

Hagiography (continued)

intercession, by praying with her this Wednesday, knowing that she knows our struggles in life.

Saint Augustine: Saint Augustine Aurelius Augustine was born in 354 at Thagaste, Algeria. Augustine's mother, Monica, enrolled her son as a catechumen as a child. However, Augustine's baptism was deferred to a later time in accordance with custom. Possessing an inquisitive mind, Augustine set his sights on a career that would bring him both wealth and fame. Augustine's parents actually heartily endorsed their son's career goals and wanted to provide their son with the best education. All the while he had strong rejections to Christianity; however, his mother remained faithful in her prayers that he would pursue "the truth." Following his studies in Thagaste and later in Carthage, Tunisia, Augustine taught rhetoric. He first served as a teacher in his native town and later became a teacher in Rome and Milan. Augustine traveled from city to city and encountered many opportunities and challenges along the way. He was also on a deep spiritual journey, searching for inner peace and lasting happiness, although the road that he often took was not the most prudent. The example, prayers, and influence of Monica ultimately played a role in her son's spiritual journey. They ultimately led to Augustine's conversion to the Catholic faith. At 33 years old, Augustine was baptized by Bishop Ambrose of Milan. He also made a commitment to spend the remainder of his life as a "servant of God."

Ultimately, as a servant of God, Augustine agreed to live his life in celibacy. He made this decision in spite of the fact that he had spent several years living with a woman whom he deeply loved and fathered a son, Adeodatus.

After three years, Augustine was called to become a priest while on a visit to the city of Hippo, about 50 miles from Thagaste. This was contrary to what Augustine might have chosen for himself, but he still chose to accept what he believed was God's will for him. In Hippo, Augustine established a monastic community that he directed while assisting the bishop, Valerius. Several years later, Augustine succeeded Valerius as head of the diocese.

Augustine was hesitant to move into the bishop's house, since he did not want to disturb the peace of the monastic community. At this point, Augustine wrote his Rule for the community's continued direction. He then established a third community for clerics in his new episcopal residence (which was a very different situation for the "priests" of his diocesan Church – imagine all of us priests living with the bishop today

😊). Thus, from the time of his return to Thagaste until his death, Augustine resolutely opted for a monastic style of community life.

As bishop, Augustine found his desired life of contemplation and separation from worldly concerns. He focused on his many obligations as leader of the local Church and as a civil official. In addition to his pastoral duties within Hippo, Augustine traveled to church councils in the region of North Africa. He did so 40 to 50 times over the course of the 35 years he served as bishop. Augustine even made the nine-day journey to Carthage for meetings with other bishops about 30 times. Augustine also authored many texts, the most famous of which are his *Confessions* and *City of God* along with innumerable letters, treatises and homilies, most of which are extant to this day.

In 430, Augustine fell ill. He took to his bed and spent his days and nights praying the penitential psalms, which he asked to have written on the wall of his room. Augustine died on August 28, as the Vandals invaded Hippo. Following Augustine's death, his body was laid to rest in Hippo. It was later taken to Sardinia and moved to Pavia, Italy, where it now rests in the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.

Given Augustine's humble beginnings, astonishing conversion, and direction the theology in the areas of ecclesiology, sacraments, Christology, eschatology, and spirituality – *we would do well to consider praying with him this Thursday.*

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK : Just a quick note from me this week. I am well and I thank God every day for my health. God has been so good to me, his most unworthy servant. I was very pleased that all 16 people present a Mass stayed for adoration this past Wednesday. As I think about it, Wednesday was an awesome day to be at Mass and Adoration. The Gospel of the day was the famous parable of the laborers in the Vineyard. This parable is unique to Matthew's Gospel. The owner of a vineyard hires day laborers at various times throughout the day. The ones hired at six o'clock in the morning put in a full day's work. Those hired at five o'clock put in only one hour of work. But the owner pays everyone a full day's wage (a denarius). He goes out of his way to make sure that everyone knows that all are paid the same in spite of the different number of hours worked. Not surprisingly, those hired first complain that they worked longer but earned no more money than those who started late in the day. "But the owner replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?... Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:13, 15-16). The message is simple and clear –

our God is a generous and merciful God. We should be befuddled by the largesse shown to us in terms of God's compassion rather than casting judgement upon others who we "in our pettiness" might consider to be unworthy. In our Catholic tradition, we name saints and pray for souls in the process of purgation (God's final merciful act to us). **We do not name sinners!** This is not to say that hell does not exist or that the possibility that if someone rejected God throughout life that they might not act consistently and reject Him in the act of dying; BUT THAT IS NOT OUR HOPE. *We hope that God's universal will for salvation might be realized by all freely choosing for God in their transition from time to eternity.* And if their free choice is one that occurs at that last moment, after a life of poorly made choices, and God accepts – ALLELUIA!!! We have all heard that life isn't fair, well, according to our human standards, neither is salvation. And this is GOOD NEWS! This should not cause us to become atrophied in our desire to live the good life, for the more we follow the law of Christ, the better example we offer to those who struggle to do so.

In closing, you know how much I love all of you and that I yearn for you to grow in intimacy with Christ, with our Most Blessed Mother our Patron, and the entire communion of saints. That, **along with greater devotion to the Eucharist and participation in the life of the community on various levels** (liturgically, spiritually, socially, and with personal financial responsibility before God) are the things I long for most. You know it is my heart's desire that more of our parish family would participate in daily mass and weekly Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Although movement in this direction is slow, I am confident that Christ, during our most intimate of conversation, hears my prayers. As always, I ask that you continue to pray that I might be the best pastor and shepherd of souls that the Lord is calling me to be. It is also my prayer that I could reach out even further than our borders of Visitation Parish and bring many more into communion with Christ in the Catholic Family.

ETHNIC FEST - Labor Day weekend is only **one week away** and with it our participation in the **Annual Johnstown Ethnic Fest**. As you know, this is one of our major fundraisers throughout the year, and our success allows us to meet our annual budgetary needs. We want to thank those who have contributed, whether it be by donating Jello and spirits or very generously through the second collection. We continue to be in desperate need of **volunteers** to help with our booth (sign-up sheets are in the main vestibule of the Church). Thank you for your willingness to participate in this important fundraiser in any way.

Ice Cream Crawl Update – On Sunday, September 7th, 2025, we will have our last ice cream social of the year, and it will be in the school cafeteria starting at 7PM. Anyone interested in going is asked to bring a half gallon of their favorite flavor and topping to share. Sign up sheets will be in the vestibule to sign up and list the flavor you are bringing and topping.

Young Adult Group (18-39): Our next Theology on Tap is Wednesday August 27th with Fr. Michael Wolfe speaking on Angels at the Boulevard Grill at 6pm. We are busy planning fall and winter speakers and other events. All young adults (18-39) and young families with their children are invited to join us for faith and fellowship! For more information contact Geoffrey Stumpo at (814) 659-7415 or geoffstumpo@gmail.com.

Mums Sale – From August 10th until September 2nd, we will be selling coupons for mums from Fosbrink's Four Seasons on Goucher Street. The coupons are redeemable from September 9th until September 13th, and their hours are from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. These times are reserved for Visitation Parish pick-ups. There will be three different coupons: a 9" pot is \$10.00, a pumpkin pot (which has a metal pumpkin, scarecrow, etc. in the pot) is \$9.00 and a porch planter for \$25.00. Please help support Visitation Parish in this new fundraiser with Fosbrink's Four Seasons.

2025 Wedding Anniversary Celebration Information - Bishop Mark Bartchak and the Family Life Office cordially invite all couples celebrating 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60+ years of marriage in 2025 (and their families) to attend the Annual Wedding Anniversary Liturgy. Couples may attend Sunday, September 21 in ALTOONA at Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament or Sunday, September 28 in JOHNSTOWN at St. John Gualbert Cathedral. Both locations are handicap accessible. Liturgies in each location begin at 2:00 p.m. Most Rev. Bishop Mark will be the celebrant and homilist at each celebration. Refreshments/snacks will be available after the mass for anniversary couples and their families. Reservations must be made through your parish for either celebration by Friday, September 12th.

Please note that the secretary will be out of the office from **Friday, August 29th** to at least **Tuesday, September 2nd** due to an operation she will be having. If you need anything, please leave a message on the rectory phone and she will address it when she returns to the office. Her time away may extend to a few days longer depending on how she feels.