

**Augustinian Chapters and Celebrations of Renewal:**  
**Volume 2**  
**Chapters of Renewal for**  
**Finding Our Voice in a Post-Pandemic World,**  
**The Call to Synodality in an Augustinian Way, and**  
**Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way**



**Gary N. McCloskey, O.S.A.**  
*Order of Saint Augustine*  
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**Chapters and Celebrations of Renewal**  
**Volume 2 – Chapters of Renewal for**  
**Finding Voice through Psalms**  
**for Serving in a Post-Pandemic World,**  
**The Call to Synodality in an Augustinian Way and**  
**Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way**

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***Dedication  
to***

**+Anthony M. (Mickey) Genovese, O.S.A.**

**and**

**+Richard G. Cannuli, O.S.A.**

**For their encouragement in creating Augustinian Practices**

Acknowledgements:

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CURIA  
GENERALIZIA  
AGOSTINIANA

VIA PAOLO VI, 25 - 00193 ROMA  
Tel. +39 06.680061

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Dear Brothers,

This second volume of *Augustinian Chapters and Celebrations of Renewal* has been prepared with detailed attention to the signs of the times in which we are living. This volume, like the first, was prepared by Gary McCloskey, OSA of the St. Thomas of Villanova Province, and can be employed as a guide to assist our communities who are searching for meaningful ways to celebrate local chapters and Chapters of renewal. We are grateful to Gary for the time and thoughtful effort he gave to preparing this publication.

The three sections of this volume address current realities in our world which touch the lives of each one of us. Section one assists us to find a voice in a Post-Pandemic World. Using the Psalms in our celebrations of Renewal and local chapters, we can discover how these ancient songs continue to communicate to us through the experiences of our daily lives. As a result of the pandemic that touched each of us in personal and communal ways, we are different now from who we were before, and the Psalms can give voice to this reality.

Section two has at its center, the call to Synodality in which the Universal Church is currently involved. The suggested forms for our reflection and sharing highlight how traces of our Augustinian way of life are foundations which support and animate the Synodal Process of listening, walking together, communion, participation, and mission.

The third section, Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way, highlights some of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as they speak to our Augustinian common life and apostolate. They are principles which support our lives as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ as we respond to the cry of our poorest brothers and sisters and as we care for our Common home.

In September of 2022, we celebrated the Intermediate General Chapter in San Diego, California. There, we approved a document, *Renovatio*, which guides us to review our lives in such a way that leads to a renewal of our corporate and individual commitment to be Augustinians in the twenty-first century. May the following pages inspire each of us toward a renewal of the vocation we have received.

Fraternally,

  
Alejandro Moral Antón, O.S.A.  
Prior General



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Chapters of Renewal in this volume are a continuation of Volume I from over 12 years ago. While Volume I was crafted to meet the Plan of Province 2010-2014 of the Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova, Volume II follows the greater usage of Volume I outside of the Villanova Province as well as responding to requests for Chapters of Renewal from outside of the Villanova Province.

These Chapters are crafted to aid in implementing what the Order's *Constitutions* say about the celebration of Chapters of Renewal, when it describes,

The local prior will take advantage of the opportunity to promote the religious and apostolic life of the friars with words of encouragement. He will propose to the examination of the friars what appears necessary and useful to promote communion and correct faults or transgressions. Thus in fraternal and responsible dialogue, an effort will be made to resolve difficulties and improve community life.<sup>1</sup>

In responding to the request from friars for activities, related to the Social Apostolate (Catholic Social Teaching) and the OSA UN NGO, the need has become clear for Community-based (in addition to my prior work in School-based) Augustinian Pedagogy.

In this volume are Chapters of Renewal for 3 Order-wide issues:

### **Finding Voice through Psalms for Serving in a Post-Pandemic World The Call for Synodality in an Augustinian Way, and Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way**

In these Chapters of Renewals, communities can explore how to respond in an Augustinian way through connections to Saint Augustine's thoughts. where participants can see from his time resonance with the concerns of today. These Chapters of Renewal are formed so that participants will not only hear from Saint Augustine but also, be prepared to practice Augustinian thinking in their everyday lives. Additionally, the Chapters are shaped for participants to learn as Saint Augustine teaches via Prayer as a Pedagogy of God.<sup>2</sup>

## **SECTION I: FINDING VOICE THROUGH PSALMS FOR SERVING IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD**

In some quarters there is talk of a "Post-Pandemic World" and a "new normal." One only needs to look around to see that people are in differing circumstances related to facing Covid and any post-Covid reality. What people have in common is a need to find their voices in the type of reality they are facing locally. This Chapter of Renewal is guided by Saint Augustine's thoughts about praying the Psalms to find our voices in difficult times.

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions of the Order of Saint Augustine*, §102.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter 130*.



# FINDING OUR VOICES IN DIFFICULT TIMES WITH THE PSALMS GUIDED BY SAINT AUGUSTINE CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

## Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

**LEADER:** In *Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, the Second Vatican Council reminded us of the Church and the Trinity accompanying us in these words:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of people. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.<sup>1</sup>

While this is a prayer of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the restlessness of joys, hopes, griefs, and fears connect to Saint Augustine, when he observes in his *Confessions*, "But now suppose I produce something else from my memory: I state that there are four passions that disturb the soul - desire, joy, fear, and sadness; and for purposes of disputation, I state whatever analysis of them I have formulated by dividing each according to species and genus ... the mind itself has become aware of them by undergoing its emotions."<sup>2</sup>

In a Covid affected world, we are often in a swirl of emotions that impact our ability to find the words to voice our prayers. Saint Augustine encourages us to let the Psalms lead us and carry us in prayer when he says, "If the psalm is praying, pray yourselves; and if it is groaning, you groan too; and if it is happy, rejoice; and if it is crying out in hope, you hope as well; and if it expresses fear, be afraid. Everything written here is like a mirror held up to us."<sup>3</sup>

He also urges us to "Listen to [the psalms] as if you were listening to yourselves. Listen as if you were watching your own reflection in the mirror of scriptures."<sup>4</sup>

## Praying with Saint Augustine through the Inspired Voice of Psalmist

The superior and community will choose 3 of the 6 psalms and their difficulties in the Appendix of this Chapter of Renewal. The choices should connect to the community's difficulties. These psalms and Augustinian thoughts on the psalm should be prayed and read here. If the community desires, they can hold an additional Chapter of Renewal with the remaining 3 psalms and related difficulties.

*Pause*

## **An Augustinian Reflective Dialogue for FINDING OUR VOICES WITH THE PSALMS**

The superior exhorts the community in these words:

Saint Augustine tells us that the first step to truth is humility.<sup>5</sup> Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path, let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for finding our voices in prayer.

As we reflect in preparation for our Augustinian dialogue, let us ask:

At this point, the superior should use the Reflection Questions in the Appendix related to Psalms that the community has just found the voice to pray.

*Pause*

### **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with the People of God.

### **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our humble listening, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Here the superior should use the Concluding Intercessions in the Appendix related to Psalms that the community has used as their voice in prayer.

Other petitions may be added by the community.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,  
you created humankind in your own image and likeness.  
Open our ears to hear your voice,  
cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,  
and dispel all our ignorance  
that we may recognize you,  
the only true God and Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>6</sup>  
R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

## Appendix:

The superior and community will choose 3 of the 6 psalms and their difficulties below for this Chapter of Renewal. The choices should be connected to the difficulties they are experiencing. If they desire, they can hold an additional Chapter of Renewal with the remaining 3 psalms and difficulties.

Also, the related Reflection Questions and Concluding Intercessions should be used in the appropriate places of the Chapter of Renewal.

### 1. Difficulty in Finding God in Prayer

**LEADER:** Let us strive for God's aid in finding our voice as we pray Psalm 141 together:

**ALL:** LORD, I call to you; hasten to me;  
listen to my plea when I call.  
Let my prayer be incense before you;  
my uplifted hands an evening offering.  
Set a guard, LORD, before my mouth,  
keep watch over the door of my lips.  
Do not let my heart incline to evil,  
to perform deeds in wickedness...  
My eyes are upon you, O LORD, my Lord;  
in you, I take refuge; (Psalm 141: 1-4a, 8a)

*Pause*

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm, Saint Augustine tells us, "The evening offering is the Lord's passion, the Lord's cross, the offering of the saving victim in a holocaust acceptable to God. Through his resurrection, his evening sacrifice was transformed into a morning offering. Because of him, every prayer purely directed from the heart of a believer rises like incense, as from a holy altar. Nothing is more delightful than this fragrance of the Lord. May all who believe send forth the same fragrance."<sup>7</sup>

#### Related Reflection Questions

How can we lift up our hearts like incense rising to God?

#### Related Concluding Intercession

So that we take refuge in God through our praying of the Psalms:  
R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

### 2. Groaning in the Face of our Difficulties

**LEADER:** Let us find God coming to us as we pray Psalm 6 voicing our groaning in our current difficulties:

**ALL:** Do not reprove me in your anger, LORD,  
nor punish me in your wrath.  
Have pity on me, LORD,  
for I am weak;  
heal me, LORD,  
for my bones are shuddering.

My soul too is shuddering greatly  
and you, LORD, how long...?  
Turn back, LORD, rescue my soul;  
save me because of your mercy.  
I am wearied with groaning;  
all night long I drench my bed with tears;  
I soak my couch with weeping.  
The LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.  
The LORD has heard my plea;  
the LORD will receive my prayer. (Psalm 6: 2-5,7,9b-10)

*Pause*

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm, Saint Augustine tells us, "'Save me,' he [the Psalmist] says, 'because of your mercy.' ... Heal me, therefore, says the psalmist, not in proportion to what I in fact deserve, but in proportion to your own abundant mercy ... 'The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping; the Lord has heard my petition; the Lord has taken up my prayer.' ... because whoever sows in tears will reap in joy, and those who mourn are blessed because they will receive consolation."<sup>8</sup>

**Related Reflection Question**

How can I, in the midst of groaning, seek God's mercy through praying the Psalms?

**Related Concluding Intercession**

So that the Lord may hear my groaning and weeping and receive our prayer through the Psalms.  
R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

### **3. Being Happy and Rejoicing Despite our Difficulties**

**LEADER:** Let us find God coming to us as we pray Psalm 122 voicing our happiness and joy, even when these emotions distract us:

**ALL:** I rejoiced when they said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."  
And now our feet are standing  
within your gates, Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem, built as a city,  
walled round about.  
There the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD,  
As it was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
There are the thrones of justice,  
the thrones of the house of David. (Psalm 122: 1b-5)

*Pause*

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm, Saint Augustine tells us, "Dearly beloved

brothers and sisters, ... remember how the throngs incite one another, how people encourage each other, saying, 'Come on, let's go, let's go.' Others ask, 'Where are we going?' And they are told, 'To that place, to the holy site.' People talk to each other and catch fire with enthusiasm, and all the separate flames unite into a single flame. This one flame that springs up from the conversation of many people who enkindle one another seizes them all and sweeps them along to the holy place. ... 'Let's run, let's run fast,' they say, 'for we are going to the Lord's house!' Let's run and not weary because we shall reach a place where fatigue will never touch us. ... they shout from afar to us late comers, 'We are going to the Lord's house! Walk! Run!' The apostles have seen it, and they exhort us, 'Run, walk, follow, we are going to the Lord's house!' And what do we reply, every one of us? 'I rejoiced over those who told me, 'We are going to the Lord's house.'" I rejoiced over the prophets, and I rejoiced over the apostles, for all of them have told us, 'We are going to the Lord's house.'"<sup>9</sup>

#### Related Reflection Question

How can I take the joy of God's invitations to move forward in my life?

#### Related Concluding Intercession

That with happiness and rejoicing in the midst of difficulties we may go up to the Lord through our praying of the Psalms.

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

## 4. Maintaining Hope Despite our Difficulties

**LEADER:** Let us find God coming to us as we pray Psalm 25 voicing our cries to God with what hope we experience in these difficult times:

**ALL:** To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul,  
my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be put to shame.  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame.

Make known to me your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.

Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,  
for you are God, my savior,

I wait all the day long.

Remember your compassion and your mercy, O LORD,  
for they are ages old.

Remember me according to your mercy,

because of your goodness, LORD. (Psalm 25: 1b-3a, 4-6, 7b)

#### Pause

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm, Saint Augustine tells us, "'Remember your mercies, Lord,' remember the deeds your mercy has wrought, because people are thinking you have forgotten. 'And that your mercies are from eternity.' remember this, that your mercies are from eternity, because you have never been without them. You did indeed subject sinful humans to frustration, but you subjected them

in hope; you did not abandon them but supported them with the many great comforts of your creation.”<sup>10</sup>

#### Related Reflection Question

How can the Lord in his mercy guide us to fidelity in the midst of our difficulties?

#### Related Concluding Intercession

That we, in the midst of difficulties, may know the ways of the Lord through our praying of the Psalms.

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

### 5. Facing Fear and Being Afraid in our Time of Difficulties

**LEADER:** Let us find God as we pray Psalm 27 giving voice to God’s care amidst our fears in these difficult times:

**ALL:** The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life’s refuge;  
of whom should I be afraid?

When evildoers come at me  
to devour my flesh,

These my enemies and foes  
themselves stumble and fall.

Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart does not fear;

Though war be waged against me,  
even then do I trust.

One thing I ask of the LORD;  
this I seek:

To dwell in the LORD’s house  
all the days of my life,

To gaze on the LORD’s beauty,  
to visit his temple.

For God will hide me in his shelter  
in time of trouble,

He will conceal me in the cover of his tent;  
and set me high upon a rock.

Even now my head is held high  
above my enemies on every side!

I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing and chant praise to the LORD.

Hear my voice, LORD, when I call;  
have mercy on me and answer me.

“Come,” says my heart, “seek his face”;  
your face, LORD, do I seek!

Do not hide your face from me;

do not repel your servant in anger.  
You are my salvation; do not cast me off;  
do not forsake me, God, my savior!  
Even if my father and mother forsake me,  
the LORD will take me in.

LORD, show me your way;  
lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

Do not abandon me to the desire of my foes;  
malicious and lying witnesses have risen against me.

I believe I shall see the LORD's goodness  
in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD, take courage;  
be stouthearted, wait for the LORD! (Psalm 27: 1b-14)

*Pause*

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm Saint Augustine tells us, "See now what the psalmist has to say. 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?' He enlightens me, let the darkness roll back: he saves me, let all infirmity be banished. Now that I walk firmly in the light, whom shall I fear? ... But when we have a hope in him that is sure and fixed and true, whom shall we fear? The Lord is your illumination, the Lord is your salvation. Go on! Find someone more powerful and be afraid! I belong so thoroughly to the most powerful one of all, to him who is all-powerful, that he both enlightens me and saves me; I shall fear no one except him. 'The Lord is the protector of my life; from whom shall I shrink?'"<sup>11</sup>

**Related Reflection Question**

How can God's enlightenment and protection prayed about in the Psalms move us forward in the midst of difficulties?

**Related Concluding Intercession**

That God's enlightenment through the Psalms may help us to overcome our fears and find our protector.

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

## **6. Let God Carry You in the Midst of Difficulties**

**LEADER:** Let us find God as we pray Psalm 55, and it carries our voices when we feel voiceless in these difficult times:

**ALL:** Listen, God, to my prayer;  
do not hide from my pleading;  
hear me and give answer.

I rock with grief; I groan  
at the uproar of the enemy,  
the clamor of the wicked.

They heap trouble upon me,  
savagely accuse me.

My heart pounds within me;

death's terrors fall upon me.  
Fear and trembling overwhelm me;  
shuddering sweeps over me.  
I say, "If only I had wings like a dove  
that I might fly away and find rest.  
Far away I would flee;  
I would stay in the desert.  
"I would soon find a shelter  
from the raging wind and storm."  
But I will call upon God,  
and the LORD will save me.  
At dusk, dawn, and noon  
I will grieve and complain,  
and my prayer will be heard.  
He will redeem my soul in peace  
from those who war against me,  
though there are many who oppose me.  
Cast your care upon the LORD,  
who will give you support.  
He will never allow  
the righteous to stumble. (Psalm 55, 2-9, 17-19, 23)

**LEADER:** In reflecting on this Psalm Saint Augustine tells us, "Let us listen and make these words our own ... [and] realize that we are in it too, so that as we share his tribulation we may unite our prayer with his. 'I am deeply saddened in my ordeal, and very distressed.' ... Now what about the speaker in this psalm [?] ... He stretched his love so far that he could love even his enemies, but now weariness has overtaken him."<sup>12</sup>

#### Related Reflection Question

How, in the midst of our difficulties, can we cast our care upon the Lord through our praying of the Psalms?

#### Related Concluding Intercession

That God's support can come to us through the Psalms in our fears and trembling.

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, Pope. *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, §1. Second Vatican Council, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions* X, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 30(31) (4)*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 123 (124)* 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Soliloquies* I, 1, 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 140(141)*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 6*, 5, and 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 121(122)*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 24(25)*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 26(27)*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 54(55)*, 3-5.



## **SECTION II: Call for Synodality in an Augustinian Way**

Well over 50 years ago, Saint Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops by *moto proprio* during the last session of Vatican II. The Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality observes,

This more permanent structure was intended to preserve close cooperation of the bishops with the pope after the council. First and foremost, synodality denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working."<sup>1</sup>

The next 5 Chapters of Renewal are shaped to develop aspects of "synodal" thinking for our "ordinary way of living and working" discerning our way forward. This thinking should continue past the Synod on Synods into other synods and gatherings. The International Theological Commission observes

An ecclesial mentality shaped by synodal thinking joyfully welcomes and promotes the grace in virtue of which all the baptised are qualified and called to be missionary disciples. The great challenge for pastoral conversion that follows from this for the life of the Church is to intensify the mutual collaboration of all in evangelising witness based on everyone's gifts and roles.<sup>2</sup>

These Chapters of Renewal focus on strengthening, in Augustinian circumstances, synodal thinking through the aspects of Synodal Listening in an Augustinian Way, Synodal Walking Together in an Augustinian Way, Synodal Relationship and Encountering in an Augustinian Way, Synodal Conversion in an Augustinian Way, and Synodal Missionary Communion in an Augustinian Way.

Like the others in this volume, these Chapters of Renewal are shaped in connection with the thoughts of Saint Augustine to remind us of our heritage. Saint Augustine's thoughts also show that these values of the Church did not begin with Pope Saint Paul VI, the International Theological Commission, or Pope Francis. Even earlier than Saint Augustine, we can find synodal-like thinking and acting at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15<sup>3</sup> and in Ephesians 4-5 where we see Saint Paul expresses solicitude for the unity of and usage of their diverse gifts by the community of Ephesus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission - Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality. Vatican City: Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, 2021, §1.2.

<sup>2</sup> International Theological Commission. Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, 2018, § 104.

<sup>3</sup> For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission – Biblical Resources for Synodality. Vatican City: Synod of Bishops, 2021, pp. 75-79.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-87.



## **SYNODAL LISTENING IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY CHAPTER OF RENEWAL**

### **Introductory Rites**

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. The greatest obstacle in turning back to God is pride. Thus, our holy father Augustine, our guide in the paths of freedom and truth, advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds us about humble listening, "Today's world is largely a deaf world... At times, the frantic pace of the modern world prevents us from listening attentively to what another person is saying. Halfway through, we interrupt him and want to contradict what he has not even finished saying. We must not lose our ability to listen."<sup>2</sup>

In the humility of Saint Augustine, let us rely on the grace to become a listening community in deeper ways begun in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and encouraged by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (4-5).

### **Call for SYNODAL LISTENING in an Augustinian way**

**READER 1:** Let us heed Saint Augustine as he points out that Christian listening is a community endeavor, as he notes, "Listen to me, or rather, listen with me; let's both listen together, both learn together. I mean, just because I'm talking and you're listening, it doesn't mean that I'm not listening with you. So, when you hear 'Christ is God,' you ask, 'What sort of God is Christ?' Listen with me. I'm not saying listen to me, but with me. In this school, you see, we are all fellow students; heaven is our professor's chair. So, listen to what sort of God Christ is."<sup>3</sup>

*Pause*

Let us humbly listen rather than speak, as Saint Augustine encourages us, "Those who hear are more fortunate than those who speak. The learner is humble, but the teacher has to work hard at not being proud."<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** In our reflection on listening let us take Saint Augustine’s encouragement to reflect on how well we have been listening each day. As he notes, “It is the task of Christians daily to make progress toward God, and always to rejoice in God or in his gifts. For the time of our pilgrimage, our wandering in exile, is extremely short, and in our home country time does not exist. There is a considerable difference, after all, between eternity and time. Here devotion is required of you, there you take your rest. For this reason, like good traders, let us note every day how we have got on, what profit we have made. You see, we have to be not only attentive in listening, but vigilantly active as well. This is a school in which God is the only teacher, and it demands good students, ones who are keen in attendance, not ones who play truant.”<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** This reflection is to build up our listening, as Saint Augustine encourages us, “Let the admonitions of the prophets and the apostles sink into your hearts as foundations, lay down your humility on top of them as an even floor with nothing to trip people up. Secure sound and salutary teaching in your hearts with prayers and sermons as with strong walls. Shed light on them with the divine oracles as lamps, hold up the weak like columns, protect the needy like roofs, so that the Lord our God may pay back eternal goods things for temporal ones, and take possession of you forever as his perfected and dedicated dwelling.”<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

### **Reflection for SYNODAL LISTENING through an Augustinian Dialogue**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step toward listening. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for synodal listening in an Augustinian way.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?

What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?

Do the ways we live and minister, help us to listen to the whole People of God?

What else facilitates or inhibits our listening to the cry of God’s people?

*Pause*

### **Fraternal Dialogue**

*The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:*

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with the People of God.

## Concluding Prayer

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our humble listening, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To be open to hearing God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To overcome the limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have views that are different from our own:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that the ways we live and minister may help us to listen to the whole People of God:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that we may increase our listening to the cry of God's people:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that our listening together may increase harmony among God's people:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>7</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Sermon 261*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 50(51)*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Sermon 16A*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Sermon 337*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.

# SYNODAL WALKING TOGETHER IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY

## CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. The greatest obstacle in turning back to God is pride. Thus, our holy father Augustine, our guide in the paths of freedom and truth, advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds us about the struggles in walking together in a synodal way, "Let us realize that as our minds and hearts narrow, the less capable we become of understanding the world around us. Without encountering and relating to differences, it is hard to achieve a clear and complete understanding even of ourselves and of our native land." (*Fratelli Tutti* § 146)<sup>2</sup>

In the humility of Saint Augustine, let us rely on the grace to become a community walking together in deeper ways begun in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and encouraged by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (4-5).

### Call for SYNODAL WALKING TOGETHER in an Augustinian way

**READER 1:** In our reflection on walking together as a community let us take Saint Augustine's encouragement to make progress and sing as we are walking. As he notes, "Make some progress, make progress in goodness. There are some people, you see, according to the apostle, who progress from bad to worse. You, if you're making progress, are walking; but make progress in goodness, progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behavior. Sing and keep on walking. Don't stray off the road, don't go back, don't stay where you are."<sup>3</sup>

*Pause*

Saint Augustine cautions us not to get stuck as we walk together, "Always be dissatisfied with what you are, if you want to arrive at what you are not yet. Because wherever you are satisfied with yourself, there you have stuck. If, though, you say, "That's enough, that's the lot," then you have perished. Always add some more, always keep on walking, always forge ahead."<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Saint Augustine points out that as we are walking together, we must care for those walking at different paces. “While we are walking, one walks more slowly. another more quickly; still, both are walking. So the ones who are sticking are to be rallied, those who are turning and are going back to be called back. Those who go astray to be led back to the road; slow walkers are to be urged on, the fast walkers to be imitated. Those who make no progress are stuck on the way; those who go back from a better purpose to a worse one they had given up have turned and gone backward. Those who have abandoned the faith have strayed from the way altogether. Let us be counted with the slow ones, a long way behind the faster walkers, but still with those who are walking.”<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** No position or other difference should hamper our walking together as Saint Augustine observes, “In virtue of the duty assigned to us we guard you, brothers and sisters but our desire is to be guarded by God along with you. We act as your shepherds, but along with you we are sheep under one shepherd. We stand in this elevated place as your instructors, but we are your fellow-students in this school under our one teacher.”<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection for SYNODAL WALKING TOGETHER through an Augustinian Dialogue**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step for our walking together. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path and away from each other, let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for our walking together.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How good are we in our community and ministries at making progress and not getting stuck?

How are our community and ministries places where people progressing at different paces can progress in walking together?

How good are we at not letting position and other differences get in the way of walking together?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

*The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:*

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us “sing and keep on walking” together as we dialogue.

## **Concluding Prayer**

*After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:*

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To walk together with increased humility in ways that we are fellow students in this school under our one teacher.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To keep us progressing in goodness as we walk together with others:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To keep us dissatisfied so we do not get stuck as we walk together with others:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To strengthen us to be attentive to those moving at slower paces as we walk together in dialogue:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord,

To guard us against any position or other differences hindering us as we walk together in dialogue:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>7</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Sermon 256*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Sermon 169*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Sermon 306B*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 126(7)*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.

# SYNODAL RELATIONSHIP AND ENCOUNTERING IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

## Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. The greatest obstacle in turning back to God is pride. Thus, our holy father Augustine, our guide in the paths of freedom and truth, advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds us about the importance of relationships and encountering in a synodal way in these words, "Let us realize that as our minds and hearts narrow, the less capable we become of understanding the world around us. Without encountering and relating to differences, it is hard to achieve a clear and complete understanding even of ourselves and of our native land."<sup>2</sup>

and

"I never tire of repeating those words of Benedict XVI which take us to the very heart of the Gospel: 'Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.'"<sup>3</sup>

In the humility of Saint Augustine, let us rely on the grace to become a community walking together in deeper ways begun in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and encouraged by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (4-5).

## Call for **SYNODAL RELATIONSHIP** and **ENCOUNTERING** in an Augustinian way

**READER 1:** Let us heed Saint Augustine as he points out that our community relationships should be encounters of unity, as he notes, "My soul found all manner of joy when I was in their company — to talk and to laugh and to be kind to each other — to read engaging books together, to go from the lightest joking to talk of the deepest things and back again — to differ without discord, as I might differ with myself, and when on the rarest occasion disagreement arose, to find it highlights the sweetness of our normal agreement — to teach or to learn from each other — to be

impatient for those absent and welcome them with joy when they return — these and similar things, emanating from our hearts as we gave and received affection, shown in our faces, our voices, our eyes, and a thousand other gratifying ways, ignited a flame which fused our very souls together and made the many of us one.”<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

In our reflection on our relationships as we encounter one another let us take Saint Augustine’s encouragement to reflect on how present we are to each other. As he notes, “Isn’t this what generally happens when we are showing people who have never before seen those impressive and beautiful sights, in the city or in the country, that we had grown used to passing by without the slightest pleasure because we had already seen them so often? In showing them to others do we not find that our own enjoyment is revived by sharing in the enjoyment that others derive from seeing them for the first time? And this we experience the more intensely, the closer our friendship with one another is, for the more the bond of love allows us to be present in others, the more what has grown old becomes new in our own eyes as well.”<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** In our relationships in encountering one another let us take Saint Augustine’s encouragement to learn together in the school of the Teacher of us all. As he notes, “You know that all of us have one Teacher, and that under him we are fellow disciples, fellow pupils. And the fact that we bishops speak to you from a higher place does not make us your teachers; but it is the one who dwells in all of us that is the Teacher of us all. ... It’s little enough for a pupil to join the class, but to stay is what counts.”<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

In our relationships in encountering one another, let us embody Saint Augustine’s call to live Christ’s example of mutual love. As he observes, “He has loved us, then, for this reason - that we should also love one another. This is what is conferred upon us by loving us - that we would be bound together among ourselves by mutual love, and by so sweet a bond and the reciprocity of its members we would be the body of so great a head.”<sup>7</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Our reflection is to build up our relationships and encountering one another in community and ministry by bearing one another’s burden (Gal 6:2), as Saint Augustine inspires us, “It is the duty of this love to bear one another’s burdens ... When [deer] cross over a body of water to an island in order to feed, they arrange themselves so as to put the burden of their heads ... on the one before ... Bearing one another’s burdens in this fashion they cross over the water until they come to solid ground.”<sup>8</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection on SYNODAL RELATIONSHIP and ENCOUNTERING through an Augustinian Dialogue**

The superior exhorts the community in these words:

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step for our walking together. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path and away from each other, let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for our walking together.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How good are we in our community and ministries to differ without discord and teach and learn from each other?

How are our community and ministries places to walk with the one Teacher of us all strengthened by our mutual love? Where do we need to work on mutual love?

How good are we in bearing the burdens of others in mutual love?

*Pause*

### **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen together and learn together in the school of the one Teacher of us all.

### **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To walk together with increased humility in ways that our faces, our voices, our eyes, and many other ways show our unity, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase our joy as we dialogue with others on relationships and encountering one another:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase our gentleness and kindness as we dialogue on relationships and encountering one another:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To build up the love needed for facing the deepest things in our dialogues on relationships and encountering one another:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord,

To differ without discord as we strive for agreement in dialogue with one another and our wider communities:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To invite with joy those who are absent from our dialogues:  
R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,  
you created humankind in your own image and likeness.  
Open our ears to hear your voice,  
cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,  
and dispel all our ignorance  
that we may recognize you,  
the only true God and Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>9</sup>  
R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter 118, 3, 22.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti § 146*

<sup>3</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium §7*

<sup>4</sup> *Confessions, IV, 8, 13.*

<sup>5</sup> *Instructing Beginners in Faith 12,17.*

<sup>6</sup> *Sermon 134, 1.*

<sup>7</sup> *Homily on the Gospel of John 65, 2.*

<sup>8</sup> *Miscellany of Eighty-three Questions, 71, 1.*

<sup>9</sup> *Soliloquies I, 1, 5.*

## SYNODAL CONVERSION IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. The greatest obstacle in turning back to God is pride. Thus, our holy father Augustine, our guide in the paths of freedom and truth, advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds that our personal conversions should lead to solidarity, as he observes "I would like especially to mention solidarity, which, as a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion, calls for commitment on the part of those responsible for education and formation."<sup>2</sup>

In the humility of Saint Augustine, let us rely on the grace to become a listening community in deeper ways begun in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and encouraged by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (4-5).

### Call for SYNODAL CONVERSION in an Augustinian way

**READER 1:** In Saint Augustine's account of his conversion, he noted he was not alone and how what seemed to be the singing of others awakened him and how his conversion, in turn, connected him to others, "Suddenly I heard a voice from a house nearby – perhaps a voice of some boy or girl, I do not know – singing over and over again, 'Pick it up and read. Pick it up and read.' ... I stemmed the flood of tears and rose to my feet, believing that this could be nothing other than a divine command to open the Book and read the first passage I chanced upon ... Stung into action, I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for when leaving it I had put down there the book of the apostle's letters. I snatched it up, opened it and read in silence the passage on which my eyes first lighted: '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 provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires.' I had no wish to read further. Nor was there a need. No sooner had I reached the end of the verse than the light of certainty flooded my heart and all the dark shades of doubt fled away ... I ... had told Alypius what had happened ... He in return told me what had been happening to him ... We went indoors and told my mother, who was overjoyed."<sup>3</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Let us heed Saint Augustine as he reminds us that any of our conversions are signs of the mercy of God for his people, “Was it your own doing that you were converted to God, and now deserve his mercy? And what of those who have not been converted and have not received mercy: have they found God’s wrath? What could you have done towards your own conversion, if you had not been called? Did not he who called you, when you turned away from him, himself grant you the power to turn towards him?”<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Saint Augustine does not see conversion as a one-time event. In his earlier conversion to philosophy, he identifies each conversion as a rising to God when he says, “In the customary course of study I had discovered a book by an author called Cicero, whose language is almost universally admired, though not its inner spring. This book of his is called the “Hortensius” and contains an exhortation to philosophy. This book changed my way of feeling and the character of my prayers to you, O Lord, for under its influence my petitions and desires altered. All my hollow hopes suddenly seemed worthless, and with unbelievable intensity my heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise. I began to rise up, in order to return to you.”<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection for SYNODAL CONVERSION in an Augustinian Dialogue**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step toward listening. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path, let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for conversion.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

Are we listening for those things stimulating our ongoing conversions?

How good are we at sharing our conversions and sharing in dialogues about the conversions of others?

Are we as thankful as we should be for God’s mercy found in our conversions and the conversions of others?

How are others aiding us in our rising to God through our conversions?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

*The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:*

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us share God’s mercy in our conversions and where we need further conversion.

## **Concluding Prayer**

*After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:*

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our humble listening, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To be thankful for the help of others aiding us in our ongoing conversions:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To overcome the obstacles to our changes of heart in our ongoing conversions:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that we may be thankful for God's mercy in our ongoing conversions:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that we may be open to rising to God again and again in our ongoing conversions:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>6</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter 118, 3, 22.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti § 114.*

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions, VIII, 12, 29-30.*

<sup>4</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 84(85) 8.*

<sup>5</sup> *Confessions, III, 4, 7.*

<sup>6</sup> *Soliloquies I, 1, 5.*

## SYNODAL MISSIONARY COMMUNION IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. The greatest obstacle in turning back to God is pride. Thus, our holy father Augustine, our guide in the paths of freedom and truth, advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of community for our spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of others, as he says, "Love also impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging."<sup>2</sup>

and

He also calls us to transformation through a missionary impulse in these words, "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."<sup>3</sup>

In the humility of Saint Augustine, let us rely on the grace to become a listening community in deeper ways begun in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and encouraged by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (4-5).

### Call for SYNODAL MISSIONARY COMMUNION in an Augustinian way

**READER 1:** Let us join with Saint Augustine in being a missionary communion by having the attitude of Christ Jesus pouring ourselves out for others as Saint Paul encourages us, "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave coming in human likeness."<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

Let us humbly follow Saint Augustine as he inspires us to pour out the love of God found in our missionary communion, "Yet no one loves his neighbor without loving God, so he pours out this love upon his neighbor whom he loves as himself in order that his neighbor might love God. If he himself does not love God, he loves neither himself nor God."<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

Let us also have Saint Augustine's mission through our love, "We truly in that way love our neighbors as ourselves if we bring them, to the extent we can, to a similar love of God."<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** For Saint Augustine the truth of our "Amen" is when we the Body of Christ live the love of Christ for others, as he observes, "It's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply 'Amen,' and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is 'the body of Christ,' and you answer, 'Amen.' So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that 'Amen' true.... Be what you can see and receive what you are."<sup>7</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** For Saint Augustine, the harmony of a choir is an inspiration for our missionary communion, in his words, "A choir is a group of people singing in harmony. If we sing in a choir, we must sing in tune with the others. If one voice in a choir is off-key it jars on the ear and upsets the choir. But now, if the voice of an inept performer disrupts the harmony of the singers, how badly does a discordant heresy disrupt the harmony of those who are praising God! The whole world is by now Christ's choir and as Christ's it sings harmoniously from the east to the west."<sup>8</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection for SYNODAL MISSIONARY COMMUNION in an Augustinian Dialogue**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step toward listening. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path, let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for listening.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How well do we appreciate the fullness of the connection of love of God and love of neighbor?

Are our lives calling others to love God more deeply?

Do we take seriously what we pray together and understand how it challenges how we live?

How much are we in harmony with others, especially with the marginalized?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us become Christ's choir singing in harmony with him.

## **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our communion in missionary ways, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To have the same attitude of Christ to pour ourselves out in humble ways for others:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

That the ways we pour out our love may aid our neighbors to love God:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

That our "Amens" in liturgy become true in the ways we live our lives as the Body of Christ with our neighbors:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

That we may become Christ's choir through the harmony we develop with the despised and the marginalized:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

*Other petitions may be added.*

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

*Those present exchange the sign of peace.*

*Then the superior prays:*

† O God,  
you created humankind in your own image and likeness.  
Open our ears to hear your voice,  
cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,  
and dispel all our ignorance  
that we may recognize you,  
the only true God and Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>9</sup>  
R: Amen.

*The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* § 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Philippians* 2:1-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Letter 167*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Letter 130*, 7,14.

<sup>7</sup> *Sermon 272*.

<sup>8</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 149*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.

### **SECTION III: Call to Embrace the Social Apostolate and OSA UN NGO**

The following 5 Chapters of Renewal are provided as an aid to embracing the Social Apostolate and OSA UN NGO as expected by our *Constitutions*, which states:

Motivated by this social commitment of ours, we are to listen attentively to the concerns of the Church and of society, and offer assistance so that the questions which the groups among whom we work present to us may be more clearly identified and more easily resolved, such as: the defense of life, human rights, the situation of migrants, the dignity of women, the protection of youth, justice and peace, a more balanced economic order, the conservation of nature, etc. Therefore, superiors, in their respective jurisdictions, are to promote those activities which lead communities and friars to participate in undertakings of the Church and civil society, especially with the non-government organization (NGO) of the Order at the United Nations.<sup>1</sup>

These Chapters of Renewal as activities for embracing the Social Apostolate also serve the Augustinian's larger social commitment to the Social Apostolate and following our Holy Father as heard in our *Constitutions*:

All apostolic activity demands social commitment, whose reason for being stems from theological virtues: faith leads to fidelity, charity leads naturally to solidarity, hope demands a commitment made visible through witness. For this reason apostolic activity leads us to discover the need for change, or for a transformation of social structures. Our Holy Father Augustine committed himself to the human person, not only for the sake of solidarity and asceticism, but for the sake of justice whose promotion and dissemination will become the mature fruit of our Augustinian fraternity.<sup>2</sup>

The first 4 Chapters of Renewal for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way focus on this embrace through the permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine which are the *dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity*.<sup>3</sup> "These principles constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching."<sup>4</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Renewal for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way focuses on this embrace through *Laudato Sí: Care for Our Common Home*, the encyclical of Pope Francis.

As with the other Chapters of Renewal these will be shaped in connection with the thoughts of Saint Augustine to remind us of our heritage. Saint Augustine's thoughts come from his theology as well as the context of his time when bishops had a special role in caring for the poor. While Pope Leo XIII began (and his successors have continued) the systematic presentation of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the thought of Saint Augustine shows us that these values have a much longer tradition in our Church.

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions of the Order of Saint Augustine*, §185.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, §182.

<sup>3</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §160.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



# EMBRACING THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN DIGNITY

## CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. "Our Holy Father Augustine committed himself to the human person, not only for the sake of solidarity and asceticism, but for the sake of justice, whose promotion and dissemination will become the mature fruit of our Augustinian fraternity."<sup>1</sup> The Social Apostolate Principle of Human Dignity is the focus of our work on renewal at this moment.

Pope Francis heightens the importance of the Principle of Human Dignity when he asks us, "While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated. What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?"<sup>2</sup>

and

He also challenges when he writes, "If we accept the great principle that there are rights born of our inalienable human dignity, we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all. This is the true path of peace, not the senseless and myopic strategy of sowing fear and mistrust in the face of outside threats."<sup>3</sup>

### Call for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way through the PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN DIGNITY

**READER 1:** Let us heed Saint Augustine when reminds us of the root of our Human Dignity in these words, "Sometimes even the relationships are no more than implicit in the text, as in Genesis: 'Let us make man to our image and likeness' 'Let us make' and 'our' are in the plural and must be understood in terms of relationships. For he did not mean that gods should do the making, or do it to the image and likeness of gods, but that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit should do it; do it therefore to the image of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, so that people might subsist as the image of God; and God is three."<sup>4</sup>

and

Saint Augustine also learned from Saint Paul that our Human Dignity from God is lasting and resilient when the Saint preached, "We even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and

proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.”<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Saint Augustine teaches us that “Paul the apostle clearly wants us to understand the inner man as the spirit of the mind but the outer one as the body in this mortal life ... because these two, the inner and the outer, are together one person, he made this one person to his image.”<sup>6</sup>

and

For Saint Augustine, God as our Inner Teacher dwells within us as part of our Human Dignity, as he tells us, “I have also learned that He alone teaches who made use of external words to remind us that He dwells within us. With His help. I shall now love Him all the more ardently as I advance in learning.”<sup>7</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Saint Augustine understands that given by God, our Human Dignity can never be lost. He shares with us these startling words, “The fruitfulness that had been given [by God] continued in the condemned stock; and even the blemish of sin, which also imposed the necessity of death on us, could not take away the wondrous power of seed – or, rather, the still more wondrous power by which the seed is produced, a power that is inscribed on and in a way woven into human bodies.”<sup>8</sup>

*Pause*

### **Reflection in an Augustinian Dialogue for Embracing the Social Apostolate through the PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN DIGNITY**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility.<sup>9</sup> It is also the first step toward respecting human dignity. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our embracing of the Principle of Human Dignity in an Augustinian way.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How does respect for Human Dignity flow from our gift of being the Image of God?

How can we aid one another to rely on our Human Dignity as we endure afflictions and difficulties?

How does the Principle of Human Dignity demand we love the sinner but hate the sin?

*Pause*

### **Fraternal Dialogue**

*The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:*

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with the Human Dignity of all the People of God.

### **Concluding Prayer**

*After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:*

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our respect for the Human Dignity of others, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To strengthen our respect for the Human Dignity of others as well as of ourselves:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To always give thanks for being created as the Image of God with Human Dignity:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To work diligently with respect for Human Dignity as we listen to the Inner Teacher in ourselves and others:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

So that we may increase our respect for the Human Dignity of others, even those we have seen as having gone astray:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

*Other petitions may be added.*

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

*Those present exchange the sign of peace.*

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>10</sup>

R: Amen.

*The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions OSA*, §182.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 127.

<sup>4</sup> *The Trinity* VII, 4, 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Romans* 5:3-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Answer to Faustus, A Manichean* 24, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *The Teacher*, 14, 46. This translation comes from Saint Augustine, *The Teacher*, trans. Robert P. Russell, O.S.A. Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> *City of God* XXII, 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Soliloquies* I, 1, 5.

# **EMBRACING THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON GOOD**

## **CHAPTER OF RENEWAL**

### **Introductory Rites**

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. "Our Holy Father Augustine committed himself to the human person, not only for the sake of solidarity and asceticism, but for the sake of justice, whose promotion and dissemination will become the mature fruit of our Augustinian fraternity."<sup>1</sup> The Social Apostolate Principle of the Common Good is the focus of our work on renewal at this moment.

Pope Francis connects social charity to the Principle of the Common Good when he tells us, "Social charity makes us love the common good, it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons, but also in the social dimension that unites them."<sup>2</sup>

and

He also writes of human dignity's connection to the Common Good, "When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good."<sup>3</sup>

### **Call for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way through the PRINCIPLE OF COMMON GOOD**

**READER 1:** Saint Augustine sees the Common Good as serving the needs of all. As he says, "The first people to live together in unity were those who sold all their possessions and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. As we are told, "Goods were distributed to all, as each one needed, and no one claimed anything as private property, but all things were held by them in common" (Acts 2:45; 4:32). What does the psalm imply by the words, "in unity?" The same passages tell us: "They had but one mind and one heart" (Acts 4:32) intent on God."<sup>4</sup>

and

For Saint Augustine the Common Good impacts the notion of private property by confronting us with what belongs to all, "Anyone who wants to make a place for the Lord ... If all things had remained private property, each person would have owned only what belonged to him or her individually; but each person turned over his personal things to common ownership, he came to own what had belonged to others as well ... We all breathe in the air that belongs to all of us, and we all enjoy the sunshine that is common to all."<sup>5</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Saint Augustine finds in the Common Good our equality and the mutual benefit of service as he observes, “Where I’m terrified by what I am for you, I am given comfort by what I am with you. For you I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian. The first is the name of an office undertaken, the second a name of grace; that one means danger, this one salvation. Finally, as if in the open sea, I am being tossed about by the stormy activity involved in that one; but as I recall by whose blood I have been redeemed, I enter a safe harbor in the tranquil recollection of this one. I take my rest in the marvelous benefit conferred on all of us in common.”<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Saint Augustine understands that the Common Good has priority over personal benefit. As he wrote, “No one shall perform any task for his own benefit but all your work shall be done for the common good, with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each one of you were to work for yourself alone. For charity, as it is written, is not self-seeking (1 Cor 13:5) meaning that it places the common good before its own, not its own before the common good. So whenever you show greater concern for the common good than for your own, you may know that you are growing in charity. Thus, let the abiding virtue of charity prevail in all things that minister to the fleeting necessities of life.”<sup>7</sup>

and

In the Common Good, Saint Augustine sees Truth as belonging to all of us as common property. As he preached, “Truth is the common patrimony of all. There is no mine or yours, no his or hers where truth is concerned: it belongs to all equally. Perhaps it can be thought of as situated in the middle, so that all who love truth can cluster around it, for whatever belongs to everyone is in the middle of them.”<sup>8</sup>

*Pause*

### **Reflection in an Augustinian Dialogue for Embracing the Social Apostolate through the PRINCIPLE OF COMMON GOOD**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility.<sup>9</sup> It is also the first step toward respecting common good. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our embracing of the Principle of Common Good in an Augustinian way.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

What do we face as challenges to our sharing in seeking the unity of the Common Good?

What are the challenges to accepting the mutual benefit of the Common Good?

How does the Principle of Common Good support an understanding of Truth as common property?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with the Common Good of all the People of God.

## **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our striving for the Common Good, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To enable us to overcome the challenges to our sharing in seeking the Common Good:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To be able to share what belongs to all of us so we can build the Common Good:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To have the humility of the mutual benefit we find in the Common Good:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Give us the courage to forgo private benefit in favor of the Common Good:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Give us the courage to understand Truth as being common property as part of the Common Good:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>10</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions OSA*, §182.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 182.

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<sup>3</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 132(133)* 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 131(132)* 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Sermon 340*, 1. See also *Sermon 23*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Rule*, V, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Exposition of Psalm 75(76)*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.

# EMBRACING THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

## CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. "Our Holy Father Augustine committed himself to the human person, not only for the sake of solidarity and asceticism, but for the sake of justice, whose promotion and dissemination will become the mature fruit of our Augustinian fraternity."<sup>1</sup> The Social Apostolate Principle of Subsidiarity is the focus of our work on renewal at this moment.

Pope Francis sees the practice of the Principle of Subsidiarity when he observes, "We can see a concrete application of the principle of subsidiarity, which justifies the participation and activity of communities and organizations on lower levels as a means of integrating and complementing the activity of the state. These groups and organizations often carry out commendable efforts in the service of the common good and their members at times show true heroism, revealing something of the grandeur of which our humanity is still capable."<sup>2</sup>

### Call for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way through the PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

**READER 1:** Saint Augustine bases his Rule on the Subsidiarity of "each one's need" as well as their available gifts with the humility of honest acceptance of limitations. In his words, "Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. Food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior, not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one's need. For so you read in the Acts of the Apostles that they had all things in common and distribution was made to each one according to each one's need (4:32,35)."<sup>3</sup>

and

Saint Augustine saw that humility in accepting the limitations of needs and gifts provided freedom under grace in practicing Subsidiarity. As he prayed, "The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty, giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives: not as slaves living under the law but as men living in freedom under grace."<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** In an understanding of Subsidiarity, Saint Augustine teaches us about the responsibility of addressing difficulties and not expecting some leader to take care of problems when he instructs us, "If you notice in someone of your brothers this wantonness of the eye, of which I am speaking, admonish him at once so that

the beginning of evil will not grow more serious but will be promptly corrected. But if you see him doing the same thing again on some other day, even after your admonition, then whoever had occasion to discover this must report him as he would a wounded man in need of treatment. But let the offense first be pointed out to two or three so that he can be proven guilty on the testimony of these two or three and be punished with due severity. And do not charge yourselves with ill-will when you bring this offense to light. Indeed, yours is the greater blame if you allow your brothers to be lost through your silence when you are able to bring about their correction by your disclosure."<sup>5</sup>

and

As part of our Subsidiarity, Saint Augustine sees that it is our responsibility to restore/repair/forgive injury and again not wait for leadership to act in our stead. He charges us, "Whoever has injured another by open insult, or by abusive or even incriminating language, must remember to repair the injury as quickly as possible by an apology, and he who suffered the injury must also forgive, without further wrangling. But if they have offended one another, they must forgive one another's trespasses for the sake of your prayers which should be recited with greater sincerity each time you repeat them."<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Saint Augustine's understanding, when viewed as Subsidiarity, transforms the superior's role from doer to overseer aiding the community in performing their responsibilities. He tells us, "But it shall pertain chiefly to the superior to see that these precepts are all observed and, if any point has been neglected, to take care that the transgression is not carelessly overlooked but is punished and corrected. In doing so, he must refer whatever exceeds the limit and power of his office, to the priest who enjoys greater authority among you."<sup>7</sup>

*Pause*

### **Reflection in an Augustinian Dialogue for Embracing the Social Apostolate through the PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY**

*The superior exhorts the community in these words:*

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility.<sup>8</sup> It is also the first step toward respecting Subsidiarity. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our embracing of the Principle of Subsidiarity in an Augustinian way.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How are we ensuring through Subsidiarity that each one's needs are met, and each one's gifts are used?

How can we see Subsidiarity as expecting each of us to restore/repair/forgive injuries?

How does the Principle of Subsidiarity require a special orientation to our understanding of leadership?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with God's People under the Principle of Subsidiarity.

## **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our respect for Subsidiarity with others, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To aid our implementation of the Principle of Subsidiarity in meeting each one's needs and utilizing each one's gifts:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase, through the Principle of Subsidiarity, our acceptance of our limitations in humility while striving to live in freedom under grace:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase through the Principle of Subsidiarity the courage to deal with offenses:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase through the Principle of Subsidiarity the courage to restore/repair/forgive injuries:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To aid us through the Principle of Subsidiarity to properly orient our expectations of leadership:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

*Other petitions may be added.*

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

*Those present exchange the sign of peace.*

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>9</sup>

R: Amen.

*The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions OSA*, §182.

<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* § 175.

<sup>3</sup> *Rule*, I, 4. This and subsequent excerpts are translations from *The Rule of Saint Augustine*, trans. Robert P. Russell (1976). Villanova, PA: Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova.

<sup>4</sup> *Rule*, VIII, 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Rule*, IV, 25-26.

<sup>6</sup> *Rule*, VI, 42.

<sup>7</sup> *Rule*, VII, 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Soliloquies* I, 1, 5.

# EMBRACING THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY THROUGH THE PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY

## CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, we meet in community as the praying Church. Let us ask for the grace to accept the goodness of God while at the same time we acknowledge our faults and failings. "Our Holy Father Augustine committed himself to the human person, not only for the sake of solidarity and asceticism, but for the sake of justice, whose promotion and dissemination will become the mature fruit of our Augustinian fraternity."<sup>1</sup> The Social Apostolate Principle of Solidarity is the focus of our work on renewal at this moment.

Pope Francis identifies that the Principle of Solidarity is a mindset shaping community and prioritizing life as he says, "The word "solidarity" is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few."<sup>2</sup>

### Call for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way through the PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY

**READER 1:** Saint Augustine goes beyond the Principle of Solidarity in seeing our unity as part of our being members of the body of Christ. For him, "When the apostle Paul is explaining the bread to us. He says, 'We being many are one bread, one body' (1 Cor 10:17) O sacrament of piety, O sign of unity. O bond of charity! The one who wants to live has somewhere to live, has something to live on. Let him approach, let him believe, let him belong to the body so as to be given life. Let him not shudder at the make-up of its members, let him not be a festering member which needs to be amputated, nor a crooked member of which it would be ashamed; let him be beautiful well-suited, healthy; let him cling to the body, live for God and by God. Let him work now on earth so as to reign later on in heaven."<sup>3</sup>

and

Saint Augustine finds our unity, our Solidarity, demands that we make true our "Amen" as we receive the body of Christ. He challenges us, "If you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, 'You, though, are the body of Christ and its members' (1 Cor 12:27). So if it's you that are the body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are you reply 'Amen,' and by so replying you express your assent. What you

hear, you see, is 'The body of Christ,' and you answer, 'Amen.' So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that 'Amen' true."<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Making our 'Amen,' our Solidarity, true Saint Augustine teaches us that the Great Commandment, our twin love must prioritize in practice our love of neighbor, in this way, "In terms of precept the love of God comes first; but, in terms of practice, the love of neighbor comes first. The one who prescribed this command of love for you in two precepts would not first commend your neighbor to you and then God after that; but God comes first and the neighbor after that. But, because you do not yet see God, you will deserve to see him by loving your neighbor; for, by loving your neighbor, you clean up your eye for seeing God. As John plainly says, 'If you do not love the brother whom you see, how will you be able to love the God whom you do not see?' (1 Jn 4:20)"<sup>5</sup>

and

For Saint Augustine, part of the practice of acting, in Solidarity, on the twin love of God and neighbor involves how we interpret scripture. This is how he thinks about this practice: "So if it seems to you that you have understood the divine scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by this understanding you do not build up the twin love of God and neighbor, you have not understood them."<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Solidarity in an Augustinian sense has a crucial final judgment. Saint Augustine tells us, "I mean, this too, brothers and sisters, is something I have sometimes reminded you of, something which I confess has exercised me no little in God's scripture, and which I ought regularly to remind you of. I'm asking you to think hard about what our Lord Jesus Christ himself will say at the end of the world, when he comes to judgement; that he will gather all the nations together in his presence, and divide mankind into two parts, placing some on the right hand, others on the left; and that he is going to say to those on the right, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the origin of the world' ... Why are those going to take possession of the kingdom? 'Because I was hungry and you gave me to eat.' Why are these going into the eternal fire? 'Because I was hungry, and you did not give me anything to eat.'"<sup>7</sup>

and

As part of our Solidarity, Saint Augustine sees Christ as present in our sisters and brothers, especially in the needy and the outcast, in the least and the lost. After his congregation heard of the presence of Christ to Zaccheus, Saint Augustine told them to do the works of mercy with Christ present in the least and the lost in this way, "Brothers and sisters repeat it aloud, so that you might realize that you are not deprived of Christ's presence. Listen to what the judge will say: 'When you did it to one of the least of mine, you did it to me'. Each of you expects to receive Christ seated in heaven. Turn your attention to him lying in the street; direct your attention to Christ who is hungry and suffering from the cold, Christ in need and a stranger.... As your knowledge of Christian teaching grows, so may your good works increase!"<sup>8</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection in an Augustinian Dialogue for Embracing the Social Apostolate through the PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY**

The superior exhorts the community in these words:

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility.<sup>9</sup> It is also the first step toward respecting Solidarity. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our embracing of the Principle of Solidarity in an Augustinian way.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How unified are we in Solidarity as members of the body of Christ with Christ as our Head?

How is our being in Solidarity in the body of Christ a practice of the twin love of God and neighbor?

How does our carrying out of the Principle of Solidarity through the works of mercy, like I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, prepare us to meet the test of the final judgment?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with God's People under the Principle of Solidarity.

## **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our respect for Solidarity with others, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To strengthen us in Solidarity as the body of Christ to be a sacrament of piety, a sign of unity, with a deeper bond of charity:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase our work in Solidarity as a member of the body of Christ, in order to make true the 'Amen' we say when we receive the body of Christ:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To increase our practice of the love of neighbor through the Principle of Solidarity so that we can increase of love of God:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To help us practice the twin love of God and neighbor through the Principle of Solidarity in ways that we more properly interpret scripture:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To open our eyes to the presence of Christ in our midst in the needy and the outcast, in the least and the lost:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To aid us to increase our engagement in the works of mercy in preparation for the final judgment:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,  
cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>10</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Constitutions OSA*, §182.

<sup>2</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* §188.

<sup>3</sup> *Homily on the Gospel of John 26*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Sermon 272*.

<sup>5</sup> *Homily on the Gospel of John 17*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Teaching Christianity*, I, 36, 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Sermon 389*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Sermon 25*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.

# EMBRACING THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN WAY THROUGH *LAUDATO SÍ*

## CHAPTER OF RENEWAL

### Introductory Rites

The chapter may begin with an appropriate hymn.

The superior greets the community and addresses them in these words:

My brothers, Pope Francis in *Laudato Sí* invites us to dialogue about our common home as he notes, "In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical [*Laudato Sí*], I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home."<sup>1</sup> In our dialogue let us have our holy father Augustine as our guide in the paths of freedom and truth. He advises us: "That first way [to reach and to gain truth], however, is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility, and as often as you ask. I would say this. It is not that there are no other commandments that should be mentioned, but unless humility precedes, set alongside for us to cling to. And set over us to crush us down. Pride tears the whole benefit from our hands when we rejoice over some good deeds. We must fear the other vices in sinful actions, pride lurks even in good deeds"<sup>2</sup>

### Call for Embracing the Social Apostolate in an Augustinian Way through *Laudato Sí*

**READER 1:** Saint Augustine calls us to see God's revelation in the *Book of Nature* in these words, "In order to attribute to God as its author you should first look at the whole of creation as if you were reading a kind of large book of the nature of reality."<sup>3</sup> In another place he notes, "Others, in order to find God, will read a book. Well as a matter of fact there is a certain great big book, the book of created nature. Look carefully at it top to bottom, observe it, read it. God did not make letters of ink for you to recognize him in; he set before your eyes all these things he has made. Why look for a louder voice? Heaven and earth cries to you, 'God made me.'"<sup>4</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 2:** Saint Augustine also calls us to hear the *Voice of Nature telling us about God*. As he notes, "Heaven and earth plainly exist, and by the very fact that they undergo change and variation they cry out that they were made ... Heaven and earth further proclaim that they did not make themselves ... And their visible existence is the voice with which they say this. 'It was you who made them, Lord ... We know this, and we thank you for the knowledge.'"<sup>5</sup> In another place Saint Augustine lets us listen to the *Voice of Nature telling him about God*. As he relates, "This is what I love, when I love my God. And what is this?"

I put my question to the earth, and it replied, 'I am not he';  
I questioned everything it held, and they confessed the same.  
I questioned the sea and the great deep,  
and the teeming live creatures that crawl,  
and they replied,  
'We are not God; seek higher.'  
I questioned the gusty winds,  
and every breeze with all its flying creatures told me,  
'Anaximenes was wrong: I am not God.'  
To the sky I put my question, to sun, moon, stars,  
but they denied me: 'We are not the God you seek.'  
And to all things which stood around the portals of my flesh I said  
'Tell me of my God.  
You are not he, but tell me something of him.'  
Then they lifted up their mighty voices and cried,  
'He made us.'  
My questioning was my attentive spirit,  
and their reply, their beauty.  
Then toward myself I turned, and asked myself, 'Who are you?' And I answered my  
own question: 'A man.' See, here are the body and soul that make up myself, the  
one outward and the other within. Through which of these should I seek my God?  
With my body's senses I had already sought him from earth to heaven, to the  
farthest place whither I could send the darting rays of my eyes; but what lay within  
me was better, and to this all those bodily messengers reported back, for it  
controlled and judged the replies of sky and earth, and of all the creatures dwelling  
in them, all those who had proclaimed, 'We are not God,' and 'He made us.' My  
inner self recognized them all through the service of the outer. I, who was that  
inmost self, I, who was mind, knew them through the senses of my body; and so I  
questioned the vast frame of the world concerning my God, and it answered, 'I am  
not he, but he made me.'"<sup>6</sup>

*Pause*

**READER 3:** Saint Augustine alerts us to other *Manifestations of God in Nature* that can be found by our other senses, when he recalls, "But what am I loving when I love you? Not beauty of body nor transient grace, not this fair light which is now so friendly to my eyes, not melodious song in all its lovely harmonies, not the sweet fragrance of flowers or ointments or spices, not manna or honey, not limbs that draw me to carnal embrace: none of these do I love when I love my God. And yet I do love a kind of light, a kind of voice, a certain fragrance, a food and an embrace, when I love my God: a light, voice, fragrance, food and embrace for my inmost self, where something limited to no place shines into my mind, where something not snatched away by passing time sings for me, where something no breath blows away yields to me its scent, where there is savor undiminished by famished eating, and where I am clasped in a union from which no satiety can tear me away. This is what I love, when I love my God."<sup>7</sup>

*Pause*

Pope Francis tells us, "Liturgy is done with things that are the exact opposite of spiritual abstractions: bread, wine, oil, water, fragrances, fire, ashes, rock, fabrics, colours, body, words, sounds, silences, gestures, space, movement, action, order, time, light."<sup>8</sup> For Saint Augustine, it is not only going out to Nature but also finding *Manifestations of God through Elements of Nature in our Liturgy*, when he preached, "Just as many grains are mixed into one loaf in order to produce the visible appearance of bread, as though what holy scripture says about the faithful were happening: They had one soul and one heart in God (Acts 4:32); so too with the wine.... That too is how the Lord Christ signified us, how he wished us to belong to him, how he consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on his table. Any who receive the sacrament of unity, and do not hold the bond of peace, do not receive the sacrament for their benefit, but a testimony against themselves."<sup>9</sup>

*Pause*

## **Reflection for Embracing the Social Apostolate through *Laudato Sí* in an Augustinian Dialogue**

The superior exhorts the community in these words:

Saint Augustine has told us that the first step to truth is humility. It is also the first step toward listening. Humility frees our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us on the wrong path. Let us take some time for reflection to deepen our humility for implementing the insights of *Laudato Sí*.

As we reflect in preparation for dialogue, let us ask:

How can we be better at seeing God's plan in his Book of Nature?

How can we improve our hearing of what God is telling us through the Voice of Nature?

How can we increase the other ways we sense God showing us his plan in Nature?

How can the elements of nature used in liturgy engage us in the experience of God acting in our lives?

*Pause*

## **Fraternal Dialogue**

The superior calls the community to dialogue in these words:

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, let us listen and learn together in the school of the Lord in harmony with the People of God.

## **Concluding Prayer**

After the dialogue, the superior ends the Chapter with the following prayer:

Brothers, God hears our cries and the cries of his people. To increase our humble caring for our common home, let us ask for God's help.

Our Response is: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To open us to see God's plan in his Book of Nature:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To open us to hear the voice of nature telling us about God:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

To open all our senses to become more aware of the manifestations in nature of God's plan:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

That we may become more engaged during liturgies to find the elements of nature showing God acting in our world:

R: We humbly ask your help, O Lord.

Other petitions may be added.

†United in one mind and heart we pray:

\* **Our Father** ...

Those present exchange the sign of peace.

Then the superior prays:

† O God,

you created humankind in your own image and likeness.

Open our ears to hear your voice,

cleanse our eyes to see your wonders,

and dispel all our ignorance

that we may recognize you,

the only true God and Jesus Christ

who lives and reigns forever and ever.<sup>10</sup>

R: Amen.

The chapter may end with a hymn of thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> *Laudato Sí* §3.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter 118*, 3, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, 32, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Sermon 68*, 6. In *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis identifies Saint Bonaventure, Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope Benedict XVI, Canadian Bishops, and Japanese Bishops as well as others also identifying God's revelation in nature.

<sup>5</sup> *Confessions*, XI, 4,6. In *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis references the Voice of God in creation (§85) and the cry of the earth (§49, §53, §117),

<sup>6</sup> *Confessions*, X, 6, 8-9. In *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis in numerous ways talks about creation revealing God (§2, §5, §8, §9, §33, §66, §67, §69, §72, §76, §77, §80, §84, §85, §216, §221).

<sup>7</sup> *Confessions*, X, 6, 8. In *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis also calls us to love creation (§42, §76, §77, §84, §85, §89, §93, §220, §225, §238),

<sup>8</sup> *Desiderio desideravi*, §42.

<sup>9</sup> *Sermon 272*.

<sup>10</sup> *Soliloquies I*, 1, 5.



