

St Joseph's Catholic Parish

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ord. Time
Year B, 8 September, 2024

Embracing the communities of
Cherbourg, Goomeri, Murgon,
Proston and Wondai



Unity in diversity ... being one in Christ through Baptism!

Love, not genius, will save your fallen-away loved ones

John Caliguire



Luca Giordano, 'Saint Augustine and Saint Monica', 1657, Real Monasterio de la Encarnació

There is a problem with geniuses.

The problem is that most people aren't geniuses. So, when we do discover a genius every so often, we have to do our best with our ordinary minds to understand the insights of a brilliant mind. Such is the case with the genius of Saint Augustine.

Augustine was not only a prolific writer, writing more than almost anyone will read in a lifetime, but his work has a tremendous depth. His training in rhetoric gave him an uncanny ability to convey profound truths in a distinctly winsome way. But then there are times when his genius seems to get in the way.

For instance, perhaps his most famous work, *Confessions*, is widely quoted and appreciated for both the style with which the story is told and the depth of psychological insight that remains relevant even 1,600 years later. However, there are several occasions where Augustine shares a story that has been widely appreciated for its sentimental value, but overlooked for its theological significance.

One of these instances involves an exchange between his mother, Saint Monica, and her priest regarding the

state of Augustine's soul. At this point, Augustine is being led astray by a popular heretical group of his day, the Manichaeans. The scene depicts a desperate Monica, who had been tirelessly praying for her son's return to the faith, pleading with the priest to talk to her son. Despite his denying her request, he assures her that "it is impossible that the son of these tears should perish".

What's more, Augustine shares that his mother would often recount this story to him and that "she had accepted this answer as if it had sounded from heaven".

Augustine was carried away by many temptations in his early years, not just Manichaeism, including his well-known participation in hedonism. Another vice he wrestles with in his story is the theatre.

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There will be NO Weekday Masses this coming week at

Gayndah, Wednesday, 11 Sept.

Wondai, Wednesday, 11 Sept.

Murgon, Thursday, 12 Sept.

Sunday Mass Times

Murgon

WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday	8.00am

Wondai

every	Saturday	5.00pm
WEEK	DAY	TIME

Proston

every	Saturday	9.00am
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Goomeri

WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday	6.00pm

Gayndah

WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays	10.30am
every	2nd, 4th Sundays	9.00am

Cherbourg

WEEK	DAY	TIME
5	Sunday	4.30pm

Weekday Mass Times

12 noon, Wednesday, Gayndah
5.00pm, Wednesday, Wondai
9.00am, 2nd, 4th Thursdays, School/Parish Mass, Murgon
9.00am, 1st, 3rd Thursdays, Castra
Holy Hour for Peace
Wondai, 4.00pm to 5.00pm, Wednesday, before Mass

Today's readings

Isaiah 35: 4-7; James 2: 1-5;
Mark 7: 31-37

Response:

Praise the Lord, my soul!

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom and healed all who were sick. Alleluia!

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Augustine found that those who went to the theatre were actually seeking feelings of pity. He observes that they would be disappointed if they left the show without a sufficient cry. He finds this to be fundamentally disordered.

Whether one agrees with Augustine's reflections on the theatre does not matter here. What is particularly interesting is how Monica demonstrates a properly ordered response to pity.

But, if Monica had a properly ordered response to pity, this means that she must have been led to some action to remedy the object of her pity. She feels for the suffering of Augustine before he even recognises it as suffering, but what does she do about it? What is her action?

She prays. Constantly. Augustine is trying to very subtly show us that prayer is not a passive or secondary way in which we come to the aid of others, but an active and primary way to assist. The things Monica does that we conventionally think of as actions – such as convincing a priest to talk to him or trying to dissuade him from going to Rome – are all pathetically unsuccessful. But it is her prayers that influence the trajectory of Augustine's life. And as he tells his story, he is always sure to demonstrate how closely his providential path is aligned with his mother's persistent prayers.

While the stories of these two great saints have always captured the imagination of believers, it is of particular importance today. A cross that many mothers carry is the dismay over their adult children who have lost their faith. The lives of Saints Monica and Augustine provide us not only with hope and a road map for how one ought to respond to such a crisis, but insight into understanding the crisis itself better.

The first lesson is that prayer is the single most effective answer to this problem, as it is to all problems.

Those who are saddened by their adult children falling away from the faith should first feel affirmed that this is an objectively upsetting thing, but also encouraged to bring this sorrow to the Lord. He can't wipe our tears if we don't cry to him.

Second, we should recognise that the promise given to Monica is that it was impossible that her son should perish – but not impossible that he should suffer. Our Lord answers all prayers, but those answers are not always immediately perceptible to us. Augustine is writing his stories many years later and sees the fruit of his mother's prayers, but that does not mean that she could perceive any of this in the moment. As the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backward, but must be lived forward."

It is indeed a tragedy that there is so much genius in Augustine that we will never be able to understand everything he has to teach. But there is one particular lesson that sticks out here. When one of the greatest geniuses who ever lived applied his mind to all there is to be pondered, one of the greatest mysteries he found was that the faith of ordinary people like his mother was far more powerful than his mind. And he realised this not by theological reflection, but through his mother's profound devotion and witness to the faith.

Saint Monica, patron of mothers facing family difficulties, pray for us!

(John Caliguire is a husband and father from New Jersey)

A man whose driving was a little erratic was stopped by police at 2 o'clock in the morning and asked where he was going.

'I'm going to a lecture about alcohol abuse, about the ramifications it has on family members and the effects it has on the human body,' replied the man.

'Oh yes,' said the policeman sceptically,



Parish Directory, Saint Joseph's Parish

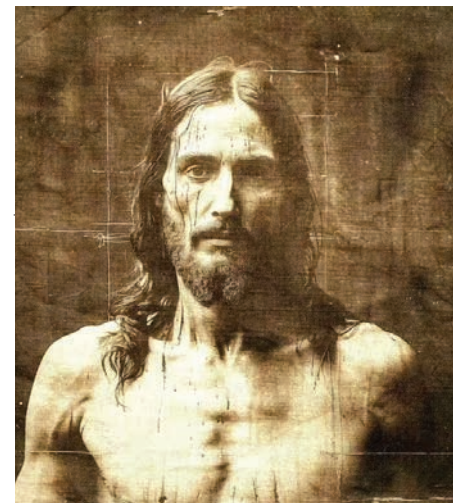
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We pray for those who are sick:
Orlando Dyrit; Glenda Geragherty;
David McIntosh.



Artificial intelligence has imagined the 'face of Jesus Christ' from the Shroud of Turin, the cloth believed to have covered His body immediately after the Crucifixion.

Image: Daily Star



'And who would be giving that lecture at this time of night?'

'My wife.'