. And this ‘new normal’ that we have now might stay for a while until there is a vaccine. What we have experienced and will continue to



Photo taken during the re-opening of the Church after the lockdown

It was a happy moment to see a few parishioners back in the church and celebrate the Eucharist with them, even though only 10 people were allowed to be in the church building at any one time. Then the 10-persons limit became 50 in 1st June, then became unlimited depending on the area of the church building in 1st July. At Holy Spirit we are able to accommodate 175 people in the church building, excluding the clergy and those involved in the liturgy.

experience is going to force the Church to change in some ways. Are we ready to embrace the ‘new normal’? With the situation we are currently in, we have to focus and invest on our online resources and community. It is interesting to see that the digital community was a real community. Do we have online tools so people could easily give their donations? With the restrictions still in place to the elderly, how are we going to connect with them? The lockdown led us to become creative ministers.

Looking back, the lockdown gave us plenty of time to think about what really matters most to us, i.e., catching up with friends and family, reconciling with ourselves, the growing desire to celebrate eucharist with the community. We were

We are in a liminal season, stuck between an ending and a new beginning. The pathway forward is unknown. As we re-open our churches, will be business as usual? As we rush to return to normal, let us use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to.

- Fr. Michael Belonio OSA



Fr. Quang Tuyen Pham OSA with some parishioners doing renovation work in the parish

THE AUGUSTINIANS

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

This year's Annual Appeal, focused on Augustinian Vietnam Mission Fund and other ministries, is being held in August, around the time of St Augustine's Day.

There are various ways you can contribute to the Order:

AUGUSTINIAN VIETNAM MISSION FUND (not tax deductible)

Donations will be used to assist the new Augustinian Community in Saigon with their setup costs which include preparation to invite young Vietnamese to test their vocation in the Augustinian *Come and See Program*. You can make a donation by cash or direct deposit.

Account Name: Augustinian Vietnam Mission Fund

BSB: 082 146

Account Number: 7359 03067

Reference: Please include your name

AUGUSTINIAN VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA TRUST FUND (Tax deductible)

If you would like to know more about what we do, please visit our website.

Website: www.augustinianvolunteersaustralia.org

You can also donate via our website or by direct deposit

Account Name: Augustinian Volunteers Australia Trust Fund

BSB: 062 287

Account Number: 1043 4293

Reference: Please include your name

AUGUSTINIAN SEMINARY TRUST FUND (Tax deductible)

Donations are used exclusively for the ongoing provision for our seminarians. Envelopes are available in our parishes and you can make a donation by cash, credit card or direct deposit.

Account Name: Augustinian Seminary Trust Fund

BSB: 082 146

Account Number: 13 610 4220

Reference: Please include your name

BEQUESTS

Please contact the Province Office for information on how you can leave a bequest to the Province. For donations made by direct deposit, please contact our office for a tax deductible receipt.

Mailing Address:

Order of St Augustine
PO Box 7278 Warringah Mall
Brookvale NSW 2100 AUSTRALIA

Phone: +61 2 9938 0200

Email: anna.heath@osa.org.au

PUBLICATION TEAM

Fr Percival Severe OSA (*Coordinator*)

Fr Peter Jones OSA

Fr John Sullivan OSA

Fr Michael Belonio OSA

Br Duc Tin Nguyen OSA (*Layout artist*)

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For additional copies, or to unsubscribe, please contact the Provincial Office:

Order of Saint Augustine
PO Box 7278 Warringah Mall
Brookvale NSW 2100 AUSTRALIA

PHONE +61 2 9938 0200

EMAIL osaadmin@bigpond.com



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