



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 25 August 2010

St Augustine

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

There are very dear people in the life of each one of us to whom we feel particularly close, some of whom are already in God's embrace while others still share with us the journey through life: they are our parents, relatives and teachers; they are the people to whom we have done good or from whom we have received good; they are people on whom we know we can count. Yet it is important also to have "travelling companions" on the journey of our Christian life. I am thinking of a Spiritual Director, a Confessor, of people with whom it is possible to share one's own faith experience, but I am also thinking of the Virgin Mary and the Saints. Everyone must have some Saint with whom he or she is on familiar terms, to feel close to with prayer and intercession but also to emulate. I would therefore like to ask you to become better acquainted with the Saints, starting with those you are called after, by reading their life and their writings. You may rest assured that they will become good guides in order to love the Lord even more and will contribute effective help for your human and Christian development.

As you know, I too am especially attached to certain Saints: among them in addition to St Joseph and St Benedict, whose names I bear is St Augustine whom I have had the great gift to know, so to speak, close at hand through study and prayer and who has become a good "travelling companion" in my life and my ministry. I would like to stress once again an important aspect of his

human and Christian experience, which is also timely in our day, in which it seems, paradoxically, that relativism is the "truth" which must guide our thoughts, decisions and behaviour.

St Augustine was a man who never lived superficially; his thirst, his restless and constant thirst for the Truth is one of the basic characteristics of his existence; not however for "pseudo-truths", incapable of giving the heart lasting peace, but of that Truth that gives meaning to life and is the "dwelling-place" in which the heart finds serenity and joy. As we know, his was a far from easy journey: he thought he had found the Truth in prestige, in his career, in the possession of things, in the voices that promised him instant happiness; he committed faults, he experienced sorrows, he faced failures but he never stopped, he was never content with what only gave him a glimmer of light. He was able to look into the depths of his being and realized, as he wrote in *Confessions*, that the Truth, the God whom he sought with his own efforts was closer to him than he himself, that God had always been beside him, had never abandoned him, was waiting to be able to enter his life once and for all (cf. III, 6, 11; X, 27, 38). As [I said in a comment on the film made recently about his life](#), St Augustine, in his restless seeking realized that it was not he who had found the Truth but that the Truth, who is God, had come after him and found him. Romano Guardini, commenting on a passage in the third chapter of *Confessions* said: "St Augustine understood that God is the "glory that brings us to our knees, drink that quenches our thirst, treasure that gives happiness... [he had] the pacifying certainty of those who have understood at last, but also the bliss of the love that knows: "this is everything and it is enough for me" (*Pensatori religiosi*, Brescia 2001, p. 177).

Again, in *Confessions*, in the ninth book, our Saint records a conversation with his mother, St Monica, whose Memorial is celebrated on Friday, the day after tomorrow. It is a very beautiful scene: he and his mother are at Ostia, at an inn, and from the window they see the sky and the sea, and they transcend the sky and the sea and for a moment touch God's heart in the silence of created beings. And here a fundamental idea appears on the way towards the Truth: creatures must be silent, leaving space for the silence in which God can speak. This is still true in our day too. At times there is a sort of fear of silence, of recollection, of thinking of one's own actions, of the profound meaning of one's life. All too often people prefer to live only the fleeting moment, deceiving themselves that it will bring lasting happiness; they prefer to live superficially, without thinking, because it seems easier; they are afraid to seek the Truth or perhaps afraid that the Truth will find us, will take hold of us and change our life, as happened to St Augustine.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to say to all of you and also to those who are passing through a difficult moment in their journey of faith, to those who take little part in the life of the Church or who live "as though God did not exist" not to be afraid of the Truth, never to interrupt the journey towards it and never to stop searching for the profound truth about yourselves and other things with the inner eye of the heart. God will not fail to provide Light to see by and Warmth to make the heart feel that he loves us and wants to be loved.

May the intercession of the Virgin Mary, of St Augustine and of St Monica accompany us on this journey

To special groups

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims, especially the young altar servers from Malta and their families, and the pilgrimage group from Japan. This Saturday the Church celebrates the Feast of St Augustine, who found in Christ the fullness of that truth which brings authentic freedom and joy. May St Augustine and his mother, St Monica, accompany us with their prayers and draw us ever closer to the Lord.

Lastly my thoughts turn to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*: I invite you all to find in Christ the reason for your hope.

After greeting the faithful gathered in the courtyard, the Pope went to the window overlooking the square of Castel Gandolfo and addressed the following words in Italian to those who had been unable to find room in the courtyard.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your presence and enthusiasm. I wish you a good day, a good vacation and great joy during these hot days. May the Lord help you and go with you always. I give you my Blessing.

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