

# *the* Augustinian

SPRING 2026

**AUGUSTINIAN ORDER CELEBRATES  
NEW PRIOR GENERAL**

*Our Province's Own Fr. Joseph L. Farrell, O.S.A.*

Join Us as We Come Together with  
**ONE MIND AND ONE HEART**  
 to Support the Augustinians  
 on April 24!



**Tolle Lege Day**  
*One Mind, One Heart.*



**24 HOURS OF GIVING  
 ON FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026**



Make your **TOLLE LEGE DAY GIFT**  
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The Augustinian Friars will launch their sixth annual giving day on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Augustine. Please join us as we come together as a community with one mind and one heart, for 24 hours of giving to support the Augustinian way of life and the friars' ministries.

*Every gift, no matter the size, will make a difference.*

Questions: contact Cynthia Staniszewski at [cynthia.staniszewski@augustinian.org](mailto:cynthia.staniszewski@augustinian.org) or 610-527-3330 ext. 239. **#TOLLELEGEDAY #ONEMINDONEHEART**

Above: Prior Provincial Fr. Robert P. Hagan, O.S.A., shares a laugh with NBC10 news anchor Keith Jones and other guests at the 2024 Profile in Augustinian Leadership event.

# the Augustinian

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## DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

Welcome to the spring issue of *The Augustinian*. As we celebrate the election of our brother Fr. Joseph L. Farrell, O.S.A., to the role of prior general—the leader of the Augustinian Order worldwide—we wanted to use this issue to introduce our readers to the Augustinian Curia. The Curia is not only our Order's physical home in Rome, right next to Vatican City, but it provides our leadership as well.

To those who know of the Augustinians' commitment to community, it will not come as a surprise that our Order's leadership is a joint effort. There is a feature on Fr. Farrell detailing his journey to his new role, as well as profiles of some of the members of his new team (including our Province's own Fr. Kevin M. DePrinzio, O.S.A., who assumed the position of assistant general in January). There is an explanation of the Curia itself, an introduction to the Curia's fundraising arm tasked with supporting our mission around the world, and a special article about how the Philadelphia area shaped not only Fr. Farrell and Fr. DePrinzio, but a third Augustinian: Pope Leo XIV.

We haven't forgotten Pope Leo in these pages. We have a commentary on *Dilexi te*, his first apostolic exhortation, and an introduction to his *Pray with the Pope* initiative, which each month invites us to pray along with Pope Leo's intentions.

We hope you will enjoy these and all the other stories that fill the pages of this magazine. Be sure to take a look at our jubilarians on page 24 and join me in celebrating their many years of service and devotion to God's people.

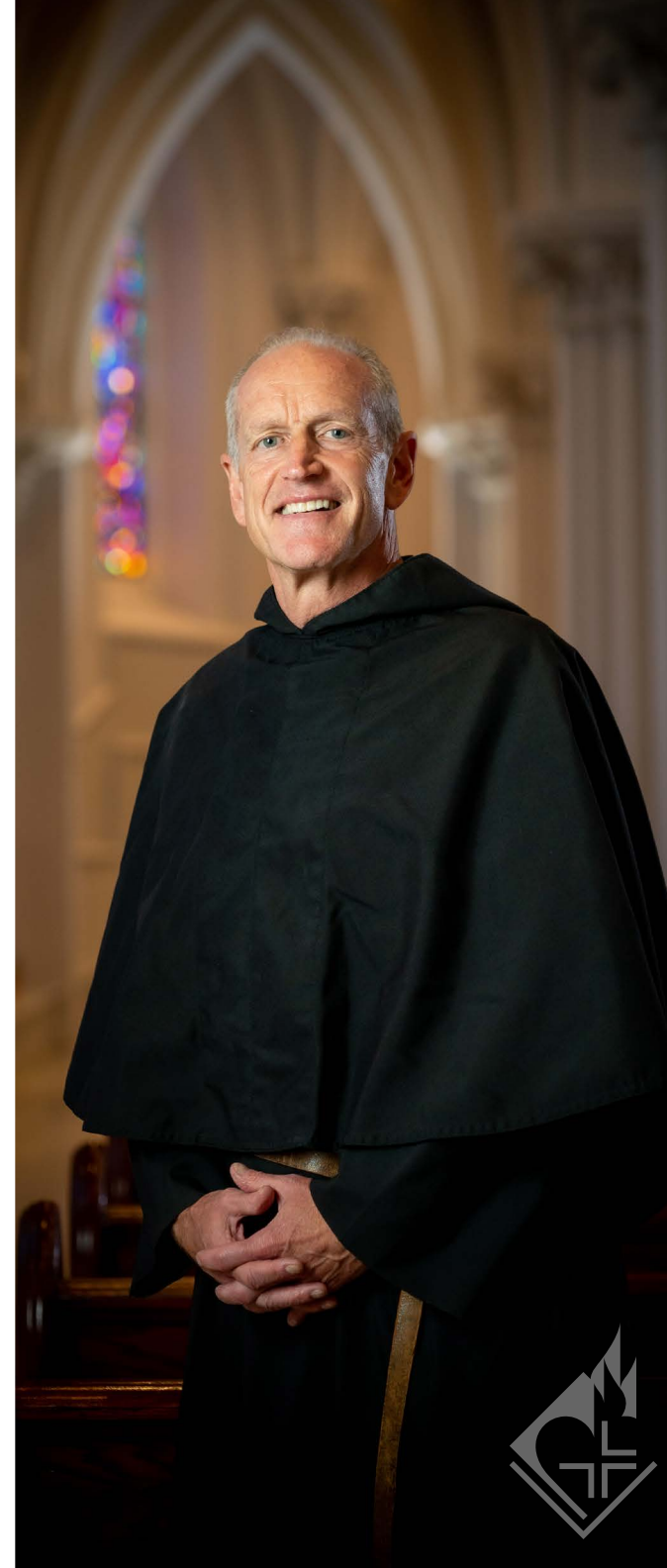
May this Easter season fill us with a renewed sense of hope—a reminder that even in difficult times, the hand of God is ready to roll

the stone away from our tombs of fear and despair and infuse our hearts with a spirit of peace, love, and joy that never dies. God bless you all.

Peace always,

Fr. Robert P. Hagan, O.S.A.

Prior Provincial



“  
**EACH OF US  
 STRENGTHENS  
 ALL OF US.**  
 ”

— St. Augustine

# Delco Born, Rome Bound



## FR. JOSEPH L. FARRELL, O.S.A., ELECTED PRIOR GENERAL OF THE AUGUSTINIAN ORDER

By Sarah M. Reisert

**D**elaware County, Pennsylvania, is a special place. It was the first place William Penn set foot in 1682, the birth of what would become the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Neighbors fly flags that say “Delco” when no other nearby counties with equally snappy nicknames do the same. Delaware County has given the world many things: the first permanent railway in the United States, Wawa convenience stores, even the Slinky. Frank Furness was from Delco, as was W. C. Fields, Joan Jett, and Tina Fey.

On July 11, 1963, Delaware County gave us Joseph Lawrence Farrell, who would one day become the worldwide leader of the Augustinian Order.

### GROWING UP DELCO

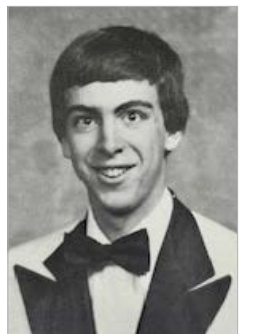
Born in Darby, Pa., Fr. Farrell grew up in nearby Drexel Hill as one of six children. “He grew up in a family that prayed the rosary together and did all kinds of things related to their faith,” remembers Fr. Joe Mostardi, O.S.A., who served at Monsignor Bonner High School while the many Farrell boys worked their way through. He got to know the family and frequently attended dinners at their home, when they would pray for vocations as part of grace. He remains close to the Farrell family to this day. Sometimes they refer to Fr. Mostardi as their other brother.

“Joe would do anything for his family. His commitment to the Order always comes first, but his commitment to the family is a close second, if not parallel with his commitment to the Order,” says Fr. Mostardi. “He’ll come back and forth anytime they need him for something. They’ll save up and he’ll baptize three great-nieces and -nephews all the same weekend.” Fr. Mostardi often helps out when Fr. Farrell can’t get home.

Fr. Farrell’s introduction to the Augustinians was through the friars who served weekends at his family’s home parish when they weren’t busy teaching at nearby Bonner. Fr. Farrell ended up going to Bonner himself. “The Augustinians’ style of life attracted me. I was friendly with them. I worked with them. We had a couple

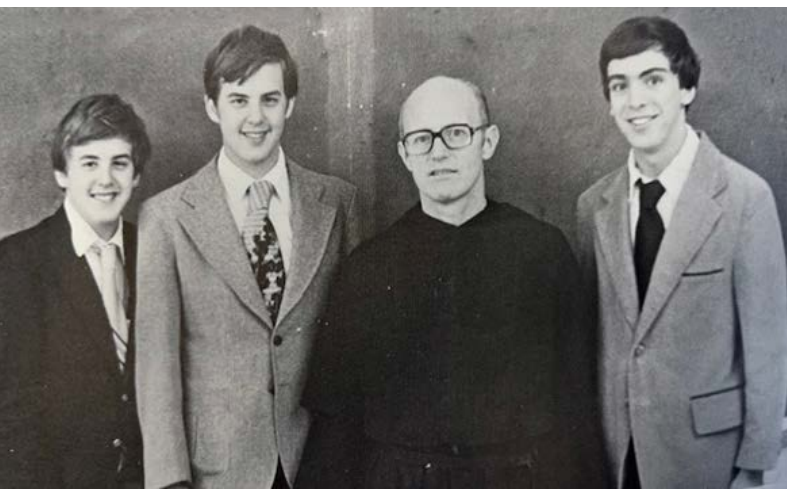


Photos clockwise from left: Fr. Farrell atop the roof of the Augustinian Curia with St. Peter’s Basilica in the background; Fr. Farrell (back row, right) with his five siblings; a high school yearbook photo of a young Fr. Farrell.



of conversations with vocation directors, but I wasn’t feeling called to religious life at that point.”

After graduating from Bonner, Fr. Farrell went to Villanova—more Augustinian territory. He got his degree not in theology, but in business. When it



Fr. Farrell poses for a yearbook photo with the other officers of Bonner High School's Community Service Corps and Fr. Edward Dixey, O.S.A.

came time to interview for jobs during his senior year, something didn't feel quite right. "Every company I interviewed with asked if I was willing to relocate, and I kept saying no. I felt comfortable in the area; I grew up here. After a couple of times saying no, I thought: if I really wanted a job, I would move to Mars, wouldn't I? Yet at the same time, I kept saying no."

One day Fr. Mostardi—then the vocation director for the Augustinians—called the Farrell house looking for Fr. Farrell's younger brother. "My younger brother wasn't home, so Fr. Joe struck up a conversation with me and asked me how the interviews were going. I said that my heart just wasn't in it, and he asked if I would like to talk about it. That's when it hit me. I asked, 'Will this be a business talk, or a friendly talk?' He said, 'It can be both if you'd like.' That's when I seriously thought that I might have a vocation."

Fr. Mostardi remembered all of those prayers for vocations around the Farrell family dinner table. "When Joe finally entered, I said to Mr. and Mrs. Farrell, 'Do you see what you did? You prayed for this,'" he laughs. "They were thrilled, of course."



Fr. Farrell prepares the Bonner Friar for a Bonner vs. O'Hara game.

## LIFE AS AN AUGUSTINIAN

Fr. Farrell applied to the Augustinians' pre-novitiate program in 1985. At that time, pre-novices could also work, so while he was taking philosophy classes to make up for the philosophy he missed as a business major, he also taught at his alma mater, Msgr. Bonner High School. His business major was put to good use teaching the students personal money management.

"You could see from the very beginning that this is a very unique young man," says Fr. Mostardi. "Very sensitive to those around him, very aware of when things were going wrong for somebody, very attentive to whatever we asked him to do."

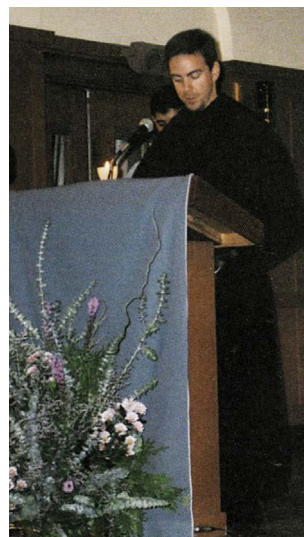
Fr. Farrell's next stop was the frozen tundra of Racine, Wisconsin, for his novitiate year. "It was cold up there, as Racine's right on Lake Michigan. I always used to say the winds would come down from Canada and the first place they would hit was Lake Michigan. The second place would be Wisconsin, the third place would be St. Rita's Parish, and the next place they would hit was my window in the friary. There would be ice on the inside in the winter!"

From Racine, Fr. Farrell headed to Washington, D.C., to study theology at the Washington Theological Union. "After graduation my wish was to go back to Msgr. Bonner to teach," says Fr. Farrell. "My formation director, Fr. Joe Genito, O.S.A., sat me down and he said, 'I know what your wish is, but we really think a parish ministry would be important for your life as an Augustinian.' I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to go to Lawrence, Mass., to work with Fr. Bill Waters, O.S.A., pastor of St. Augustine Parish in Tower Hill."

St. Augustine's was a small parish, about 800 households at the time. Fr. Bill taught this newly ordained priest the ins and outs of parish ministry, but he was only there for two and a half years until he was asked to go to Bonner. Fr. John Denny, O.S.A., Bonner's chaplain, had just been named principal of the school, and they were in need of a new chaplain. Fr. Joe served in that role for two and a half years, then got the call to go to Merrimack College, where he served for seven years in campus ministry.



The campus ministry team pictured in the 2001 Merrimack College yearbook: Fr. Jim Wenzel, O.S.A., Charline Henry, Fr. Joe Farrell O.S.A., Paul Murano, Dori White-Pulizzi.



Fr. Farrell participates in a service at Merrimack College during his years as their campus minister.

## BENVENUTI A ROMA

In his seventh year at Merrimack, all of Fr. Farrell's colleagues said that if he wanted to stay in higher education, he'd have to get a doctoral degree. "I kept saying that I was really happy doing what I was doing, but they kept on, so I began to look around," he remembers. He applied to Boston College, which had a doctoral degree in religious education, and Fordham, which had a similar degree.

During that same time, Fr. Farrell was appointed by the prior provincial to serve on one of the Augustinians' International Commissions on Youth, the World Youth Days and Youth Gatherings. As he served out these duties at St. Monica College in Rome, the friars there knew that he was thinking about doctoral work. They encouraged him to come to Rome, reassuring him that he could study in English now. That sounded wonderful to him.

"I applied, was accepted, left Merrimack, moved to Rome, went to register for classes—and not a single class was in English!" he remembers. "I went to the secretary and said, 'Please, can you tell me where the English classes are?' She said, 'Americano, si?' I replied, 'Si!' And she went 'Solo Italiano.' Oh, no, I thought; I'm dead. I don't speak any Italian. After I calmed myself down, I thought, well, I'm just going to start swimming in that pool until the lifeguard blows the whistle and says get out. And I did it! The language of the house was Italian. I had a tutor to help me. I used to watch television in Italian, which helps your ear to get adjusted. And I just kept swimming. I was there for two years for a license degree, and then I stayed another two years to get the doctoral degree."

"When Joe went to Rome to start his degree, I said to him, 'Be careful, because you're not going to come back home for a long time,'" Fr. Mostardi laughs. "Joe said no, no, no, he's only going for a degree. I said, 'You can say whatever you want, but you're going to be there until you're 74. You're going to get your degree, and then they're going to give you a job in St. Monica's or something, and the next thing you know, you're going to be on the General Council, and then you're going to be the prior general.'" Fr. Mostardi wasn't wrong, but there was a small detour first: in 2007, Fr. Farrell was assigned to Villanova University, where he worked in the office for Mission and Ministry and taught St. Augustine part-time for six years.

In 2013, Fr. Farrell was assigned as a delegate to the General Chapter. Delegates accompany the prior provincial to the international General Chapter in Rome. "I went as a delegate to vote for our Order's next leadership, and in that voting process, I

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Fr. Joe Mostardi, O.S.A.

ended up getting elected myself," he says.

Robert Prevost, O.S.A., now Pope Leo XIV, was finishing his 12 years of service as prior general, and the Order elected Alejandro Moral Antón, O.S.A., as the new prior general. Fr. Farrell had previously met Fr. Alejandro during his time in Rome, when he was an assistant general in the Curia. After his election, a new



Fr. Farrell with former prior general Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón, O.S.A., and Prior Provincial Fr. Robert P. Hagan, O.S.A.

prior general has a couple of days to look around to see what team he would like to nominate to work with him, and then the brothers have to vote according to the people that he nominates.

"Fr. Alejandro had seen me the night before he was going to nominate me and told me that he would really like to have me as the vicar general," says Fr. Farrell. "I didn't know what a vicar general did, so I went to Fr. Michael Di Gregorio, O.S.A., the vicar general at the time, and asked him. Michael said he prays for the good health of the prior general every day. And that is basically the job of the vicar

general: praying for the good health of the prior general and assisting him in whatever needs to be done."

There were also thematic areas that Fr. Farrell was called to work on. One was the Augustinian Spirituality Institute, where he served as the vice chair for seven years with now-Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín, O.S.A. When he was nominated bishop, Fr. Farrell took over as the president of the Institute. He also worked on our international commissions on initial formation and vocation promotion and the commission for communications. As an assistant general, he also had a regional area to cover: the three North American provinces.



Photos clockwise from above: At the completion of his term of office, Prior General Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón, O.S.A., turned over the seal of the Order to Fr. Farrell, then acting as the president of the General Chapter; Fr. Farrell regards portraits of the priors general who served before him; Fr. Farrell at work at his office in the Curia.

Fr. Farrell served six years with Fr. Alejandro during his first term, and in 2019, the Order held its next General Chapter. Fr. Alejandro got reelected as prior general, and he asked if Fr. Farrell would stay on as vicar general. He agreed, and they served together for another six years.

While fulfilling his duties as vicar general, Fr. Farrell was simultaneously earning his master's degree in church management from Villanova University. It was all online, which was good, but there were a lot of very late nights because of the six-hour time difference. "I'd be sitting in my room in Rome looking at the computer at 2:00 AM. Sometimes the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak," he says. "But it was a wonderful opportunity. It had been 40 years since I graduated from Villanova, so having this was a great refresher on how to work with people. Most of the management issues that we have in the Order are human resources—personnel. How do we work with each other? How do we listen to each other? How do we help each other reach the goal together?"



## BECOMING PRIOR GENERAL

"Twelve years serving on the General Council was a blessing in my life," says Fr. Farrell. At the same time, he thought that it might be long enough, and it may be time to bring some new people in. For almost two years he turned to the Holy Spirit on the issue, praying for guidance and for acceptance of the Lord's will. "I was very clear with what my will was, but it helped me to be open to what the General Chapter would decide," he says.

Fr. Mostardi knew that Fr. Farrell wanted to come back home. "I told Joe that I'd love to have him back, but I didn't really think that's going to happen. 'You're your own worst enemy,' I said. 'You are the nicest person I know. You are such a good listener—World War III could be going on, and your attention is on the person to whom you're speaking. You are never distracted. You invest in the relationships that you're in. You've done a wonderful job in what you do. You are kind, you are smart, you are generous, and people just enjoy your company. You want to come home from Italy? Put a bag over your head and stop being nice to people.'" Fr. Mostardi laughs.

And so, on September 9, 2025, Fr. Joseph L. Farrell, O.S.A. became prior general of the Augustinian Order. "Delco proud!" read one comment on the Province's Facebook page.

## THE PRIOR GENERAL'S TO-DO LIST

Fr. Farrell is no stranger to the responsibilities of a prior general. "He was involved in every problem that existed in the last 12 years," says Fr. Mostardi. "It's not like he's coming in and all of a sudden, all of these problems are dumped on his desk. He knows exactly what needs to be done, and he will do it. I think also he realizes what could have been done, what should have been done, and what wasn't done, and now he's in the position to say, 'Alejandro took everything this far. Now it's my turn to do it this far.' And the person who takes over after him moves it to the next step."

Fr. Farrell's to-do list is a mix of things required of each prior general as well as some personal projects he'd like to tackle.

**1 VISITS WITH THE FRIARS.** Fr. Farrell already has three million frequent flyer miles, says Fr. Mostardi, and he is about to get a lot more. One of the obligations of the prior general during his six-year term is to visit with every friar. Official gatherings like provincial chapter meetings do not count towards these visits! After the visit, the prior general writes up a report and offers it to the superior, noting both the positive things he noticed during his visit as well as where some attention might be necessary. The previous prior general, Fr. Alejandro, couldn't go everywhere in his first term, so he designated his vicar general to visit the rest. (No doubt helping Fr. Farrell collect those three million miles!) When he was elected to his second term, Fr. Alejandro visited the places he missed. "Joe will be very aware of the pulse of every province that he goes to," says Fr. Mostardi, "and be very sensitive to helping them define who they are presently and who they're going to be in the future."

**2 ONGOING FORMATION.** One of the things that came up at the General Chapter was ongoing formation for the friars. Ongoing formation is a lifelong, continuous process of personal and professional development focusing on spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral growth to deepen commitment, stay relevant, and fulfill one's mission. It's about continuous renewal, keeping up with societal changes, and maturing in one's identity and service. Fr. Farrell served as the vice chair of the Augustinian Spirituality Institute for seven years and recognizes its worth in this area. "The Institute was established to provide ongoing formation programs. The most popular of the programs was a three-month course in Rome featuring an updated course on Augustinian spirituality, learning about our history, our saints, the *Rule*, the life of Augustine, pastoral theology, and some deep reading of Augustine. It worked really well, up until 2020," he says wryly. "We were never able to bounce back. We had some online courses that didn't take off quite as much as we had hoped. It's on a priority list right now to breathe new life into it."



**3 BEING A FRIAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY.** "No matter what age people are, they could be surrounded by people and still feel isolated or feel alone," says Fr. Farrell. "Many students are realizing that social media is not satisfying their emotional needs. Social media can be very helpful but also can trap people."

**4 FEWER FRIARS, INCREASING DEMANDS.** This problem is multi-faceted. As an Order, the Augustinians are aging. How do you care for them? How do you maintain your presence in ministries where you've served for years, or decades? Do you pull friars from other circumscriptions to serve there? But then, how does the loss of those friars affect their original circumscription? "I don't want to see us work ourselves to death," says Fr. Farrell, "nor do I want to see us have to leave places where we've already formed relationships, because those are valuable."

**5 RETURNING TO FRANCE.** The Augustinians haven't been in France in 25 years, but Fr. Farrell notices a real interest in returning. "When I look at the map of Europe, there's a big country in the middle that's just this big hole where we used to be," says Fr. Farrell. Some of our Augustinians from the French-speaking Democratic Republic of the Congo have expressed an interest in helping the friars reestablish themselves in France.

**6 COLLABORATION.** "I would encourage all of us—our lay collaborators, our family members, our brothers and sisters, our friars—to find ways of working together. That's what church is and that's how we're going to continue to move forward," says Fr. Farrell.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEW PRIOR GENERAL

No one who has ever met Fr. Joe Farrell would doubt that he will be excellent at this job. "He's very conscientious about his work," says Fr. Mostardi. "He's also deeply spiritual. He has a great sense of that interior life of which St. Augustine speaks."

But if not about the job, what advice would his brother friars offer to Fr. Farrell as he embarks upon his new position?

"Don't let any of this stuff drive you so crazy that you become disappointed in what you're able to do and frustrated at what you cannot do," suggests Fr. Mostardi. "Be mindful of when you feel that things aren't coming together, that you step back from it and be objective about what you're capable of doing and be subjective when it's about yourself."

If Fr. Farrell manages to do that, he might be looking at a second term as prior general. "I just joke about it," says Fr. Mostardi. "Even when he won, I said, 'Well, you're getting closer to 74 years old.' He said, 'Oh, no, I'm only going to do this for six years.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah. We'll see how that goes.'"

# A SURPRISE 31 YEARS IN THE MAKING: Fr. Kevin M. DePrinzio, O.S.A., Named Assistant General of the Augustinian Order

By Sarah M. Reisert

**W**hen Fr. Kevin DePrinzio, O.S.A., was a senior at Monsignor Bonner High School in 1994, there was no way he could have imagined that his school chaplain would someday choose him to serve in one of the most important roles in the Augustinian Order.



“I have known Fr. Joe since I was a senior at Bonner, when he came as the chaplain,” Fr. Kevin remembers. “He was the first person I told that I was thinking about joining the Order. In some ways, he first served as a mentor, then our relationship grew into friendship and brotherhood.”

When his longtime friend was elected prior general, you’d think Fr. Kevin might have suspected that he could be called to serve on Fr. Joe’s council—but that’s not the case. “It was definitely a surprise! It was not in my script, nor did it ever enter my imagination when I thought about future assignments.”

Fr. Kevin might have been surprised, but Prior Provincial Fr. Robert P. Hagan, O.S.A., was not. “I’m not surprised that Fr. Joe saw in Fr. Kevin gifts to use on behalf of the Order,” says Fr. Rob, who has known Fr. Kevin since their shared time in the seminary in Washington, D.C. “We were classmates for six years in our time in formation. We went through all those experiences together. I’ve been proud watching him grow in his life as an Augustinian.”

Since his profession to the Augustinian Order in 2000 and his ordination in 2004, Fr. Kevin has served as the vocation director for the Augustinian Friars in the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova and worked as a campus minister at Villanova University. He was also an adjunct professor and campus minister at Merrimack College, as well as a teacher and school minister at his alma mater, Monsignor Bonner High School.

A vice president of Villanova University from 2020 until he moved to Rome in January, Fr. Kevin oversaw the university’s Office for Mission and Ministry, which plays a vital role in ensuring Villanova’s commitment to living

out its Augustinian Catholic mission in every aspect of university life. He was responsible for the wide array of scholarly and pastoral programs offered by the Office for Mission and Ministry; promoted programs and research on contemporary issues through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching; attended to the university community’s spiritual and sacramental needs; and provided faith-based opportunities for students, faculty, and staff of various religious beliefs and traditions.

He earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts from Washington Theological Union, as well as a Master of Philosophy and a Ph.D. in theology from The Catholic University of America. He also earned his Bachelor of Arts in English from St. Joseph’s University, which his Villanova-educated brothers try not to hold against him. The Jesuit life at St. Joe’s wasn’t enough to tempt him away from the Augustinians, though, because the friars at Bonner made such an impression on him.

“There were eleven friars in the school at the time, each of whom brought something unique, but together exhibited a chemistry and bond—whether in their classroom teaching, presiding and preaching at Mass, or bantering with each other in the halls,” Fr. Kevin remembers. “During those four years, I came to suspect that the source of it all was the friary behind the school—or what the friary stood for—and I grew more and more curious and intrigued about what happened there. As I have reflected on this curiosity several times over these past years, I have come to know that it has always been the way of life that first attracted me and still sustains me in the every day. There is something about our living together, praying together, eating together—what we friars call sharing life ‘in common’ both in its joys and struggles—that informs and forms the way I, and we, minister. In our sharing life together, we find God. It is very Eucharistic.”

Fr. Kevin’s passion for community life is matched only by his skill at it. “One of Fr. Kevin’s strengths is his ability



to forge and cultivate relationships,” says Fr. Rob. “A portion of his duties will be to travel around certain parts of the world to listen, to strengthen relationships, and to keep the channels of communication open in such a way that people are heard where the struggles are, and where the Order may be able to help the Augustinian communities around the world with whatever they may need.”

Fr. Kevin will indeed be traveling a lot as one of Fr. Joe’s assistants general. “Each of us has a set of regions of friars with whom we will liaise. As of now, my

areas are the United States and Canada, England, Ireland, Austria, Poland, and the Czech Republic.”

There are also certain themes or groupings that each assistant general is tasked with overseeing alongside another assistant general. Right now, Fr. Kevin’s areas are fraternal life, vocations, and initial/ongoing formation; Augustinian studies; our education apostolate; and the Augustinian family, which includes the Order’s contemplative nuns, active sisters, and laity.

Fr. Joe is playing to Fr. Kevin’s strengths with these assignments. “Kevin works very hard, and we work well together,” says Fr. Joe. “He brings a lot of talent with regard to vocation promotion, and he’s a great preacher and a really good communicator.”

True to form, Fr. Kevin says he is most excited about his new community, specifically the variety of cultures he finds there. “I am living with friars from Benin, Congo, Kenya, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, and Spain,” he says. “To know that God has called each of us and all of us to a way of life that is not bound by any one culture,



teases out for me the harmonious living and deep call to unity that are at the heart of the *Rule of St. Augustine* which ignites us to serve the needs of the Church.”



Photos clockwise from top: Fr. DePrinzio greets students on the campus of Villanova University; Fr. DePrinzio serves Mass with Fr. Farrell at the Augustinian Curia; Fr. DePrinzio with two other Province vocation directors: Fr. Joseph Narog, O.S.A. (left), and Fr. Jeremy Hiers, O.S.A. (right)



# MEET THE NEW VICAR GENERAL: Fr. Alexander Lam, O.S.A.

By Sarah M. Reisert

**F**r. Alexander Lam, O.S.A., may not be a name familiar to many of our readers, but it's one that Prior General Fr. Joseph Farrell, O.S.A., knows very well.



Fr. Alex has served alongside Fr. Joe for the past six years as the assistant general for Latin America. Ordained a priest in 2001, Fr. Alex has also served as the vice coordinator for the Commission for the Augustinian Lay Movement and the leader of the Commission on Vocations and Initial Formation. A native of Peru, he has served as both the prior provincial and formation director of the Province of Our Lady of Grace of Peru.

"The election [for the new prior general] was between Alex and me. It was very close," remembers Fr. Joe. "Both of us talked to each other the whole time, knowing that the Order will be in good hands whichever way the election turned out." Fr. Alex was what Fr. Joe calls an easy choice for his vicar general. In fact, the two have known each other for over 20 years.

"Back in, I think it was 2000, he came to Merrimack College while I was there. Merrimack had an English language program, and Alex stayed with us for a couple months to learn English." Today, Fr. Alex speaks English and Italian in addition to his native Spanish. He puts his language skills to good use as one of the Order's most active friars on social media, chronicling the many trips

around Central and South America that he made as assistant general. And at not even 50 years old, he represents the future of Augustinian leadership.

Fr. Alex has particularly impressed Fr. Joe with his strategic planning skills. "I told him we're going to depend upon that during the next six years," says Fr. Joe. "He's already helped us do some strategic planning of, for example, how the structure of the Korea delegation could work. Do certain commissions need to exist on their own or could they be combined? Should certain commissions be separated into different parts? He's already helping us with all of that."

For his part, Fr. Alex is humbled by his new position. "I thank my brothers for the honor of their trust in the service I have been asked to provide as vicar general. United with our new prior general and his council, I will strive, in my humility, to give my best. I count on your prayers and friendship!"



Follow Fr. Alex on Instagram! @fr.alexlam

# Augustinian Explainer: WHO-AND WHAT-IS THE AUGUSTINIAN CURIA?

By Sarah M. Reisert

**W**hen someone is talking about the Augustinian Curia, you may hear things like, "The Curia decided X or Y," or "The meeting will be held at the Curia." So is the Curia a place, or is the Curia a group of people? It's both!

The Augustinian Curia may refer to either the headquarters in Rome for the international business of the Order of St. Augustine, or the international leadership team of the Order who live and work there. It's similar to when you hear someone referring to the Pentagon or the White House—depending on the context, it could be either the building or the people.

## THE PEOPLE: THE GENERAL CURIA

The General Curia of the Order of St. Augustine, also known as the Order's General Council, is composed of the prior general, the vicar general, and five assistants general.

The **prior general** is the head of the Order and its supreme authority, after the Ordinary General Chapter—the assembly of superiors from over 40 circumscriptions around the world who gather every six years to vote on matters important to the Order. According to the official website of the Order, "The Order commends its administration and governance into his care with confidence in his foresight and faithfulness. The prior general, therefore, is to be obeyed as a father. He himself should be the servant of all, in order that the common good of the Order may be realized."

The **vicar general** serves as the prior general's second in command, assisting the prior general with whatever he needs. The vicar general is also responsible for the oversight of the houses that come directly under the General Curia—places that don't fit into a particular province. These include the Augustinians that work in the Papal sacristy, those at the parish of St. Anne in Vatican City, and all the friars at Collegio Santa Monica and the Curia. He also oversees our friary in San Gimignano in Tuscany, Italy.

The five **assistants general** are elected by the Ordinary General Chapter. They must be at least thirty years old, solemnly professed for at least seven years, and recognized for their learning, prudence, integrity, and zeal. They have a wide range of responsibilities: advising the prior general on matters of governance, helping to implement the program established by the General Chapter, ensuring that major decisions within the Order are made collegially, approving key personnel decisions,



The Augustinianum, one of the three buildings of the Augustinian Generalate in Rome.

preparing the official report on the state of the Order before each Ordinary General Chapter, overseeing admissions to the novitiate and profession, approving statutes for provinces and other circumscriptions, and much more.

Each of the assistants general is assigned to a region. They visit the Order's circumscriptions (provinces, vicariates, etc.) on the prior general's behalf and occasionally preside at provincial and vicariate chapters:



BELGIUM

Martin Davakan, O.S.A., serves as the assistant general for Europe



UNITED STATES

Kevin DePrinzio, O.S.A., serves as the assistant general for North America



MEXICO

Benjamin Franco Garcia, O.S.A., serves as the assistant general for Latin America



PHILIPPINES

Frederick Comendador, O.S.A., serves as the assistant general for Asia Pacific



KENYA

James Mwangi Wambugu, O.S.A., serves as the assistant general for Africa  
*from: Kenya*

There are other friars who are members of the Curia as well, though they are not a part of the General Council:

- The **secretary general** puts in writing all that the prior general deems necessary, and records in the Registers whatever is worthy of note. Javier Pérez Barba, O.S.A., is currently serving as the secretary general.



SPAIN

*Javier Pérez Barba, O.S.A.*

- The **treasurer general** takes care of the administration of the temporal goods of the Order in accord with its Constitutions, looking after the needs of the Curia and promoting the finances of the Order. José María Herranz, O.S.A., is currently serving as the treasurer general.



SPAIN

*José María Herranz, O.S.A.*

- The **procurator general** is responsible for preparing and carrying out all business of the Order with the Holy See, except for those things that pertain to the postulator general. Pasquale di Lernia, O.S.A., is currently serving as the procurator general.



ITALY

*Pasquale di Lernia, O.S.A.*

- The **postulator general** handles the causes of beatification of the Servants of God and of the canonization of the Blessed of the Order, both with the local Ordinaries and with the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Justo Diaz Villareal, O.S.A., is currently serving as the postulator general.



SPAIN

*Justo Diaz Villareal, O.S.A.*

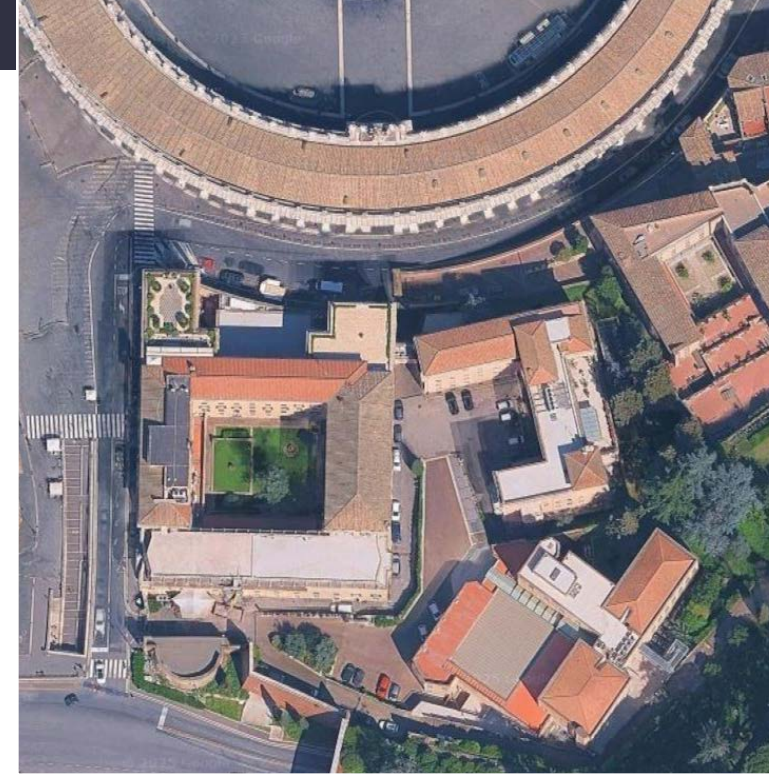
- The **archivist general** is responsible for safeguarding in neat and orderly fashion all records and documents kept in the general archives and scientifically maintaining an inventory and catalogue of the same. Andrés Gómez, O.S.A., is currently serving as the archivist general.



COLOMBIA

*Andrés Gómez, O.S.A.*

- The **sacristan of the Order** carefully registers the Masses received from the priors provincial or from others and sees that they are celebrated as soon as possible in accord with the conditions given him.



### THE PLACE: THE AUGUSTINIAN CURIA COMPLEX

The Augustinian Generalate in Rome is comprised of three buildings that you can see in the photograph above. Believe it or not, that semicircle cutting through the top of the photo is the eastern colonnade of St. Peter's Square—yes, it's that close to the Vatican!

Of the three buildings gathered towards the bottom-center of this photo, the Augustinian Curia building is the one with two wings of different sizes jutting out towards the left. A typical Augustinian community, the Augustinian Curia comprises the members of the General Council and a number of other Augustinians.

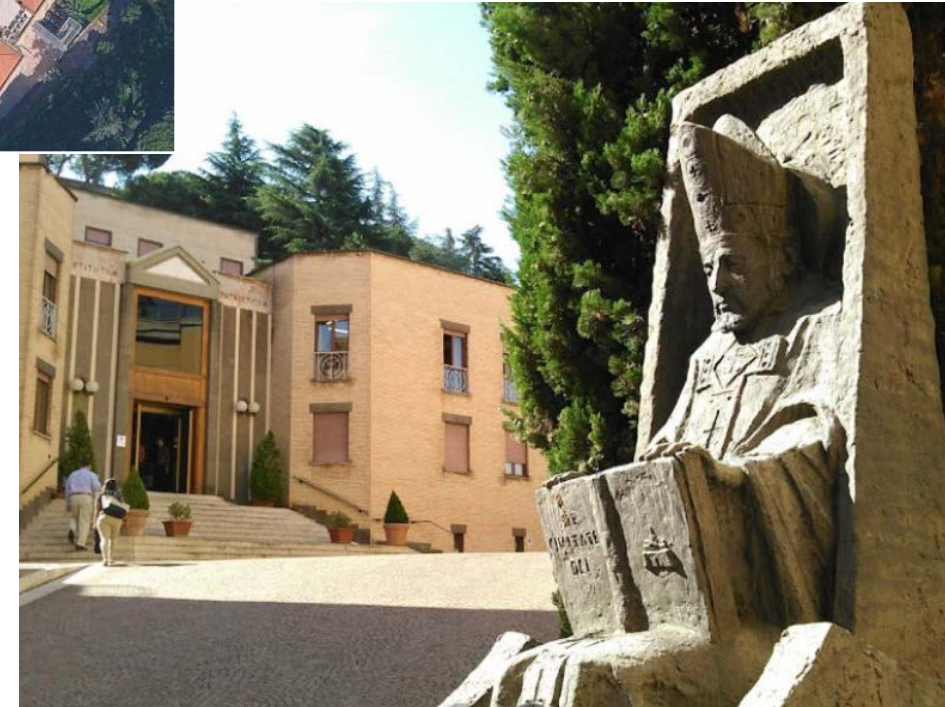
The second (and largest) building on the property is St. Monica's International College (Collegio Internazionale di Santa Monica). You can see it in the photo to the left of the Curia, with four sides surrounding an internal courtyard. The college educates Augustinians studying for the priesthood and for postgraduate degrees in Rome. It also houses the teachers and others.

The third building on the site, the Augustinianum, is the building just under the Curia building in this photo. The Augustinianum is the postgraduate Patristic Institute that the Augustinians conduct for the Vatican. It is an incorporated institute of the Pontifical Lateran University and is responsible for the study of patristic theology, the history and theology of the Church Fathers. This is also where large meetings like the General Chapter are held.

So now you know: the Curia is both a place *and* people in Rome. The Augustinians who live there are always grateful for visitors, so if you find yourself in Rome be sure to stop by and say hello!

**WANT TO SOUND LIKE A LOCAL WHEN YOU PRONOUNCE CURIA?**

Then say KOO-ree-ah instead of CURE-ee-ah!



*Photos above: The Augustinianum, one of the three buildings of the Augustinian Generalate in Rome. The pope is pictured here on the steps of the Augustinianum last September with the friars attending the General Chapter.*

# STANDING WITH THE POOR

How the Augustinian Curia Serves the Marginalized Around the World through the Augustinians in the World Foundation

By Sarah M. Reiser

“

God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favor of the weakest.

”

— Pope Leo XIV



Augustinians in the World Foundation representatives Maurizio Misitano and Simona Cipriani pictured with Fr. Joseph Farrell, O.S.A., and Pope Leo XIV on the occasion of the pope's 70th birthday.

**P**art of the Augustinian Charism—one that Pope Leo XIV feels very strongly about—is answering the call to serve those most in need. Here in the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova, part of our fundraising dollars is earmarked for projects serving those on the margins, in addition to supporting our elderly and infirm friars and our young men in formation.

But around the globe, the areas of the world most in need of the Augustinians' help may not have the resources to support a fundraising office of their own. How was the Augustinian Curia to close this distance between the places where donations would be of the most use and the communities that have the ability to support these causes?

After examining several possibilities during the 2013 General Chapter Meeting, the Augustinian Order created La Fondazione Agostiniani nel Mondo—or, in English, the Augustinians in the World Foundation. Founded on December 20, 2014, by the Augustinian General Curia, the goal of the Fondazione was to assist Augustinian missionaries worldwide in their social projects benefiting the poorest.

We should mention that the prior general at the time the Fondazione was created was none other than Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A., now Pope Leo XIV! “It was during his

mandate as prior general that the office for social projects was created and the Augustinian General Curia [under the name Curia Generalizia Agostiniana] was recognized as an NGO at the United Nations in ECOSOC [the Economic and Social Council],” says the Fondazione. “It was he who laid the foundations for the birth of the Fondazione Agostiniani nel Mondo, the only foundation desired and created by the General Curia of the entire Order of St. Augustine as a tangible sign of our global commitment to the poor!”

The current prior general, Fr. Joe Farrell, O.S.A., is also one of the founders of the Fondazione. Since the foundation's inception he has played a crucial operational role on its executive committee, closely following every project. “We think of his exploratory mission to West Papua in 2016. It was there that he discovered the school that, thanks to your support, we are funding today,” says the Fondazione. “His profound knowledge of our projects and his closeness to our work made his election a fantastic choice.”

The school the Fondazione is referring to is the SMP Villanova School in West Papua, Indonesia. In 2015 Augustinian missionaries assumed the management of an old school, and today—after the construction of nine classrooms and a small hostel—young men and women receive an entire cycle of education and can proceed to college, an opportunity which had previously been unthinkable.

Many of the Fondazione's projects are designed to support and educate young people. They have worked on schools in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in addition to the one in West Papua. They've built a sports field in India in an area that lacks both facilities and equipment, creating a space where children can come together and play irrespective of caste and creed. A project in Algeria aims at combating suicide among young people. And in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they have built a residential center to help rehabilitate child soldiers, offering an education and professional training in fields like tailoring, carpentry, and even IT.

But the Fondazione's projects go far beyond giving children around the world a better start. In healthcare, they reorganized and equipped the health service spaces in Zulia, Venezuela (everything from lighting and ventilation to stretchers and

desks), allowing them to serve 20% more patients. In Chone, Ecuador, a hospital devastated by a 2016 earthquake received a new wing and new medical equipment. In Ketapang, Indonesia, where infant mortality rates are three times higher for the poor than for the rich, the Fondazione contributed towards new equipment and staff training of the radiology department at Maternity Fatima Hospital.



Thanks to a new generator in Maracaibo, Venezuela, more than 300 people are guaranteed service at a soup kitchen, socio-health assistance, and a supply of basic necessities. In 2018, as 10,000 people fled Boko Haram violence in Nigeria, the Fondazione worked to create an emergency fund to help the refugees with basic needs. In Mozambique, the Fondazione is helping

local farmers improve their economic condition by valuing biodiversity and sustainability, providing them with equipment and seeds to diversify production and training them in more sustainable use of the territory. Around a thousand people, mostly women, will benefit from this project.

These are only some of the many endeavors on which the Fondazione has worked in the name of the Augustinians. Many are in places where the Augustinians have had communities for hundreds of years—or in the case of Algeria, the birthplace of St. Augustine, since the very beginnings of the Augustinians themselves.

While each Augustinian province is tasked with the care of the people within its own borders, we must remember that every friar is a brother to every other Augustinian around the world. Their communities are our communities, and when they suffer, we suffer as well. May we, like the Good Samaritan, recognize that our neighbor is not only the person who lives near us, but the person most in need of our help.

If you're interested in learning more about the La Fondazione Agostiniani nel Mondo, you can visit their website by scanning this QR code. You can also contact them directly:

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# Augustinian Brotherly LOVE:

## PHILADELPHIA'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH

By Brendan D. Towell

Director of Spirituality & Mission,

Secondary Schools & Schools of Special Education, Archdiocese of Philadelphia



**W**hen Pope Francis preached at the Basilica of St. Augustine in Rome in 2013, he urged the Augustinians to remain restless in the spirit of their patron: searching for God, open to encounter, alive in love. At the time, their prior general was Fr. Robert Prevost, O.S.A., who (for a time) was formed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Not long after, Francis named him a bishop, the first step on a journey that, in 2025, saw him elected Pope Leo XIV, the first U.S.-born and the first Augustinian pontiff. Last September, Leo returned to that same basilica to open the 188th General Chapter of the Order he once led. His words echoed Francis's homily but carried a new weight. If Francis urged seeking hearts, Leo showed how to channel the ache of the human heart through listening, humility, and unity.

Two papal homilies, twelve years apart, frame a single trajectory. Francis spoke from outside the Order; Leo offered a challenge only one of their own could give. In that challenge lies the genius of the Augustinians: a longing for God, purified in community.

The 2025 General Chapter brought several Philadelphia ties.

While the cardinals elected a Villanova University alumnus in Pope Leo, the Augustinian delegates elected Fr. Joseph Farrell, O.S.A., another Villanova graduate and a member of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova, as their 98th prior general. Not long after, they selected Fr. Kevin DePrinzio, O.S.A., the vice president for mission and ministry at Villanova, as assistant general for the English-speaking provinces. Together, these three American Augustinians now serve at the highest levels of their Order and the Church.

### THE "FLAVORS" OF CATHOLICISM

Diverse spiritual traditions have long enriched the tradition. Jesuits help us discern God's voice in decisions. Carmelites draw us into contemplative silence. Dominicans train us to proclaim the truth. Each is a distinct flavor of Catholic life, not in competition but in harmony with one another.

Augustinians, by contrast, bring something universal: the conviction that the human heart is made for God alone, and nothing else can ultimately satisfy. Augustine recognized that our desires extend beyond this world, and he also understood that the path to God runs through community. His *Rule* begins: "The main purpose for your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart."

Not everyone is called to Franciscan poverty, Benedictine stability, or diocesan priesthood. But every soul hungers for God, and the Augustinians help speak directly to that universal need.

### THE RULE THAT SHAPES LEADERS

St. Augustine's *Rule* is short enough to read in less than an hour, but its wisdom lasts a lifetime. On possessions: "Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common." On prayer: "Be assiduous (faithful and steady) in prayer... think over in your hearts the words that come from your lips." On charity: "Whenever you show greater concern for the common good than for your own, you may know that you are growing in charity."

What unites today's Augustinian leaders is not just training in this *Rule* but Augustine's core insight: every soul is wired for God, and leaders who know this can guide the Church into communion.

**POPE LEO XIV** wrote his dissertation on authority long before he wore papal white. For him, leadership is never about power, but about communion. His call to listening, humility, and unity flows from that conviction.



**FR. JOSEPH FARRELL, O.S.A.**, authored *Rendering an Account: An Augustinian Spirituality of Accountability*. For him, accountability is not merely bookkeeping, but a spiritual posture—a willingness to live transparently before God and one's neighbor.



**FR. KEVIN DEPRINZIO, O.S.A.**, studied how Teresa of Ávila read Augustine's *Confessions* through *lectio divina*. He shows how Augustine's yearning becomes a mirror for our own: "the soul is consumed with longing, yet it can find no means of its own to have what it longs for; and the more it searches the more it thirsts."



Authority (Pope Leo XIV), accountability (Fr. Farrell), and desire (Fr. DePrinzio): three strands stitched together by one *Rule*, one spirituality, one heart oriented toward God.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Why should this matter to Catholics in the pews? Because this "American Augustinian moment" is not just about friars in Rome. It is about a way of being Christian that speaks directly to our fractured, anxious age.

In a Church tempted by clericalism, Leo XIV and Fr. Farrell remind us that authority and accountability only make sense when they serve communion. In a culture awash in anxiety and thirst, Fr. DePrinzio points us back to Augustine's conviction that desire is not a flaw to be suppressed but the very way God

draws us close. At a time when many are tempted to manage or medicate their longings, the Augustinian approach insists that they are not problems but pathways to God. This is why it is so urgently needed today. Other charisms continue to enrich the Church, but this is a moment for the world to be reintroduced to the Augustinian Order and its distinctive witness—not least of all through Augustine himself. He knew ambition and distraction, temptation and failure, friendship and longing. He wrote not as a remote sage but as a companion in the struggle for meaning.

Pope Benedict XVI captured this perfectly:

*When I read St. Augustine's writings, I do not get the impression that he is a man who died more or less 1,600 years ago; I feel like he is a man of today: a friend, a contemporary who speaks to me with his fresh and timely faith. In St. Augustine, who talks to us... for Christ is truly yesterday, today, and forever.*

Not all Catholics will become a pope, a prior general, a priest, or a religious. But we can all be Augustinian because the call to community and conversion is not reserved for the convent or friary. That call belongs in marriages, families, parishes, classrooms, and workplaces. Wherever lives are open to God and His grace, the Augustinian charism takes root.

### A PERSONAL WORD

I count myself blessed to know these men not only as leaders but as brothers in faith. Fr. Joe Farrell often welcomed my students to the Augustinian motherhouse in Rome on pilgrimages (he even let them climb to the roof for a view of St. Peter's!). Fr. Kevin DePrinzio and I have known each other since high school; years later, he presided at my wedding. And while I have known Pope Leo XIV only briefly, his witness has left a lasting mark.

For me, their leadership is not just a headline but a living witness. For all of us, it is an invitation: pick up the *Rule of St. Augustine*. Read it, pray it, live it. Augustine himself urged his brothers: "The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity... not as slaves living under the law but as men living in freedom under grace."

That gift of freedom and charity—embodied now in Pope Leo XIV, in the Augustinian Order's new leadership, and in all who walk this path—is meant for the whole People of God. It is not only a spirituality but an invitation to adventure: to discover that our deepest longings are not burdens but doorways into the very life of God.



# Charity and Change:

## AN AUGUSTINIAN REFLECTION ON DILEXI TE

By Fr. Arthur P. Purcaro, O.S.A., Assistant Vice President for Mission and Ministry, Villanova University

**I**s feeding the hungry something good to do? Yes—but not good enough! If you want to know why feeding the hungry is good but not good enough, please think of the reasons why this person is hungry and what changes might be required to alter those circumstances.

Pope Leo XIV in his recent letter to us, *Dilexi te* (“I have loved you”), addresses both themes—charity and change—urging Christians to move beyond merely individual acts of charity to confront the systemic causes of poverty and inequality.

### TOXIC CHARITY AND DILEXI TE

Pope Leo XIV addresses the potential pitfalls of an unreflective approach to charity, stressing concerns about effectiveness and dignity. The pope warns against an attitude of indifference that can result from a “throwaway culture” that tolerates or turns a blind eye toward immense suffering. The pope’s letter affirms the necessity of almsgiving as a “means of contact, encounter, and empathy with those less fortunate,” (*Dt* 115) but stresses that such acts must be carried out “with intelligence, diligence and social responsibility.”

*Dilexi te* critiques a superficial approach to charity that is disconnected from the deeper goal of human development:

- **Dignity and work:** The letter emphasizes that the most important way to help the disadvantaged is to assist them in finding “a good job, so that they can lead a more dignified life by developing their abilities” (*Dt* 115). Charity that traps people in a cycle of dependency, fostering paternalism while degrading self-worth, falls short of this goal.
- **Beyond immediate relief:** The text suggests directing aid toward developing “capital” (health, education, social services) rather than only temporary monetary aid, which

may increase the very poverty it intends to reduce. The call for transformative charity (understood as justice) is focused on long-term development.

- **Encounter vs. condescension:** Pope Leo XIV stresses that “serving the poor is not a gesture to be made ‘from above,’ but an encounter between equals” (*Dt* 115). Toxic charity, on the other hand, often reinforces power imbalances and a sense of superiority in the giver stressing what we do *for* others rather than *with* them.

### STRUCTURES OF SIN AND SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE

While addressing individual acts of charity, *Dilexi te* strongly links personal responsibility to the need to dismantle “structures of sin,” a term firmly rooted in Catholic theology (notably in the encyclicals of Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Francis) and diametrically opposed to structures of grace.

“Structures of sin” refers to institutional and systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality, injustice, and poverty. These are the societal systems and economic rules that favor the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable. Pope Leo XIV explicitly condemns:

- An economy that “kills” (*Dt* 92) and the “empire of money” (*Dt* 81), placing people at the service of an economy rather than an economy at the service of people.
- “Economic rules” (*Dt* 13) that generate growth but also increase inequality and the gap between rich and poor, a gap growing exponentially at the current time.
- “Ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation” (*Dt* 92) without taking into account the social consequences of profit-making activities, nor the effects on our common home.

The exhortation argues that charity is incomplete if it fails to address these underlying systemic issues. Christians are called to make their voices heard, “to point out and denounce such structural issues, even at the cost of appearing foolish or naïve” (*Dt* 97). The Church’s mission extends beyond the



Left: Pope Leo XIV greets people involved in Opera San Francesco for the Poor, a Milan-based charity founded by the Capuchin Friars that provides free, daily essential services to people in need. Above: Pope Leo XIV shares a meal with over 1300 people in need as part of the 400th anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians).



private sphere to engaging with problems affecting civil society, politics, and the economy.

Opposing these sinful structures, we are invited to contribute to building structures of grace: an economy of communion, based on the recognition that all is gift, meant for all, and that sharing generously as God shares with us is the natural characteristic of the people of God.

### THE DYNAMISM OF DILEXI TE

The core message of *Dilexi te* is that a complete Christian response requires both authentic, effective charity and a commitment to systemic change. The document rejects approaches that separate evangelization from integral human development, or that dismiss social action as merely the government’s job.

The pope highlights popular movements fighting against “structural causes of poverty and inequality,” affirming their work as part of the Church’s mission. In essence, *Dilexi te* seeks to move Christians beyond the potentially toxic aspects of spontaneous, unreflective giving to an integrated approach that respects the dignity of the poor, works with them for their empowerment through capital development as agreed upon by all parties, and actively confronts the structures of sin that keep people oppressed. Love for the poor, as the document states, is “not a matter of mere human kindness but a revelation” (*Dt* 5) and an “inseparable bond between our faith and the poor” (*Dt* 36).

### ST. AUGUSTINE’S INFLUENCE ON POPE LEO XIV’S APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION DILEXI TE

The impact of Pope Leo’s Augustinian vocation is profound and multifaceted, serving as a foundational theological lens for the document’s central themes of charity, justice, and the inherent dignity of the poor.

St. Augustine provides the profound theological scaffolding for *Dilexi te*, allowing Pope Leo XIV to address contemporary issues of toxic charity and systemic sin through the timeless lens of rightly ordered love and the recognition of Christ in every person in need.

In this letter, the Holy Father affirms: “I am convinced that the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society, if we can only set ourselves free of our self-centeredness and open our ears to their cry.” (*Dt* 7) He clearly points out that “this ‘preference’ never indicates exclusivity or discrimination towards other groups, which would be impossible for God. It is meant to emphasize God’s actions, which are moved by compassion toward the poverty and weakness of all humanity. Wanting to inaugurate a kingdom of justice, fraternity and solidarity, God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favor of the weakest” (*Dt* 16). We are all one family meant by God to enjoy the gift of our common home.

Read *Dilexi te* by scanning the QR code below.



  
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION  
**DILEXI TE**  
OF POPE LEO XIV  
ON LOVE FOR THE POOR



# REMEMBERING OUR ROOTS:

## The Augustinians Collaborate with Villanova University to Care for Our Immigrant Brothers and Sisters

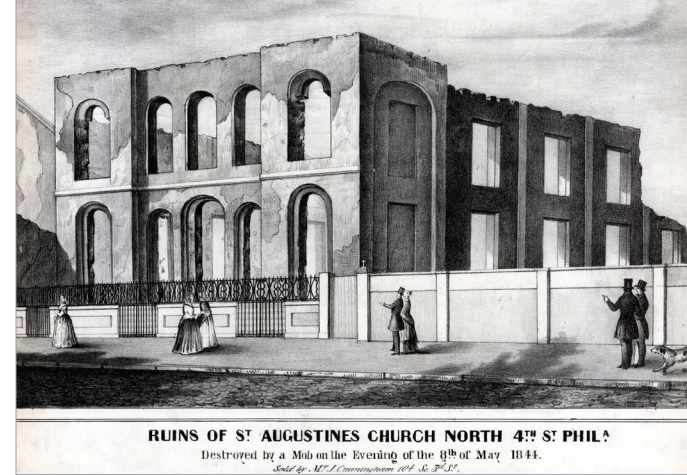
By Sarah M. Reisert

“My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants, who in turn chose to emigrate. All of us, in the course of our lives, can find ourselves healthy or sick, employed or unemployed, living in our native land or in a foreign country, yet our dignity always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God.”

—Pope Leo XIV

It’s sometimes easy to forget that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Each of us may generally know that our forebears came from somewhere else, but if genealogy isn’t one of our hobbies we may not know exactly when, or why, or from where. If we can’t remember our own ancestors arriving on these shores, it’s easy enough to feel like we’ve always been here.

The Augustinians were immigrants to this country—specifically Irish immigrants. They were answering the summons of Bishop John Carroll, the first bishop in colonial America. Carroll knew Pennsylvania was in dire need of priests, as thousands of Irish and German Catholic immigrants were flocking to the state because of its promise of religious tolerance. First came Fr. John Rosseter, O.S.A., from Ross, Ireland in 1794, and Fr. Matthew Carr, O.S.A., followed from Dublin in 1796. They built St. Augustine Parish in Old City Philadelphia specifically to minister to these immigrant communities, and the church suffered for it: on May 8, 1844, anti-Catholic nativists burned the church to the ground.



Fr. Joe Genito, O.S.A., joined the friar community at St. Augustine’s (which was rebuilt by 1848) in 2024. He knew that this would be a time of transition for the church, and a revitalization effort was already underway. To better learn the history of his new home, he picked up a copy of *No Easy Road: The Early Years of the Augustinians in the United States, 1796-1874*, a 1993 book written by Fr. Arthur J. Ennis, O.S.A.



Fr. Joseph Genito, O.S.A.

“I saw the word *immigrant* and I knew right then and there that establishing a center of immigration at St. Augustine Church would be the thing to do,” says Fr. Joe. “It’s why we were founded in the first place, what we came to do: to serve the community, to minister to their needs, but also to be promoters of justice.”

He knew he couldn’t go it alone. “I am not a lawyer, and I am not a professor; I’m a priest,” he says. “I know that I don’t know a lot of things about immigration law.” His first step was to contact his good friend Fr. Peter Donohue, O.S.A., president of Villanova University. “I asked Peter to whom I should speak about this immigration issue, and he said, ‘Oh, no doubt about it. It’s Michele.’”

Michele Pistone, director of Villanova’s Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration, knows her own immigration history very well. Her grandparents’ naturalization papers are framed on her office wall. In college, while studying abroad in Italy, she made her way to Sicily to meet the family that still lived there. “When I got off the train, there was no question about who my relatives were,” she remembers. “My grandfather’s brother was standing on the platform, and he looked just like my grandfather. His granddaughter looked just like me when I was her age. There was no mistaking that I was part of this family, and it brought home how everyone is an immigrant.”

The experience sparked a lifelong interest in immigration. A lawyer by trade, Pistone joined Villanova University as a member of its law faculty. Soon, she was the founder and faculty director of the Villanova Interdisciplinary Immigration Studies Training for Advocates, as well as founder and faculty director for the school’s Strategic Initiative for Migrants + Refugees.

The latter was formed in response to Pope Francis’ 2017 call to Catholic colleges and universities to promote research and teaching about, and the social promotion of, immigrants and refugees. As the most senior person on campus working on

the issue, Pistone felt called to move that idea forward. When Villanova purchased Cabrini University in 2024, it provided a unique opportunity. “Mother Cabrini, of course, is the patron saint of immigrants,” says Pistone. “The best way for the university to continue the charism and the work of the Cabrini community was to start an institute on immigration.”

The Institute’s new home will open on the Villanova University Cabrini Campus in Radnor, Pa., later this year, but they are already hard at work. Last October, they hosted an international summit in Rome called *Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home*. Over 200 participants from more than 40 countries gathered at the Augustinian Curia for three days to strengthen and coordinate academic response to challenges facing migrants and refugees. The list of collaborators is impressive: the Dicastery on Integral Human Development, the Dicastery on Culture and Education, Jesuit Refugee Services, the Scalabrini International Migration Institute, the Center for Migration Studies, the Federation of International Catholic Universities, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—even the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.



Mother Cabrini, patron saint of immigrants

When Fr. Joe came calling, Pistone answered. Together, they are trying to build something that not only provides practical support for today’s immigrants, but to bring together community partners in teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and service with migrants and refugees. People are already reaching out to Fr. Joe and pledging their help. “A parishioner from St. Thomas of Villanova Church in Villanova, Pa., where I served as pastor, contacted me wanting to participate. He’s hoping to steer his law firm to do their pro bono work in this area. A parishioner at St. Paul’s, where I help out on the weekends, started a group of lawyers back in 2016 who saw what was happening then about the immigration issue and wanted to make sure that they helped immigrants avoid being mistreated. Last August, Michele and I participated in a gathering of people from the entire area to talk about ways that we might collaborate. We can do more if we share resources and don’t duplicate efforts.”



Prior General Fr. Joe Farrell, O.S.A., with Michele Pistone at *Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home*.

The initiative is still in the early stages, but Fr. Joe and Pistone are determined to make real change. “I’m definitely interested in participating in the Cabrini Institute, whether or not it takes off here at St. Augustine’s,” says Fr. Joe. “I hope it does, because it is such an important need right now.”

“I think it’s really important for us as a community to remember that we ourselves were persecuted in this city,” says Pistone. “St. Augustine’s stands as a symbol to rebuilding, reconciliation, and growth.”

If you are interested in getting involved with the Mother Cabrini Institute at Villanova University, scan the QR code.



# The Personal Touch

By Fr. Jeremy R. Hiers, O.S.A., Director, Office of Vocations

**H**aving someone who believes in you is a truly special gift. When faced with challenging decisions, dreams that seem unattainable, or any other difficulties, it becomes easier when there's someone in your life who believes in your potential.

This is particularly relevant to vocation promotion.

The number of young men who are discerning a potential call to Augustinian religious life has been steadily increasing in response to Pope Leo XIV. The individuals actively exploring this path with us come from all over. They have diverse educational backgrounds, including but not limited to philosophy, theology, business, and the sciences.

The reasons for reaching out to us vary as much as their backgrounds. Many are inspired by the life of St. Augustine, while others are drawn to the words and actions of Pope Leo XIV. Some are attracted to a specific Augustinian ministry, while others are simply curious about how religious community life can help them grow closer to God and their neighbors.

However, one thing I've discovered is that most of these discerners share a common experience: they began to discern after being personally encouraged by someone who saw a potential vocation in them. In other words, the majority of those discerning with us took the step to reach out only after a friend, family member, spiritual director, pastor, or other known person personally encouraged them to consider the idea of religious life.

This leads me to wonder how many other young men in our own neighborhoods, parishes, and classrooms have thought about religious life but are hesitant to reach out for various reasons. Religious life may initially seem unattainable because they feel unqualified or unable to live the life of a religious. They might have misconceptions about what religious life entails. They may not know how to contact us.

A simple conversation with a friar can help them overcome these perceived challenges. A simple invitation from you can encourage them to take the step to have that conversation.

Do you sense that someone in your life might have a calling to become an Augustinian Friar? A simple encouragement to reach out to us could be all he needs to take that step. Even if he has a conversation and it doesn't seem like he's called to be an Augustinian, it's still a step in the direction of discovering where God is ultimately calling him.

If we can ever be of help in promoting vocations in your area, please don't hesitate to contact us at [vocations@augustinian.org](mailto:vocations@augustinian.org).

**DON'T BELIEVE THAT ONE PERSON'S INVITATION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?** These are just some of the men who became Augustinian Friars because someone like you encouraged them to consider religious life:



Br. Nicholas Anderson, O.S.A.



Br. Frank Connor, O.S.A.



Fr. William C. Gabriel, O.S.A.



Fr. Jeremy R. Hiers, O.S.A.



Fr. Daniel J. Madden, O.S.A.



## Pray WITH THE Pope

“We should set aside moments of silence, moments of prayer, times in which, quieting noise and distractions, we recollect ourselves before God in simplicity of heart.”

—Pope Leo XIV

Prayer is a powerful thing. Whether it is in the quiet of our own hearts or alongside a community of fellow petitioners, prayer connects us to the Lord, to the saints, to ourselves, and to each other. Now, in a special way, prayer can connect us to the pope and to others around the world praying with one heart for those facing great challenges.

*Pray with the Pope* is a global initiative of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network. The network prays for and addresses the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church, guided by the Pope's monthly intentions. Through the *Pray with the Pope* initiative, the Holy Father shares his monthly prayer intention as an invitation to pray and mobilize around the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church.

Each month, a new video is posted on the *Pray with the Pope* website, which you can visit by scanning the QR code at left. You can also listen to his prayer on partner



apps that you may already have, like Radio Vaticana or Hallow. It is an opportunity to unite in prayer with others around the world, and to raise a plea together for these intentions.

The Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova shares each of Pope Leo's monthly intentions via a special email that also includes a brief reflection written by one of our friars familiar with the topic at hand. (If you don't currently receive our emails, but would like to, visit [augustinian.org/enews-signup](http://augustinian.org/enews-signup).) You can find all of the past reflections by scanning this QR code.



Below you can see Pope Leo's intentions for all of 2026. Perhaps you wish to write the intention of the month on your calendar at home so you can keep it in mind all month long. However you choose to engage with the *Pray with the Pope* initiative—through the official website, apps, or our special Augustinian reflections—we hope it will be an instrument of union and communion in the Lord, uniting members of the same body across the globe.

## POPE LEO XIV'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS FOR 2026

**JANUARY:** For prayer with the Word of God. Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

**FEBRUARY:** For children with incurable diseases. Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

**MARCH:** For disarmament and peace. Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

**APRIL:** For priests in crisis. Let us pray for priests going through moments of crisis in their vocation, that they may find the accompaniment they need and that communities may support them with understanding and prayer.

**MAY:** That everyone might have food. Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.

**JUNE:** For the values of sports. Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter, and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.

**JULY:** For respect for human life. Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

**AUGUST:** For evangelization in the city. Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

**SEPTEMBER:** For the care of water. Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

**OCTOBER:** For mental health ministry. Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

**NOVEMBER:** For the proper use of wealth. Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service of the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

**DECEMBER:** For single-parent families. Let us pray for families experiencing the absence of a mother or father, that they may find support and accompaniment in the Church, and help and strength in the Faith during difficult times.

By Fr. Michael F. Di Gregorio, O.S.A.

60 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD



John F. Deary, O.S.A.

50 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD



Liam T. O'Doherty, O.S.A.

ANNIVERSARY OF PROFESSION

75 YEARS



Edward C. Doherty, O.S.A.†

† Fr. Doherty returned to the Lord as the magazine was going to press. He will be featured in the In Paradisum of the fall issue.

70 YEARS



Francis A. Farsaci, O.S.A.

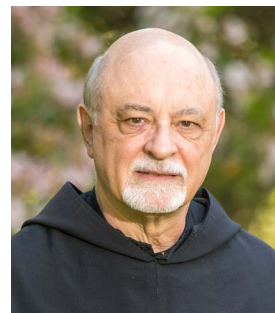


Joseph F. Wimmer, O.S.A.

60 YEARS



Francis X. Devlin, O.S.A.



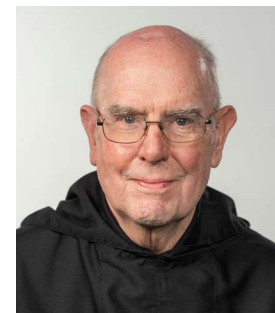
Michael F. DiGregorio, O.S.A.



Michael J. Hilden, O.S.A.



Albert P. MacPherson, O.S.A.



William F. Waters, O.S.A.

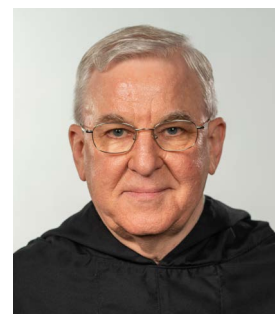
50 YEARS



Christopher J. Drennen, O.S.A.



Lee J. Makowski, O.S.A.



Daniel J. McLaughlin, O.S.A.



Richard G. Mullen, O.S.A.



Robert J. Murray, O.S.A.

FR. KAIL C. ELLIS, O.S.A.

Fr. Kail C. Ellis, O.S.A., a Villanova University scholar and administrator for nearly five decades, passed away on December 20, 2025 at Arden Courts in King of Prussia after several months of declining health.

Fr. Kail was born on September 17, 1940, in Carthage, N.Y. He was one of four sons and two daughters of Toufic and Angele Hobeiche Ellis, and the younger brother of Fr. Alfred J. Ellis, O.S.A., a friar of the Villanova Province who died in 2019. Kail received his elementary and high school education in Carthage between 1945 and 1957, and then attended LeMoyne College, Syracuse, N.Y., from which he received a B.S. degree in political science in 1962. He entered the Augustinian novitiate at New Hamburg, N.Y., in September 1962, and after professing simple vows on September 10, 1963, studied philosophy at Villanova University for one year. From 1964 to 1968 he pursued theological studies at Augustinian College, Washington, D.C., where he obtained his M.A. degree. He professed solemn vows in the Order on September 10, 1966 and was ordained to the priesthood on September 9, 1967 at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C., by Bishop Edward Herrmann.

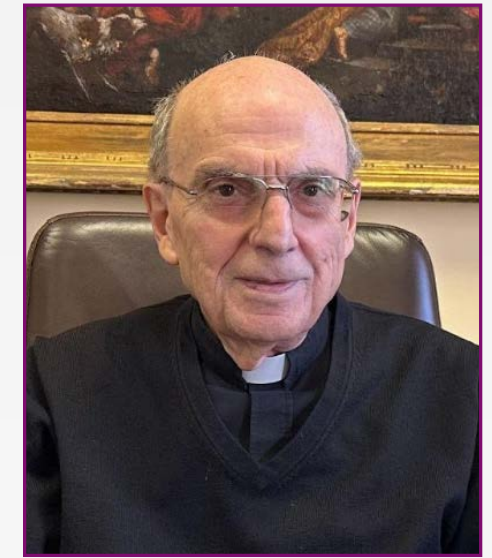
Fr. Kail was assigned to St. John of Sahagun Friary, Washington, D.C., where he taught at Archbishop Carroll High School from 1968 to 1972. He also served as vice-rector while working on an M.A. in political science at Villanova University, which he completed in 1969. In 1972 he was assigned to Austin Friars Hall at Augustinian College where he pursued studies at the Catholic University of America and completed a Ph.D. in international studies in 1979. That year he was assigned to Villanova University and served as director of summer sessions until 1986 and was founding director of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies from 1983 to 1998. He was appointed dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1986, and during his tenure was instrumental in developing the Augustine and Culture Seminar Program. He became vice president for academic affairs in 2010, and from 2015 until 2025 was special assistant to the president and chair of the Mendel Medal Advisory Committee. For much of this time he was a member of the Augustinian community of St. John Stone Friary, Villanova, where his talents were often valued in roles of leadership, hospitality, and cooking.



Villanova University named their College of Liberal Arts and Sciences alumni medallion after Fr. Ellis in 2015. The Rev. Kail C. Ellis, O.S.A. Alumni Medallion is awarded to notable alumni every year during Villanova's Alumni Medallion Awards.

In his teen years, Fr. Kail had had the opportunity to live for a period in Lebanon, at which time he developed a lifelong passion for Middle East studies. He later studied Middle East history at Georgetown University, traveled in the Middle East, published articles and contributed to two books in this area of interest.

In 2024, as a result of declining health, Fr. Kail was transferred to St. Thomas Monastery at Villanova and in his final few weeks he was placed on hospice care at Arden Courts. Prior Provincial Robert P. Hagan, O.S.A., was celebrant and homilist at the Funeral Mass for our brother, which took place on December 30, 2025, in St. Thomas of Villanova Church with the participation of many friars, relatives, colleagues, and friends. Burial followed in the Augustinian plot of Calvary Cemetery, West Conshohocken, Pa.



You can read full biographies of deceased Augustinians online at [augustinian.org/necrology](http://augustinian.org/necrology)

at home  
with...

# Allegrini Monastery

By Sarah M. Reisert



  
**ALLEGRINI MONASTERY**  
RICHLAND, N.J.

Fr. Francis X. Devlin, O.S.A., Community Prior  
Fr. Anthony P. Burrascano, O.S.A., Community Treasurer  
Fr. Robert J. Murray, O.S.A., Head of School



## Allegrini Monastery is the heart of St. Augustine Preparatory School in more ways than one.

Today, it houses the Augustinian Friars that serve there, their Order lending the school not only its name, but its mascot: the Hermit. But in 1959, the building was the entire school.

“We bought the house from a doctor back in 1959. The school started as a minor seminary, but they took other students—I think there were about 20 students to start,” says Fr. Tony Burrascano, O.S.A., who is showing us around. “The first floor was the community room, chapel, kitchen, and dining room. The second floor was classrooms, and the third floor was the monastery. Three summers ago, a man pulled up who had been a student here in the original school, and he came in and explained it all.” The nineteenth-century Mansard-style building was originally built as a summer residence for Col. E. R. Woods. “Rumor has it that at one point it was a speakeasy for the African American community here,” Fr. Tony says with a sly smile.



Fr. Tony Burrascano, O.S.A., in his office in St. Augustine Prep.

Today, St. Augustine Prep has well over 20 students and is no longer confined to the walls of Allegrini. The campus, tucked away in a quiet part of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, now stretches across four large brick buildings and several sports fields. Boys come from across southern New Jersey to attend. But Allegrini is still home to the Augustinian Friars who live and work here: Fr. Tony, who serves as the assistant to the head of school for mission and ministry; Fr. Francis Devlin, O.S.A., who teaches theology; and Fr. Robert Murray, O.S.A., who is the head of school.

“I have two primary roles as head of school: mission and vision,” says Fr. Murray. “The Augustinian Catholic mission is my primary focus because that’s what differentiates us from other schools. The vision is: where are we now? Where do we see the school in the future? What’s on the forefront of education in the field? What’s in the forefront of Catholic education?”

Fr. Murray has spent most of his life in the field of education. “I worked at Msgr. Bonner High School and then Villanova University for 21 years. I wasn’t expecting to go back to high school work, but I really, really do like it. It’s a nice community.”

You know who else wasn’t expecting to be assigned to high school work? Fr. Tony. He has had many jobs (missions director, pastor, Province treasurer, campus ministry at Villanova, and executive director of the Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor) but as you can see, secondary education was not among them. “About six years ago my phone rang. It was [then-Prior Provincial] Fr. Michael Di Gregorio, O.S.A., asking me to come to St. Augustine Prep. I was in my late sixties, and I said to him, ‘Are you nuts?’ At my age, I never wanted to be in secondary education. He promised that I’d be working in the office. I had barely arrived at the school when Fr. Murray handed me a textbook and told me I’d be teaching.”

Fr. Devlin also had a memorable welcome for Fr. Tony. “I pulled in right over there,” says Fr. Tony, pointing out the window to the friary parking lot, “and Fr. Devlin comes out and gestures at me to lower my window. He said, ‘Have you ever taught high school before?’ I said no. And he replied, ‘At your age, get in that car and get out of here right now.’” The room erupts in laughter. The job has grown on him, though, and Fr. Tony now considers it his second-favorite assignment, right

behind his time as a missionary in Africa.

For his part, Fr. Devlin always knew he wanted to teach high school. From a young age, he felt a joint call to teaching and to the priesthood. “I wound up going to Msgr. Bonner High School in Drexel Hill, and when I saw that there were priests and brothers who were teachers, I thought, ‘Well, that’s a nice fit for me.’ I graduated high school in June 1965 and entered the Order in August 1965. After my ordination in 1973 I was assigned to Bonner, where I taught for almost 30 years.”

Despite brief detours to Malvern Prep and Villanova, Fr. Devlin truly called Bonner home. “In 2007, I was on the faculty at Bonner when they made the decision that we would leave the school. It was during that final year that [then-Prior Provincial] Fr. Don Reilly, O.S.A., sat me down in the visiting



Fr. Robert Murray, O.S.A., distributes ashes to a St. Augustine Prep student.

room at Bonner. Before I hit the chair, he told me he’d like me to go to St. Augustine Prep. They gave me a year’s sabbatical since I had been teaching so long, but now I’m in my seventeenth year here.” At age 78, this is the first year Fr. Devlin has gone from teaching full-time to part-time.

You’d think to teach in a high school, these friars must be extroverts. You’d be wrong. “The three of us are all introverts, so that works out very well,” says Fr. Tony.

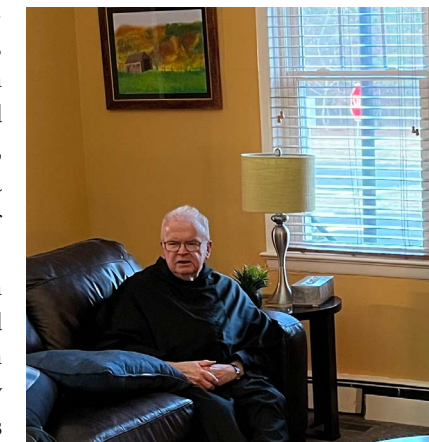
“You’re not an introvert!” exclaims Fr. Murray, surprised. “I’m a very high introvert,” Fr. Tony replies. “When I take my Myers Briggs test, each time I score higher and higher on introversion.”

“You’re not surprised that I’m an introvert,” says Fr. Devlin, to laughter.

After extroverting all day in the name of education, the evenings are quiet at Allegrini. “After dinner, I enjoy going to my room and closing the door,” says Fr. Murray dryly. Fr. Devlin enjoys doing crossword puzzles. They’ll watch the evening news, and on Fridays they might watch a movie. They generally go to bed early as they’re all early risers, though Fr. Devlin is naturally a night owl and tends to stay up later than the others.

A cook comes in to help with their meals, but Fr. Devlin and Fr. Murray say that Fr. Tony is an excellent cook. They particularly enjoy his chicken stir fry. “His desserts are also very good, but he won’t make them for us,” laments Fr. Murray.

“You know why?” interjects Fr. Tony. “I make a homemade apple pie or cake. He eats one slice and that’s the end. So I did all that work for that!”



Fr. Francis Devlin, O.S.A., in the common room of Allegrini Monastery.

## Fr. Tony's Famous Apple Pie

### INGREDIENTS

- About 4 ½ lbs of Granny Smith apples
- Homemade pie dough or pre-made pie dough, such as Pillsbury
- ¾ cup of sugar (you can substitute some brown sugar for the granulated if you wish)
- Cinnamon—lots of it! The amount used depends on how strong of a cinnamon taste you want. I add a lot.
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice (optional)
- 1 teaspoon of nutmeg (optional)
- Butter (about a stick)
- Cornstarch
- 1 egg

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place sugar, flour, salt, 4 tablespoons of cinnamon, nutmeg and lemon juice (if using) in a large bowl and stir by hand until well combined.

2. Core and peel the apples. Slice them into very thin slices. Do one apple at a time and place it in the bowl with the sugar. Mix the slices after each apple to keep them from turning brown.

3. When all the apples are peeled, place the slices in a strainer over a bowl to catch the juice. Occasionally press the apples to help squeeze out the juice. Let this drain for about 10-15 minutes. Retain the juice.

Often when making an apple pie, after baking there will be a large gap between the apples and the upper pie crust. This is due to the juices draining from the apples as they are baking and as the apple slices shrink. This step allows the juices to drain before baking.

4. Place one pie crust into the pie dish and mold it into the side of the dish. Begin placing the sliced, drained apples into the pie crust using your hands to push down on the apples. After a nice level of apples has been put in, add four pats of butter to the top of the apples. Spread some cinnamon over the apples/butter. Add another layer of apples, repeating the butter and cinnamon. Continue until all the apples are in the crust.

5. Press down on the apples with your hands to make it a compressed filling. Add the pats of butter and cinnamon to the top layer.

6. Take the drained juice from the apples and place in a small saucepan with a pat of butter. Bring to a boil. Add some cornstarch to a glass with some water and stir, then pour the cornstarch mixture into the saucepan. Stir until the juice thickens.

7. Pour about ¼ cup or so of the thickened juice back over the apples in the crust.

8. Place the remaining pie crust over the top of the apples. Turn the edges of the bottom and top level of dough to seal the side shut.

9. Make an egg wash with one egg and apply it to the entire pie with a pastry brush, including the edge of the crust. With a knife or scissors cut four small holes in the top to allow steam to escape. Do not make them too big.

10. Place the pie in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes.

11. Set your oven to 375 degrees and use your lowest rack to allow the bottom crust to cook. Layer a cookie sheet with a lip with aluminum foil (to catch the overflow) and parchment paper (so the pie dish does not stick).

12. Cook for 45 minutes and check to see if it is fully cooked by sticking a sharp knife in the top through the apples. If the knife goes through smoothly, the apples are all cooked and it is ready to cool for about 1 hour.

“He just made an apple pie for his family for Christmas,” says Fr. Devlin wistfully. “It was beautiful.”

“It was beautiful,” agrees Fr. Murray. “You wanted to take a picture, plus you wanted to eat it. We’re trying to convince him to make one for us.”

“I’m not doing all that work for them not to eat it,” says Fr. Tony, shaking his head. We suggest they throw a party at the house so that the entire pie might be eaten, but again: introverts.

They do love the boys at St. Augustine Prep, though, and the boys love them. The walls of Allegrini Monastery are covered in framed student art. As Fr. Tony showed us around the school, he was greeted respectfully—even enthusiastically—at every turn by young men dressed in St. Augustine Prep’s smart navy blazers. It brings the friars great joy to see the students deepening their faith, coming to their offices to inquire about being baptized or confirmed.

“I say to them, why are you asking for this? And they will inevitably say, ‘I see what it means to my classmates. I see what faith means to them,’” says Fr. Tony. “A couple of weeks ago we installed over 40 liturgical ministers. Two juniors came to me and asked to be Eucharistic ministers. They said, ‘We see our classmates are allowed to do that. We don’t want to just sit back and watch. We want to be a part of it.’ Where else do you get teenage boys saying that? That says an awful lot.”

“We had 26 students and teachers go to Italy at Christmas, and they got a shoutout from the pope from the balcony,” says Fr. Murray. “One of the boys on the trip came to my classroom this morning with the video on his phone that he wanted to show me, and he’s not even Catholic.”

“But from the balcony, in Italian, the pope did say, ‘Fr. Tony, make them a pie at the house,’” says Fr. Devlin.

“I don’t speak Italian,” retorts Fr. Tony.

“It sounded official,” says Fr. Murray. “The pope said it from the window.”

“Absolutely not,” repeats Fr. Tony.

The winter sun is setting as we leave the monastery. The remaining students who had been playing football on the lawn are gone, and the campus is quiet. Richland, N.J., is a rural place, with the local wild turkeys causing more trouble than any neighbors. Some might consider it too isolated for their liking, but not the Augustinians of Allegrini Monastery.

“At first it was like, is there anything else here?” says Fr. Tony. “But I’ve grown to like it. I like the quiet, and as you know, we’re all very quiet people to begin with.”

“There’s something special about this place,” says Fr. Devlin. “I’m thinking about retirement at some point and I would like to stay here and be a presence. I like the interactions here. It’s delightful.”



Senior fine arts student Raylen Weaver shows off his painting of Allegrini Monastery alongside the friars who live there.

## SUPPORTING WHAT SHAPED YOU: MEET THE ST. AUGUSTINE LEGACY SOCIETY'S YOUNGEST MEMBER

By Sarah M. Reisert

**M**atthew Babich first got to know the Augustinians through, of all things, the Miami Dolphins.



“My uncle was a professional football player for the Miami Dolphins,” says Babich. “During his time playing for the team, Fr. Frank Chambers, O.S.A., was appointed the team chaplain by then-Dolphins coach Don Shula.” Fr. Frank was a young priest serving an assignment at St. Thomas University in Miami, which was operated by the Augustinians at the time and served as the Dolphins’ training camp from 1970-1993. “My uncle entered into mentorship and spiritual direction with Fr. Frank, and from that a friendship grew, eventually extending to our entire family.”

When it came time for Babich to go to college, Villanova University was on his radar because of his familial connection to the Augustinians. During his time there he not only deepened his connection to Fr. Frank, but to the other Augustinians he encountered on campus. “What the Augustinians model at Villanova is a way of living faith that is intellectually honest and also deeply communal,” recalls Babich. “That emphasis on community, on the belonging of every member of the community, was meaningful to me at a time of transition in my life as a college student. There’s a collective spirit of belonging to something larger than yourself.”

His relationships with Fr. Frank and the other Augustinians he met at Villanova continue to this day. That in and of itself is not so unusual, but what is unusual is that Babich (who graduated from Villanova in 2020) has remembered the Augustinians in his will.

Only about 20% of people under age 30 have a will. Babich wasn’t one of them. “I had a legal benefit through work that allowed me to create a will virtually. I was going to lose the benefit because I was switching jobs, so I thought, let me create a will.”

Babich considers his legacy gift to the Augustinians as an expression of gratitude, but also responsibility. “I’ve benefited from the community that they created, and I feel a quiet obligation to help ensure that the community remains strong,” he says. “Contributing to the Augustinians is less of a financial decision and more of a statement of intent that reflects a belief—that I think what formed me as a student is worth sustaining for generations who haven’t yet arrived.”

His planned gift makes Babich our youngest member of the St. Augustine Legacy Society, which recognizes those who have included the Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova in their estate plans, or have made other provisions for a planned gift to the Province. He knows he is a bit of an outlier in the society, but he has some words of advice to other young professionals like him: “Supporting the Augustinians doesn’t depend on reaching a certain stage professionally or financially. It begins with reflecting on the people and communities that helped shape you, where you were known, challenged, and supported, and then letting that guide how you choose to care for those communities so they remain strong for others.”



Matthew Babich and his mother with longtime family friend Fr. Frank Chambers, O.S.A.

To learn more about becoming a member of the St. Augustine Legacy Society, scan the QR code.

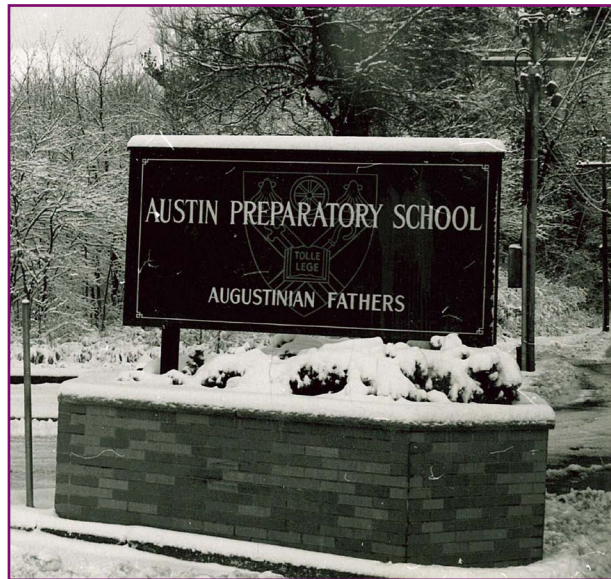


# Where we Were:

## AUSTIN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

### READING, MASSACHUSETTS

By Sarah M. Reisert



**I**t's almost a misnomer to call Austin Preparatory School a place “where we were,” since despite not officially being an Augustinian-sponsored school for over 50 years, the Augustinian Charism is vibrantly alive in the minds and hearts of its students, faculty, and staff.

The Augustinians founded Austin Preparatory School at the invitation of Richard Cardinal Cushing and the Archdiocese of Boston in 1961. The friars welcomed 176 freshman and 24 sophomore boys in the school's inaugural year, 1963, graduating its first class of 18 young men in 1966.

Fr. Art Johnson, O.S.A., was one of the first friars to serve at Austin Prep.

“I arrived in early August, and the school wasn't finished yet. The only things in the room that I was assigned were a bed and a chair,” he remembers. That year, he taught biology—the first of many positions over the 20 years he was at the school. He taught religion, Latin, and even driver's ed. He was the coach of the ski team and the assistant coach of the soccer team. But only a handful of those 20 years were served at an *officially* Augustinian school.

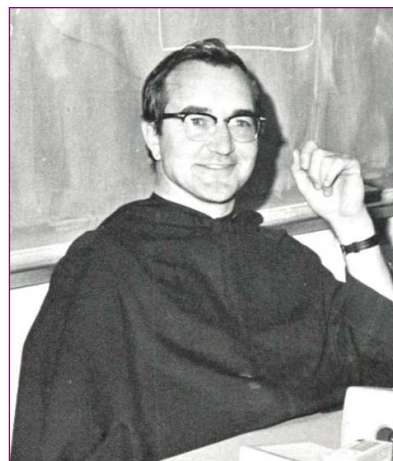
Facing declining vocation numbers during the 1970s, the Augustinians planned to close several of their schools, including Austin Prep. Worried parents, students, alumni, and faculty rallied together to save the school, and the Augustinians—still hoping to keep Austin Prep alive in some way—agreed to a buyout. Austin Prep became its own 501(c)(3) organization, a fully incorporated Catholic independent school.

It may not be surprising that the hastily-formed 501(c)(3) didn't have any money with which to buy the school, so the Augustinians loaned them the money. They even agreed to help staff the school, though of the 20 Augustinians assigned there, only five remained, including Fr. Art. The last friar to live on campus, Fr. James Flynn, O.S.A., moved out in 1988. During this time, Austin Prep added a middle school in addition to the high school, and in the early 1990s they begin to admit young women. Today, the school's enrollment is split evenly between boys and girls.

From around 1998-2012, there was not an official Augustinian presence at the school, though local friars at Merrimack College and St. Augustine Church in Andover would assist by saying Masses and hearing confessions. (This includes Fr. Art as well as an Austin Prep alum that he once taught: Fr. Peter Gori, O.S.A., the pastor of St. Augustine Church in Andover, Mass.) Things began to change when Fr. Ray Dlugos, O.S.A., vice president of mission and ministry at Merrimack College, joined Austin Prep's board of trustees. It was time for an Augustinian renaissance at Austin Prep.



Photos clockwise from top left: A photo of the school's entrance during the brief time the school was administered by the Augustinians; Fr. Art Johnson, O.S.A., in a vintage photo from the school; Dr. James Hickey and his wife Cindy celebrate their affiliation to the Augustinian Order alongside Fr. Art Johnson, O.S.A. (left), and Fr. Peter Gori, O.S.A. (right).



When Dr. James Hickey began his tenure as head of school in 2013, he was presented with a strategic plan crafted by the Austin Prep community in anticipation of his arrival. It was an initiative to deepen the school's Catholic identity and its relationship with the Order of St. Augustine. “I took that initiative to heart,” says Dr. Hickey.

This was not Dr. Hickey's first time meeting the Augustinians. He is a graduate of Wagner College, which was adjacent to Staten Island's Augustinian Academy. “I first met the friars when I was a student because they were involved with campus ministry,” he says. “Our Lady of Good Counsel is just down the hill from the college, so the friars would host campus ministry events in the church or sometimes come up to the campus to celebrate Mass in the school chapel.”

There was an awareness of the Augustinian Charism of Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas at Austin Prep, and the school's mission statement hinted at it around the edges. Fr. Dlugos used that as a guide to restructure and rewrite the mission to be more clear in how it communicated the Augustinian Charism.

“I'm from a perspective and an experience where mission is the beginning and end of all things in a school. Mission is not another thing on the plate; mission is the plate,” says Dr. Hickey. “If the school is doing mission well, everything else tends to fall into place. And for me, the litmus test is: number one, how well is the community aware of the school's mission and values and charism? And number two, how does the school exemplify its mission and values? So, everything we do here is connected to the Catholic faith and the values of the Augustinian Order.” If a new course is being introduced to the school, does it align with Veritas? If there's an initiative to support people in need, is it truly aligned with Caritas? These are not trivial questions at Austin Prep.

In 2014, the school had the opportunity to join the Augustinian Secondary Education Association (ASEA). Since then, Austin Prep has been more closely connected to the network of Augustinian secondary schools across the country and around the world. In fact, in April 2025 Austin Prep took a turn hosting the Augustinian Values Institute, where educators in Augustinian schools from as far away as Australia came to deepen their understanding of Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas. In April of this year, they will host the student version of the same initiative. “It's a great professional development opportunity,” says Dr. Hickey. “Staff members come back from the Augustinian Values Institute and say, ‘I get it now. I know we talk about Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas all the time—I hear it, I know it, but it wasn't until I went to the Augustinian Values Institute that I really understood it.’”

The Augustinian Charism is resonating with families looking for Catholic education for their children. “We've had a huge increase in enrollment since I've arrived, which I attribute to us manifesting the Augustinian Charism more clearly as a commitment to the Augustinian way of life. As that deepens, so has the demand for an Austin Prep education.”

Dr. Hickey's commitment to the Augustinian Charism led him and his wife Cindy to be affiliated to the Augustinian Order in November 2024. Affiliation is the highest honor that the Order can bestow on the laity, as affiliates formally become part of the Augustinian Order. Dr. Hickey remembers the day he was told the news. It was an exceptionally busy day on campus, but Fr. Art insisted that he had to see Dr. Hickey.

“I'm thinking: what is going on here? Is the shoe about to drop?” Dr. Hickey remembers. “Then Fr. Art said that the community at



St. Augustine Parish had submitted us for consideration to be affiliated to the Order of St. Augustine. I didn't know exactly what to say other than thank you, as I didn't really know what affiliation meant.” An affiliation Mass was held at St. Augustine Church in Andover, but Fr. Art suggested that a second

Mass be held for the Austin Prep community. “It was important that the students, the faculty, and the parents see a tangible way that Austin Prep remains connected to the Order of St. Augustine.”

Dr. Hickey doesn't just believe in the Augustinian Charism for the school—he believes in it for the world. “I don't think I'm exaggerating that you can say the world right now is full of lies, division, and hate. There's a lot of it. There's too much of it. And the Augustinian Charism stands in direct opposition to that. You have lies, division, and hate, and the Augustinians are modeling truth, unity, and love. The focus at Austin Prep is shaping Augustinian hearts formed in Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas to go out into the world and put ripples in the pond, combating all the things that we don't want in the world.”

“Austin Prep has now become what we had hoped it would become when we first opened the school,” says Fr. Art. “It is a very good example of the Augustinian Charism for all of the students who are there. It is a very good feeling to know that people appreciate what the Augustinians are all about.”

Photos (this page): Augustinians around Austin Prep, then and now.

# AUGUSTINIAN SAINTS AND BLESSEDS: MAGDALENA OF NAGASAKI

By Fr. Liam T. O'Doherty, O.S.A.  
Pastor, St. Augustine Sasaoka Catholic Church, Fukuoka, Japan



Whether referred to as the Lay Augustinians, Augustinian Seculars, or Augustinian Third Order, this branch of the Augustinian family has a long and rich tradition. It has been my privilege to be directly or indirectly associated with groups of Augustinian Seculars in Troy, New York; Topeka, Kansas; Nagasaki, Japan; and Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.



As an Augustinian missionary in Japan, St. Magdalena of Nagasaki is for me a fascinating figure in the history of our Order's work in Japan.

She was born sometime around 1610, when government hostility to Catholicism was starting to heat up. When she was 10 years of age, her parents were martyred before her eyes for their Christian faith. Her parents' valor and faith in the face of martyrdom encouraged her to dedicate herself to Jesus Christ.

Magdalena was attracted to Augustinian spirituality by two Spanish friars, Francisco de Jesús and Vicente de San Antonio, who belonged to the Recollect movement within the Order of St. Augustine. The Augustinian Recollects became an independent mendicant order within the Augustinian family in 1912, but in the early 1600s, they were still a reform movement within the larger Order. Magdalena worked with them as a translator and catechist.

When she was about 15 years old, the friars received Magdalena into the Third Order of St. Augustine—that is, as a tertiary. From that moment on, her formal attire was the simple tunic and cincture of a tertiary, and she fervently applied herself to prayer, reading religious books, and apostolic work.

The times were difficult. The persecution of Christians was becoming increasingly systematic and cruel. Magdalena taught catechism to children and begged alms for the poor from Portuguese merchants.

In 1629, she took refuge with Frs. Francisco and Vicente, along with several hundred other Christians, in the mountains surrounding Nagasaki. In November of that same year, the two missionaries were captured. Magdalena remained hidden, enduring suffering and hardship with serene joy. To her fellow Christians, she instilled courage to remain steadfast in the faith and encouraged all those who, through weakness or intellect, had renounced Christ. She visited the sick, baptized newborns,

and had a word of encouragement for everyone.

In 1632, Frs. Francisco and Vicente, her spiritual counselors, were burned alive. Subsequently, she turned to Fr. Jordan of St. Stephen, a Dominican. The Dominicans also follow the *Rule of St. Augustine*.

Seeing the frequent apostasies of Christians terrified by the tortures they endured, and desiring to be forever united with Christ, Magdalena decided to defy the persecuting authorities.

Dressed in the habit of a tertiary, she presented herself before the magistrates in September 1634. She carried a small bundle of religious books for prayer and reading in prison. Neither the promises of an advantageous marriage nor torture could break her will.

At the beginning of October, she was subjected to a form of torture called *ana-tsurushi* (literally “hole hanging”). She was suspended by her feet with her head and chest placed in a pit in the ground. The bottom of the pit was loaded with foul-smelling detritus. The tormentors often covered these holes with boards, making breathing even more difficult. The courageous young woman invoked the names of Jesus and Mary during her martyrdom and sang hymns to the Lord. She endured this torment for thirteen days, until one night when a heavy rain flooded the pit and the martyr drowned. The executioners burned her body and

scattered the ashes at sea so that Christians could not keep any relics of her.

Beatified in 1981, she was canonized by Pope St. John Paul II on October 18, 1987. Her feast day is October 20.

During the 35 years of the Order's presence in Japan in the early seventeenth century, 24 friars were martyred, and—counting only those whose names are known—57 members of the Third Order and 47 members of the Archconfraternity of the Cincture (another lay group associated with the friars) shed their blood for Christ.





# A Saint for Our Time

By Jonathan Jerome, Executive Director, National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia

**N**early 570 years ago, in the quiet hill town of Roccaporena near Cascia, Italy, a little girl was born whose hidden life would one day make her one of the most invoked saints in the modern world. Rita Lotti did not found a movement, lead armies, or write volumes of theology. She lived a simple life marked by family struggle, personal suffering, and deep fidelity to Christ. And yet, 125 years after her canonization by Pope Leo XIII in 1900, St. Rita of Cascia continues to shape lives across the modern world—especially here in the United States—earning her enduring title as the Saint of the Impossible.



Fr. Robert Guessetto, O.S.A., assistant director of the Shrine, speaks to pilgrims about the life of St. Rita.



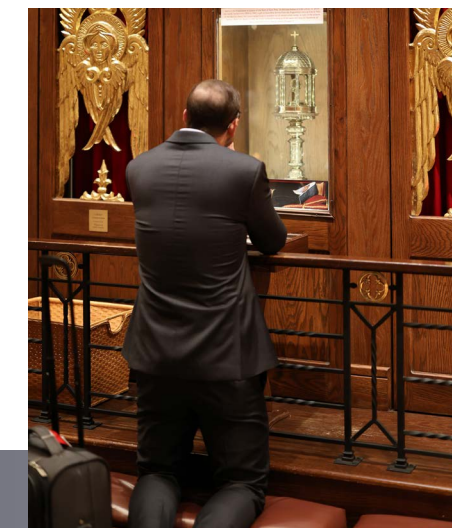
At first glance, St. Rita's life seems far removed from contemporary concerns. She lived in a rural village, married young, lost her husband to violence and her sons to a pandemic, and endured rejection before eventually entering the Augustinian monastery in Cascia. But it is precisely in these ordinary and painful realities that her relevance shines. Rita's holiness was not forged in dramatic public witness but in perseverance, forgiveness, and hope when circumstances seemed beyond repair. In an age marked by fractured families, violence, anxiety, and uncertainty, her life feels strikingly familiar.

St. Augustine is often credited with saying, "Hope has two beautiful daughters, anger and courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are." Rita embodied both. Faced with cycles of loss in her family and community, she refused despair. Instead, she chose the harder path of forgiveness and trust in God's providence. Her courage was not loud, but it was transformative, a reminder to modern believers that sanctity often unfolds quietly, through daily fidelity.

Pope Leo XIII, who canonized St. Rita at the dawn of the twentieth century, praised her as a woman who "practiced heroic virtue in every state of life." That description helps explain her universal appeal. Rita is not only a model for religious women, but also for wives and husbands, parents and widows, peacemakers and penitents. In the United States, where devotion to St. Rita has flourished for generations, countless people turn to her because she understands the complexities of modern life. She lived them first.

Over the past 119 years, the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia has witnessed this devotion firsthand. In the past year alone, more than 4,300 pilgrims traveled to the Shrine to learn about St. Rita's life, ask for her intercession, and engage more deeply with Augustinian spirituality. Their presence is a powerful testament to the enduring relevance of a saint whose witness continues to speak across centuries, cultures, and circumstances.

And we know that today, her intercession is sought by bakers in Atlanta rising before dawn, filmmakers in Texas wrestling with creative uncertainty, Marines in San



Diego preparing for deployment, mothers and fathers praying for children who have drifted from faith, and school children learning to trust God amid hardship. Our Augustinian Friars, in particular, see in Rita a living expression of the Augustinian heart: restless until it rests in God, wounded yet hopeful, honest about suffering yet confident in grace. As St. Augustine reminded his people, "God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering." Rita accepted that truth and lived it with extraordinary trust.

Devotion to St. Rita reflects a deeply Catholic instinct: when life feels impossible, we do not turn away from God—we turn toward Him with greater urgency. Shrines, parishes, and prayer groups dedicated to St. Rita testify that her relevance has not faded with time. If anything, it has grown!

St. Rita does not promise escape from suffering, but transformation through it. Her life proclaims that no situation is beyond God's reach—not the death of a loved one, not hardened hearts, not decades of unanswered prayer.

As we celebrate the 125th anniversary of her canonization this year, we are given a renewed opportunity to deepen our devotion and confidence in her intercession. St. Rita's life assures us that holiness is possible in every age, every culture, and every circumstance. She is a saint not only of medieval Italy, but of our modern time—a companion for all who carry heavy burdens and still dare to hope. St. Rita, keep praying for us!

Photos: Pilgrims of all ages experience the healing power of the National Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia.



# AUGUSTINE AND *THE DEATH OF OUR FRIENDS*

Fr. Francis J. Caponi, O.S.A., Associate Professor of Systematic/Constructive Theology, Villanova University

**G**ilgamesh, legendary king of Uruk and subject of the earliest stories in world literature (eventually compiled into the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), is not protected by his royal status from “the blight man was born for,” the grief and fear that issue from love and death. Gilgamesh’s boon companion Enkidu dies; Gilgamesh cries out: “Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How can I be silent, how can I rest? He is dust and I too shall die and be laid in the earth for ever. I am afraid of death...”

Although it is doubtful St. Augustine ever heard these stories, their antiquity and enduring appeal would not have surprised him, since friendship and death are vivid forces in the Latin literature he loved as a youth. The *Confessions* contains moving stories of love and death—most famously of St. Monica—but also, like Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the death that ruptures the bond *philia*. In Book IV, Augustine recounts the passing of an unnamed friend of his youth, pouring out his grief to God: “You took the man from this life when our friendship had scarcely completed a year. It had been sweet to me beyond all the sweetnesses of life that I had experienced.” And although as he writes the *Confessions*

this friend was dead for 20 years—years in which Augustine attained the heights of worldly success, plunged into abysses of despair, and was raised up by Christ to be his disciple, priest, and bishop—the memory of his mourning is bloody and sharp: “My heart grew somber with grief, and wherever I looked I saw only death. My own country became a torment and my own home a grotesque abode of misery. All that we had done together was now a grim ordeal without him. My eyes searched everywhere for him, but he was not to be seen.... I had become a puzzle to myself, asking my soul again and again ‘Why are you downcast? Why do you distress me?’ But my soul had no answer to give.... I wondered that other men should live when he was dead, for I had loved him as though he would never die. Still more I wondered that he should die and I remain alive, for I was his second self...”

By the time his mother died more than a decade later, the baptized Augustine is uncompromising about the error of such sorrow, suited not to Christians mourning a Christian but to those who grieve without hope (1 Thes 4:13). His world-poisoning grief issues from a double disorder. Even though Augustine knew it was “madness not to understand how to love human beings with awareness of the human condition,” emotion trumps his intellect: “the grief I felt for the loss of my friend had struck so easily into my inmost heart simply because I had poured out my soul upon him, like water upon sand, loving a man who was mortal as though he would never die.” Augustine loved a good creature badly, loved a friend “as though he would never die”—a mistake even pagan philosophers sought to avoid: “Each thing that allures the mind or offers an advantage or is loved by you, remember to speak of it as it is, from the smallest things upward. If you love an earthen jar, then think, *I love an earthen jar*, for so shall you not be troubled when it breaks. And when you kiss your little child, or wife, think, *I kiss a mortal*; and so shall you not be troubled when they die” (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* II.3).

But the grieving twenty-one-year-old did not yet grasp the full truth of the human condition; rather, he was bound by a second disorder, deeper than disordered longing for the good things of this world, prisoner to the most ancient human derangement: he “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator” (Romans 1:25). We are not simply finite, mortal, subject to sickness and death; we are *creatures*. In the language of mathematics, the universe is composed of vectors, not scalars. We are not simply stuff that takes up space, not just powers of different degrees or passions of different temperatures. Everything is a vector, moving as its nature dictates in a certain direction, pointing in its proper way to an end beyond itself. Only in the light of Jesus Christ did Augustine see the truth that it was not the extravagance of feeling or depth of devotion that corrupted his love, but its misdirection. We are made to love extravagantly, but wisely; with wild abandon, but with reason. There is almost unspeakable joy in pursuing what is true, finding what is good, and clinging to their beauty with the fierceness known to brave soldiers, great lovers, and true friends.

But heroic deeds and passionate kisses and heartfelt conversations all become ash in our mouth if we love signposts more than the places they lead. Augustine loved a human being, a mortal creature, as only the Trinity should be loved; and so he loved neither God nor man properly; for as St. James wrote, “to be a lover of the world means enmity with God” (James 4:4). Misery was the inexorable result of this misdirection: “I was in misery, and misery is the state of every soul overcome by friendship with mortal things and lacerated when they are lost.”

We are creatures made for love and subject to death, and no small part of our dying occurs when we love good things badly. In the Lenten season now concluded, Augustine advised us: “Has love of the world disoriented you? Hold onto Christ” (*Second Homily on 1 John*, 10). In this Easter season, he dares to speak of the divine consummation of rightly ordered love: “Hold to the love of God, so that, just as God is eternal, you also may abide in eternity, because a person’s love determines the person’s quality. Do you love the earth? You will be earth. Do you love God? What shall I say? That you will be God? I don’t dare to say this on my own. Let us listen to the scriptures: *I have said that you are gods and that all of you are sons of the Most High*

(Ps 82:6).” Only when Christ is loved with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength can we love our friends properly, as vectors of delight directing us towards—indeed, leading us into—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



This painting showing the death of St. Monica is one of a series of paintings dedicated to the life of St. Augustine in St. Augustine Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reflection:

# The Man in the Garden

By Fr. Paul F. Morrissey, O.S.A.



**L**ast night before evening prayer, I looked out the window into our Healing Garden here at St. Augustine Parish. A light rain was falling. A young man of about 30 (with a backpack and experiencing homelessness, I suspected) was seated at a table on the garden terrace under an umbrella. When I opened the door, he stood and looked at me. “Do you have any spiritual books, including any in Latin?” he asked. “Latin?” I responded, wondering if it was a joke or if he was trying to con me. He sounded okay, but there was something a little strange about him. Then he showed me a paperback of *The Aeneid* by Virgil that he was reading (though I’m not sure whether it was the Latin version).



“What’s your name?” I asked him. “Jacob,” he replied, then waited a moment. “My parents came from Poland. I’ve served in the military.” Thrown off guard by the personal information I told him my name, Fr. Paul, and told him to wait while I went to search for a book in the parlor. Soon, I found two copies of a small booklet, “Augustine.” I went out and gave him one. He thanked me, and we stood silent for some moments before I turned and went into Evening Prayer.

After prayer and dinner, I looked out the window again. Jacob was still there, huddled in a chair under the umbrella to avoid the rain. This time I didn’t go out, but he intrigued me, even though our neighborhood has lots of people experiencing homelessness and we can’t respond to them all. I did look once more after I had finished watching a film on TV with another friar. It was raining quite steadily now. I felt a pang of sorrow for him, now curled up and trying to sleep on the table under the umbrella with his feet sticking out. I couldn’t bear to go to sleep in my warm bed with the thought of him all night out in the rain. I went to get two blankets to give him—not the good ones, I decided—and opened the door to the garden.

“Jacob?” I called out. He was wrapped up in his hoodie and I couldn’t see his face. “Do you want some blankets?” Rolling

over, he asked, “Who knows my name?” Holding out a blanket for his head and shoulders, I said, “It’s Fr. Paul.” He peeked out from the corner of his hoodie while I threw the other one over his feet, pausing to tuck the top one tighter around his back. He was already curled up again as I closed the door behind me. Who is this man, Lord? And why do I care?

In the morning before I celebrated the 9:00 AM Mass, I remembered him. Jacob was nowhere in sight when I looked out. The rain had stopped. I noticed one of the blankets folded up neatly on a chair. The other one was gone. Pausing to remember the encounter, I guessed that God was glad. It could have been Jesus, I thought. I went in to celebrate Mass, remembering Jacob and all our unhoused neighbors at the Prayer of the Faithful.

Later that afternoon, I remembered how St. Peter and St. John had run to the tomb on Easter morning. Mary Magdalene had told them Jesus had risen. The tomb was empty when they arrived, but the burial cloths were there. The cloth that was around Jesus’ head was folded and in a place by itself. The Gospel tells us that St. John saw this and believed. (John 20: 7-8)

Maybe it was Jesus. Maybe I should have given him the good blankets. I am glad that I asked his name.



## Fr. Joseph D. Calderone, O.S.A., Receives Merrimack College's St. Augustine Medal

On September 18, Fr. Joseph Calderone, O.S.A., received the St. Augustine Medal from Merrimack College. The medal is presented to a member of the Merrimack community who embodies the College's mission to enlighten minds, engage hearts and empower lives. Fr. Joe's first assignment was in Merrimack's campus ministry, and since then he has served as a staff member, a trustee, and even president of the college in 2008. Merrimack President Christopher E. Hovey said during the presentation, "Fr. Calderone deeply embodies the values of St. Augustine and Merrimack College, and we are honored to present him with this prestigious recognition of his service and legacy."



Fr. Joseph Calderone, O.S.A., with President Christopher E. Hovey, Ph.D.

## Fr. Paul W. Galetto, O.S.A., Receives 2025 Gregor Mendel Award

On October 16, Fr. Paul Galetto, O.S.A., received the Gregor Mendel Medal from St. Augustine Preparatory School. The medal, established in 1974, is a cornerstone in recognizing exemplary achievement in the community and honors those who have made a positive difference for all. Fr. Paul is a 1974 graduate of St. Augustine Prep and former head of the school. His father, Pierino "Peter" Galetto, was also a recipient of this prestigious award.

Congratulations, Fr. Paul!

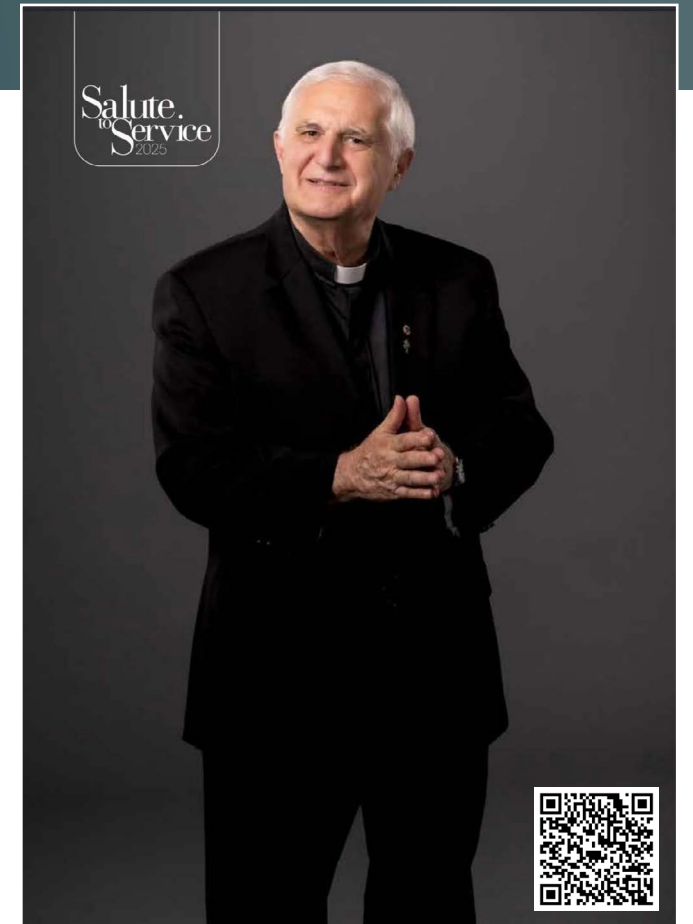


Fr. Paul Galetto, O.S.A. (center), with Head of School Fr. Robert Murray, O.S.A. (right), and George Smith, emcee of the evening's ceremony, former teacher at St. Augustine Prep, and friend of Fr. Paul (left).

## Fr. Nicholas F. Martorano, O.S.A., Honored for Exceptional Service

Philadelphia RowHome Magazine's Blue Sapphire Awards honor exceptional community service and dedication in Philadelphia in fields ranging from entertainment to business to volunteering. We are pleased to announce that Fr. Nick Martorano, O.S.A., was the 2025 recipient of their Leaders in Education Award for his leadership at St. Anthony of Padua Regional Catholic School and his service to the parishes where he serves as pastor. "It is an honor to receive the award because I have spent most of my priestly life in Philadelphia," said Fr. Nick. "Receiving this Blue Sapphire Award from Philadelphia RowHome Magazine, which is based in South Philadelphia, means I have made some positive impact in the last 40 years."

Read the full story and an interview with Fr. Nick by scanning the QR code at right.



Fr. Nicholas Martorano, O.S.A., featured in Philadelphia RowHome Magazine.

## Fr. Peter M. Donohue, O.S.A., Receives Lifetime Achievement by the Global Philadelphia Association

On December 8, Fr. Peter Donohue, O.S.A., president of Villanova University, received the Globy Award for Lifetime Achievement by the Global Philadelphia Association. The Globy Awards honor individuals and organizations that exemplify Philadelphia's global influence and leadership in areas such as education, journalism, heritage, culture, commerce, and community service, and the Lifetime Achievement Award specifically recognizes a leader whose career reflects exceptional dedication, vision, and impact. Those qualities have defined Fr. Peter's presidency and his contributions to higher education, sustainability, and civic engagement. "In the arts," he said in his acceptance remarks, "a lifetime achievement award is often a sign that you are on your way out of the career. But I plan to keep going."



Fr. Peter Donohue, O.S.A., alongside the other winners of the 2025 Globy Awards.



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*Cover: Courtesy of Fr. Genesis Labana, O.S.A.*

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*Prior General, Order of St. Augustine*

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Questions or for more information, contact Madonna Sutter, Director of Advancement & Communications at [madonna.sutter@augustinian.org](mailto:madonna.sutter@augustinian.org) or 267-272-3048.



*Save the date!*

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026**

**6:00–8:30 PM**

*Overbrook Golf Club*

*799 Godfrey Road, Villanova, Pa.*

Sponsorships and tickets will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis starting August 3, 2026 at

**[AUGUSTINIAN.ORG/OVERBROOK](http://AUGUSTINIAN.ORG/OVERBROOK)**

**THE Augustinian Fund**   
*Celebrating 20 years | 2006-2026*