

Community, Learning and Love: Philosophical Explorations in Augustinian Spirituality and Pedagogy

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Our reflections will mainly be centered on the *Rule of Saint Augustine*, citing, at the same time, other select key texts of Augustine's vast works. Thus our presentation has no pretense of exhaustivity or completeness. These reflections are of a fellow reader and learner in Augustine with his colleagues in the same endeavor. And together with him, I pray: "Insiste, anime meus, et attende fortiter: Deus adiutor noster; ipse fecit nos, et non nos. Attende ubi albescit Veritas."¹

Initial Reflections: Philosophy, Being Students for Life

In philosophy, we are all students all our lives. The teacher is merely a more advanced student, a facilitator, who journeys with his students along the way, learning by teaching them, learning with them, learning for them.

Philosophy is love or friendship (*philia*) of wisdom (*sophia*). Only a student could love wisdom because he realizes he is not in full possession of it, but needs to study, needs to work hard. Augustine, especially in the period before his baptism in 387, in Cassiciacum was a lover of wisdom, in the company of friends,

¹ Confessiones XI, 27, 34.

in the company of others² who provided him with his projection for a perfect church here on earth. He had always been a religious man.³ With his inquisitive mind and religious bent, Augustine has given us an example of a lover of wisdom in search of the truth, which he found in the Christian Religion. Thus we can speak of a Christian Philosophy in Augustine.⁴ He has given us a rich philosophy of religion, a reflection on the Christian faith into which we cannot enter into detail here.⁵

All we can say, for now, is that Augustine's philosophy is religious in nature. It seeks to relink (*religare* = relink, to bind again) man with God, whom the Bishop of Hippo calls "beauty (*pulchritudo*) ever ancient (*tam antiquam*) and ever new (*tam novam*)."⁶ "Religet ergo nos religio uni Omnipotenti Deo; quia inter mentem nostram qua illum intelligimus Patrem, et Veritatem id est lucem interiorum per quam illum intelligimus, nulla interposita creatura est."⁷ At the end of the *Rule*, Augustine exhorts each member of

² Cfr. S. Alvarez, "Qué filosofía práctica Agustín en los 'Diálogos' de Casiciaco" *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía* XIII (1986), 5-33; V. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1945); K. Corrigan, "Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine's Critical Dialogue with Platonism" *Augustinian Studies* 34 (2003), 97-106; L. Holt, "Wisdom's Teacher: Augustine at Cassiciacum" *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998), 47-60; J. O'Donnell, "Augustine's Idea of God" *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 25-36; R. Teske, "Saint Augustine as Philosopher: The Birth of Christian Metaphysics" *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 7-32.

³ See his affirmations on this regard in *Confessiones* I, 9, 14; I, 11, 17.

⁴ Cfr. E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960).

⁵ Cfr. my study: M. Ofilada, *Augustinus, Homo Religiosus* (Manila: San Agustín Museum, 1995).

⁶ *Confessiones*, X, 27, 8.

⁷ *De Vera Religione* 55, 113. See also: *De Civitate Dei*, X, 3, 2; *De Quantitate Animae*, 36, 80; *Retractationes* I, 13, 9. Writes a contemporary scholar: "Augustine found in self, world, and God the same fundamental triadic structure. The Trinitarian God and the human self are both best understood as the ceaseless movement into one another of being, understanding, and love. Therefore the best way to God is through understanding ourselves, *Gnothi seauton*, know thyself. We are to move inward, so as to move upward. We are to move from exterior things, to find the higher things. There, inwardly, we encounter God. In and

his community to long for spiritual beauty, above all, in a spirit of grace and freedom.⁸

This is important for those tasked with teaching the young the Fundamentals of our Christian Faith, which for Augustine is the “vera religio”, the true religion.⁹ The truth is the sure port or point of entry to happiness.¹⁰ The end goal is nothing else but the “beata vita” or happy life,¹¹ defined by our saint as “gaudium de veritate”,¹² which could only be had in God.¹³ This is holiness for Augustine. It is perfect charity, lived within the Church, attained in different ways and yet the very spirit of the Augustinian Order according to the *Constitutions*.¹⁴

Philosophy and Dialogue Augustinian Style: Dialectical Pedagogy and Spirituality

My approach then will be fundamentally philosophical, or that of a lover of wisdom, as one who sets the foundations for an adequate understanding of the topics that will be discussed here. Philosophy is always about the fundamentals. Philosophy consists in laying down the foundations.

through the self known deeply, we find God; in God, we find ourselves; ourselves in their true reality, more fully known than we know ourselves, better loved than we love ourselves, eternally fully alive. Thus the final future of Augustinian spirituality is to see God ‘face to face’ and to know ‘as we are known’, W. Hanky, “Philosophical and Theological Foundations of Augustinian Spirituality in the Future” Several Authors, *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism of the Augustinians* (Villanova: Augustinian Press, 1995), 45.

⁸ *Regula ad Servos Dei*, VIII, 1.

⁹ *De Vera Religione* 5, 8-9.

¹⁰ *De Beata Vita*, 1, 1; *Contra Academicos*, II, 1,2; I, 1, 2; *De Ordine* I, 2, 5. For a more detailed description, *Confessiones* I-VI.

¹¹ *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 1, 3. In *De Beata Vita*, Augustine writes: “Beatos esse nos volumus” (*De Beata Vita*, 2, 12).

¹² *Confessiones* X, 23, 33.

¹³ *De Beata Vita*, 1,1; 4, 34; *Confessiones* X, 20-23.

¹⁴ I am citing the *Constitutions of the Order* according to the 1991 English version published with the authority of then Prior General M.A. Orcasitas (Villanova, Villanova University Press, 1991), I, 1-2. Henceforth, *OSA Constitutions*.

I reclaim philosophy's role to set foundations always in dialogue with the other sciences, not above them but as their servant, as their handmaid and even partner in conversation and study. As a handmaid, philosophy does not affirm its inferiority to the four winds. As a handmaid, it is the bridesmaid, who does all the work but hardly gets the credit. Philosophy is not inferior to the other disciplines.

In fact, because it is the bridesmaid, philosophy is superior, definitely more beautiful than the more shining and resplendent brides she aids. Her superiority is affirmed not in an overt manner, but in a low-key, subtle and humble (from the word *humus* or ground, meaning in touch with one's roots, beginnings, principles) style. The bridesmaid becomes the bride not in getting married, but in remaining a virgin (*parthenos* = just like the goddess Athena), the wise virgin of the Gospels who has reserve oil and awaits the coming of the Bridegroom, who comes to take her to the wedding feast and who in fact loves her for her faithfulness and not for her desire for carnal or material rewards. Thus, philosophy is consummated in its virginity, i.e., in its constant openness and availability to service, to new horizons of truth and meaning.

Service is what makes philosophy incomparably great. It provides invaluable help in the laying of foundations of any body of knowledge. Philosophy keeps one humble, close to the ground, to one's roots, to one's foundation from which one reaches up to the stars above, viewed by the Greeks as "athanathos" or the undying one in charting their destinies. Unlike theology, which leans on the magisterium or teaching authority of the church, philosophy has only the pretension to be of service. It keeps to the background in the development of other disciplines. It is by nature restrained, not looking for easy applause but only hard work and its fruits: which is love, love for the truth, love for a strong and firm foundational basis, love for the ones who search for the truth, love for what is profound and not what is shallow or easy in applause, love for the fruits of honest and hard work.

Philosophy is the training ground for us to be profound, to enter into our interiority, our depth dimension in order to commence

the process of our integration as complete persons in action.¹⁵ Like Augustine, because of sound philosophy, inspired by the neo-platonic school¹⁶ but firmly rooted in the Christian faith.¹⁷ In the same vein, he did not allow himself to be seduced for long in the Manichean sect.¹⁸

Profundity means entering into one's depths, being one with one's interiority. Augustine, who did not distinguish between faith and reason like the medieval scholastics, favored reason or the

¹⁵ Cfr. P. Henry, *Saint Augustine on Personality* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960); R. Flórez, *Las dos dimensiones del hombre augustiniano* (Madrid: Rev. Augustiniana, 1958); P. Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même de Socrate à saint Bernard*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1974-1975); E. Dinkler, *Die Anthropologie Augustins* (Stuttgart, 1934); Ch. Couturier, "La structure métaphysique de l'homme d'après saint Augustin" Several Authors, *Augustinus Magister* I (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954), 543-550; F. Körner, *Das Sein un der Mensch* (Freiburg-Munich, 1959); M.V. Murray, "The Man of St. Augustine and St. Thomas" Several Authors, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (Washington, D.C.: ACAP, 1950); J.R. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D., 386-391* (Cambridge, Ma., 1968); F. del Río, *El compuesto humano según san Agustín* (Madrid: El Escorial, 1930); A. Turrado, *Dios en el hombre* (Madrid: BAC, 1971); H. Rondet, "L'anthropologie religieuse de saint Augustin" *Recherches des Sciences Religieuses* (1939), 163-196.

¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas writes: "Augustinus autem Platonem secutus quantum fides catholica patiebatur", *De Spir. Creat.*, a. 8, ad. 8. In another work: "Et ideo Augustinus, qui doctrinis platoniorum imbutus fuerat, si qua invenit fidei accomoda in eorum dictis, assumpsit; quae vero invenit fidei nostrae adversa, in melius commutavi", *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 84, a.5.

¹⁷ St. Augustine himself wrote towards the end of his life: "Laus quoque ipsa qua Platonem vel platonicos seu academicos philosophos tantum extuli, quantum impios homines non oportuit; praesertim contra quorum errores magnos defendenda est christiana doctrina", *Retractationes* I, 1, 9. Cfr. also: J.F. Callahan, *Augustine and the Greek Philosophers* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1967); A.H. Armstrong, *Saint Augustine and Christian Platonism* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1967). Also the still unpublished work of R. Klibansky, *Platonism and Augustinianism*.

¹⁸ Cfr. P. Alfarcic, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin: I. Du manichéisme au néoplatonisme* (Paris: Nourry, 1918); P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography* (London: 1967); P. Courcell, *Recherches sur les Confessionnes de saint Augustin* (Paris: Boccard, 1950); H.I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: Boccard, 1938); J.J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine. The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion* (London: Longman, 1954).

use of philosophy and its identification with the true philosophy of Christ,¹⁹ within the poles of God and Man,²⁰ through an insistence in one's profound dimension: interiority. In a famous text, he admonishes: "Do not go out (*Noli foras*) of yourself. Go back to yourself. Truth resides in the interior man."²¹ Clearly, Augustine echoes the Socratic dictum. Though pagan in origin, it is applicable to a Christian context. In Augustine reasoning and inquiry to the truth, in one's profound dimension, goes together with faith in perfect compenetration to build up the integral, complete man. Reason corresponds to intelligence, whereas what is believed is submitted to authority.²² And from this interiority or immanence, one reaches out to God who is beyond the limits of one's souls or "*ipsi menti supereminet*".²³ This is the touchstone of what Augustine calls "*sacrosancta philosophia*",²⁴ "*nostra philosophia christiana*."²⁵ To be a Christian means to be entitled to the truth found only in God.²⁶

In Cassiciacum, the young Augustine, on the eve of his baptism in 387 in the Duomo of Milan, made the use of the Socratic method of inquiry, wherein there were no definitely

¹⁹ Writes E. Portalié, "Il [St. Augustine] corit au Christ, mail il va chercher et il est sûr de trouver chez les platoniciens une philosophie qui s'adapte à l'explication de sa foi", "Augustin (Saint)", *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Vol. I, ed. by Vacant_Mangenotc.2, 326.

²⁰ Cfr. G. Bonner, "Christ, God and Man in the Thought of St. Augustine" *Angelicum* 61 (1984), 268-294.

²¹ *De Vera Religione* 39, 72.

²² "Quod intelligimus, debemos rationi; quod credimus, auctoritati", *De Utilitate Credendi*, 11.

²³ Ibid., 36, 67. Interesting to read is the relation of the vision in Ostia in the company of Monica, *Confessiones* IX, 10, 23. Augustine also speaks of a mystical ascent towards the invisible in Ibid., VII, 17, 23.

²⁴ *De Ordine* I, 11, 31.

²⁵ *Contra Iulianum* IV, 14. St. Augustine was also critical with the other doctrines of the philososphers which did not conform to the revealed truths of Christianity: "Apud platonicos, me interim quos sacris nostris non repugnet, repertorum esse confido", *Contra Academicos* III, 20, 43.

²⁶ *De Doctrina Christiana* II, 18, 28.

correct answers, but that in dialogue, the teacher or facilitator would lead the student to the truth, to the best answer. The teacher, following the Socratic and Augustinian method in Cassiciacum, plays a maieutic role. He is to be a midwife, helping the student give birth to his ideas, helping the student give the best of himself and show him what he could achieve. A philosopher, because he is a fellow student, could only give himself a pat on the shoulder if he attains this. And we have a great sampling of Augustine, living out these Socratic ideals with a Christian accent (for the truth was identified with the Christian God), in the *Dialogues of Cassiciacum*.

Augustine, following Socrates, in Cassiciacum created an ambiance that put premium on dialogue: not the word of one, but of many; a word that reaches out to the other, that takes the other into consideration, with respect, with love, with consideration.

Status Quaestionis

Augustine did not make use of the rather modern words "spirituality" and "pedagogy" but does offer us valuable insights, which have become classical, into the same, which we will now explore briefly. Indeed, there is such a thing as "Augustinian Spirituality and Pedagogy". We will not exhaust the riches offered by these two. Rather we will only explore a few fundamental aspects for this essay.

The two concepts are joined together. This is because, at least from a Christian and Augustinian viewpoint, *Spirituality is Pedagogical in intent and Pedagogy is Spiritual in root, nature, development and realization or fulfillment*. From here we will reflect on terms, not used by Augustine, such as mystagogy, evangelization and catechesis, but all of them somehow help in our conceptualization and comprehension of the spirit of Augustine within the coordinates and sensibilities of our times.

Earlier, we made mention of philosophy and its role. Augustine, especially since his conversion, was convinced of the collaboration of reason and faith. The authority of faith occupied a first place, because Christianity was the true philosophy and it was necessary to believe in order to be a Christian. However, reason

or knowledge was primary or first in importance because it set foundations.²⁷ Augustine constantly repeated the adage: *Crede ut intelligas*, Believe so that you may understand. But he also repeatedly said: *Intellige ut credas*, or understand so that you may believe.

From faith, there is a need to proceed to love, which is the very foundation of the philosophical vocation because it is love of wisdom. Wisdom, alone, is useless. It is there, repeated in the form of aphorisms or principles. But if it is not loved or if there is no honest attempt to live it out involving our whole being, it is futile. Augustine says: *intellectum valde ama* or love greatly in order to understand our faith.²⁸

Augustine's religious education program can be summed up into two poles: a) Philosophical reflection as logical foundation, and b) Faithfulness to Christ and His Church and teachings. The former is at the service of the latter, but the latter is first in importance for it lays down the basis for its completion. In his earliest work, *Contra Academicos*, Augustine says: "To nobody it is doubtful that there is a two-fold force that leads us to learning: authority (*auctoritas*) and reason (*ratione*). And for me it is certain that I should not stray from the authority of Christ, because I cannot find anything else more powerful. In the themes that demand arduous reasoning, given that such is my condition that I impatiently desire to know the truth, not only by faith, but by the comprehension of the intelligence, I am entirely confident to find among the platonists the doctrine which is most in conformity with our revelation."²⁹

The only way to carry this out is to live according to the Spirit, i.e., to have a spirituality. A spirituality means living out one's faith parting from the intellectual categories one grasps this same faith, with a particular style, within a concrete historical culture and in the context of a specific community of faith.

²⁷ For example: *Contra Academicos*, III, 20, 43; *De Ordine*, II, 9, 26; *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, I, 2, 3.

²⁸ *Epistola* 120, 3, 13.

²⁹ *Contra Academicos*, III, 20, 45.

Spirituality is life according to the Spirit of God who impels us to live accordingly transforming us into spirits or men after the will of God in love. Augustine's lifelong project has two essential themes: God and man. "I desire to know God and the soul [or man]. Nothing more? Absolutely nothing."³⁰ God is unchanging. It is Augustine's desire to know himself and know this God.³¹

Spirituality, from an Augustinian perspective, is nothing more than the dynamics of the growing relationship between God and man, wherein both poles are drawn closer together in loving union. God is Pure Spirit and man (or soul) is to become not just a living being but a being living in God or spirit. This dynamic relationship takes a concrete historical form that manifests growth, stages, processes, exercises understood within the universalized framework of the consummation of the union or communion.

Writes Agostino Trapè: "The two themes, though distinct, are inseparably bound in the doctrine of man as the image of God: the image is inseparable from the exemplar and vice versa. Augustine thus studies man in order to know God as in the final books of the *De Trinitate*, he studies God in order to know man and his history as in the *De civitate Dei*, and he studies God and man together as in many pages of the *Confessiones*, which are introduced, it could be said, by these two questions: "What are you for me, (O Lord)? What am I for You?" (Conf. I, 5.5)".³²

These are words, written by one of the foremost Augustinian scholars of our days and former general of the Augustinian order, that summarize the paradox of Augustinian Spirituality, which serves, in my view, as the starting point of its dynamism.

³⁰ *Soliloquia* I, 2, 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, II, 1, 1.

³² A. Trapè, "St. Augustine" A. di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology*, Vol. IV, 410. Cfr. also: Ch. Boyer, "Limage de la Trinité, synthèse de la pensée augustinienne" *Gregorianum* 27 (1946), 173-199, 333-352; S. Alvarez Turienzo, "San Agustín: Imagen de la Trinidad en su concepción antropológica" *Estudios Trinitarios* 23 (1989), 31-56; V. Grossi, "Agustín, teólogo de la antropología cristiana" Several Authors, *El diálogo de la fe-cultura en la antigüedad cristiana* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1996), 97-126.

This is the dynamic and experiential paradox which Augustine wants to teach (pedagogy). Augustine's pedagogy is centered not only on God and man but is the very expression of the dynamic and experiential relationship between the two taking into account the two spheres of transcendence and immanence, wherein both God and man meet and do not meet until that definitive encounter in love.

The Community and Church: Perspective and Context of Augustinian Spirituality and Pedagogy

It is not our aim to propose a definitive definition of Spirituality and Pedagogy from an Augustinian spectrum. It is enough, in the meantime, to have a working understanding of the Augustinian vision of the Church, in the Augustinian Monastic Community, as reflected in the *Rule* and its pedagogical value as paradigm and context for learning, which is spiritual in nature and pedagogical in methodology and execution.

Augustine, in the *Rule* clearly speaks of the members of the monastic community when he says One Mind and One Heart.³³ He clearly defines the direction of the union of spirits or persons: *In Deum* or in God. Ultimately, it can be said that the aim of Augustinian Spirituality is that God and man would be of one mind and heart. This in a nutshell is Augustinian Spirituality. But this spirituality is not isolationist. The Augustinian man is not the isolated individual, but the community man, the ecclesial man given that Augustine envisions his monastic community as an image of the Church at large.

In Augustine's works we can clearly speak of an itinerary of the mind (or man) to God.³⁴ The itinerary speaks of a dynamic

³³ Parallel to my reading of the Rule of St. Augustine, I have also reflected on the points on the 1994 instruction or document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

³⁴ Cfr. *De Libero Arbitrio* II, 3, 7-15, 39; *De Vera Religione* XXIX, 52, 39-73; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 41, 7-8; *Sermo* 141, 1-3; *In Evangelium Ioannis Ev. Tractatus*, 20, 12-13; *De Civitate Dei* VIII, 6; *Confessiones* VII, 10, 16; X, 6,9-38.

process from the external to internal, from the inferior to the superior,³⁵ from the changing to the unchanging.³⁶ In other words, from the immanent to the transcendental. These extremes form the great paradox which we call Mystery:³⁷ the presence of the transcendental in the immanent, of the unchanging in the changing, the superior in the inferior creating history or an experiential narrative of journeying, encountering culminating in the communion between Pure Spirit and imperfect spirit, between God and Man.

The point of union of Augustinian spirituality is Mystery³⁸ or presence or the great paradox involving God being involved in the experience of man as the "internum aeternum",³⁹ the most distant and yet most present,⁴⁰ that which is extremely exalted and extremely intimate or close,⁴¹ more intimate than the greatest intimacy and higher than the greatest height,⁴² the most internal of all things, because everything exists in God and the most extreme because of His transcendence above all things.⁴³

Augustine, the mystic and master of language, makes use of the language of paradox to express the extremity of the expe-

³⁵ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 14, 5,5.

³⁶ *Confessiones* VII, 10, 16.

³⁷ The reflections of the late E. Romero-Pose have been of help to me on this regard: "La vuelta al misterio y la enseñanza de la teología" *Revista Española de Teología* 61 (2001), 7-51.

³⁸ I have taken into account some reflections of S. Sierra, "Mystery and Word of God in Augustinian Spirituality" Several Authors, *Elements of an Augustinian Formation* (Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2001), 164-181. Likewise: Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Instruction on Inter-institute Collaboration for Formation* (Pasay City: Paulines, 1999).

³⁹ *Confessiones* IX, 4, 10.

⁴⁰ *Confessiones* I, 4, 4.

⁴¹ *Confessiones* VI, 3, 3.

⁴² *Confessiones* III, 6, 11.

⁴³ *De Genesis ad litteram* VIII, 26, 48.

rientiality of God,⁴⁴ who is made present in the experience of man, in the finitude and culpability of man creating a history or an experiential narrative. Of what? Of salvation! It is a living narrative that serves as a living commentary to the text of salvation history par excellence: The Bible. In an Augustinian community, the members are consistently hungry for God and are fed from the table of the word and the sacraments.⁴⁵

Augustine, through the expression of God's experientiability made concrete in presence, aims that his life and that of his community be a living existential and experiential commentary to what Scripture has always taught: God intervenes in the lives of His people, He is Yahweh, the God who reveals Himself and allows Himself to be experienced in love and with communion as an aim in a paradoxical presence. This presence is encountered in a three-fold moment involving: the cosmos and knowledge of it,⁴⁶ entering one's interiority⁴⁷ and the act of transcending one's self and immanence in the cosmos.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Augustine himself confesses in *De Trinitate*: "Cum ergo quaeritur quid tria, vel quid tres, conferimus nos ad inveniendum aliquod speciale vel generale nomen, quo complectamur haec tria, neque occurrit animo, quia excedit supereminetia divinitatis usitati eloquii facultatem. Verius enim cogitatur Deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur", VII, 4, 7. Also: *Ibid.*, V, 1,2.

⁴⁵ *Regula* III, 2.

⁴⁶ *Sermo* 141, 2.

⁴⁷ *De Vera Religione* 39, 72.

⁴⁸ *De Vera Religione* 39, 72; *Confessiones* X, 6, 9; VII, 11, 17; X, 7, 17; X, 17, 26; X, 24, 35; X, 26, 37; X, 27, 38; VII, 17, 23. Writes Fr. Trapè: "The world, when it is examined with our attention fixed on it, responds with its very nature (*Conf.* 10, 6, 9), a nature which proclaims through the mutability to which it is subject that it has been created. When this message has been accepted, the mind could conclude that God, the necessary Being who has created the world, therefore exists (*ibid.*, 11, 4, 6). The Augustinian route however continues, since it is never merely a metaphysical proof but also an interior ascent which involves the whole man who must know himself in order to find God. He knows himself when he perceives himself as a being who exists, thinks and loves. He can thus ascent to God by three paths: being, truth and love. The fact that the second of these ways is more frequent and, therefore, typical arises from the fact that Augustine loves to depart from the more indubitable truths such as self-

Our reflections on Augustine's spirituality will be based mainly on the *Rule*, written in 397, which is the primary work of spirituality for the Augustinian family. In the words of an eminent specialist: "Knowledge of human nature and discretion, philosophical depth and a firm grasp of Holy Scripture, and, not the least, the clear direction of monastic living toward the highest goal of all Christian life, which is love, give to this oldest Rule of the West its significance, which is timeless."⁴⁹ Here we see Augustine's spirituality as applied. It is a spirituality of communion⁵⁰ and not just of individualism. Its aim is to foster communion (*koinonia*): not just oneness or union, but having or sharing everything in common or oneness. Its aim is God. But it would not be enough to simply put God at the end of the journey: God is the very origin of this movement, the very force or power (spirit) of the movement towards Himself. He is the eternal truth or the aim, the true love or the driving force and the lovable eternity that which is the starting point for having neither origin nor end.⁵¹ And yet the arena to start for this movement is ourselves, in our individual selves within the community. Augustine prays "O unchanging God, let me know myself, let me know you. That is my prayer."⁵² For Augustine, we are what we pray. If we know God, we become like God. If we pray to build up a good community, we become good persons formed by the community and for the community "in Deum", who is beyond all reason, as St. Thomas Aquinas, puts it.⁵³

knowledge and the autonomy of the will in order to preclude any escape into skepticism", "St. Augustine" A. di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology*, Vol. IV, 410.

⁴⁹ A. Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of Religious Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 287.

⁵⁰ This expression has become in vogue with John Paul II's *Duc in Altum* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000).

⁵¹ This is my paraphrase of *Confessiones* VII, 10, 16.

⁵² *Soliloquia* II, 1, 1.

⁵³ "Quia homo ordinatur ad Deum sicut ad quendam finem qui comprehensionem rationis excedit", *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a.1, ad. 2.

It is not my aim to reflect on all the thematics in Augustine's encyclopedic and almost inexhaustible spiritual doctrine.⁵⁴ My interest here is limited: in as much as this spirituality is contextualized in the community and the pedagogical function exercised within the community. This pedagogical function is realized mystagogically and is evangelical in root and projection: a learning and pedagogical community is mystagogical (initiation into the mysteries) rooted in the good news or gospel and with a project of evangelization⁵⁵ first of its members and then of the world or church at large.

All this would require humility: rootedness on the ground, on the reality of our imperfection, of our finitude and culpability. Humility in order to be genuine is based on love and opens up as selflessness. 'There is no love without the openness of humble patience: 'Where humility reigns, there is love.' Humility is the fertile soil of love. Love always includes one's ability to transcend egotism and go out to others. But this cannot be done without humility, which breaks down the walls imprisoning the

⁵⁴ I fully subscribe to the summary of the thematics and characteristics of Augustinian spirituality of A. Trapè: "Augustine has exercised a decisive and continuous influence on Western Christian spirituality. This is due not only to the fact that he defended the theological foundations of the spiritual life, especially with regard to the doctrine of grace, but also to the fact that he developed and carefully examined the essential points of this life and showed their intimate relation to the great Christian mysteries; the Trinity, Christ, the church, and justification. It can therefore be said that Augustinian spirituality is at once Trinitarian, Christological, ecclesiological, anthropological, and – because of the source from which it is continuously nourished – biblical..."

The essential points of Augustine's spiritual doctrine can be summarized under the following headings; the universal vocation to holiness; charity as the center, soul and measure of Christian perfection; humility as the indispensable condition for the development of charity; purification as the law of interior ascent; prayer as a duty and a necessity, the means and the end of spiritual life; and the degrees of the spiritual life", "St. Augustine", A. di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology*, Vol. IV, 453-454. Cfr. also: G.W. Schalabach, "Augustine's Hermeneutic of Humility: An Alternative to Moral Imperialism and Moral Relativism" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 (1994), 299-330.

⁵⁵ With regards to the new evangelization, cfr. John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*; Idem., *Fides et Ratio*, 13.

ego in itself. Humility does not consist in slavish subservience, but in a sense of reality."⁵⁶

The Mystical Space of the Community: Spirituality and Transformation

The community (which is Augustine's image for the Church) is the mystical ambiance, within time and space, of the development of the life in the spirit, of the spiritual life, which should not be separated from theological reflection, especially in the realm of dogma and in what we are dedicated to: religious education.⁵⁷ This mystical ambiance is a space for transformation: going beyond one's form, attaining transcendence by means of conversion, change of heart, change of interiority through openness to God amidst one's brethren, who make up the Church, seeking to lead the brethren together towards God. Recently, in his visit to St. Augustine's tomb in Pavia, Pope Benedict XVI, himself a scholar on St. Augustine as Joseph Ratzinger, reflected, in a homily, on the aspect of conversion from the experience of Augustine in the *Confessions*.⁵⁸

The Augustinian mystical space is a community, open to conversion. For Augustine, conversion⁵⁹ is first and foremost, an act of turning towards God. It is rooted in the common life,

⁵⁶ *Ratio Institutionis*, 22.

⁵⁷ Cfr. H.U. von Balthasar, *Verbum Caro. Skizzen zur Theologie*, Vol. I (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960).

⁵⁸ *Omelia di Sua Santità Benedetto XVI, Visita Pastorale a Vigevano e Pavia, 22 aprile 2007*. The text in Italian is available at www.vatican.va/latest/latest_en.htm

⁵⁹ Cfr. the classic study of Augustinian spirituality from the viewpoint of conversion of V. Capánaga, *San Agustín, maestro de la conversión cristiana* (Madrid: BAC, 1974). Also: L.C. Ferrari, *The Conversions of Saint Augustine*. (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1984); R.A. Markus, *Conversion and Disenchantment in Augustine's Spiritual Career* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1989).

searching for God together, seeking holiness together.⁶⁰ Eventually, this seeking for God develops as parting from one's interiority and overcoming one's self-centeredness and becoming community-centered.

The protagonist in any spirituality is the individual because spirituality is the concrete realization of how one sees the cosmos or the totality of that which exists in relation to himself and how he sets forth within this cosmos to search for the Absolute. Spirituality starts in the seeking one own's good, of one's own soul identifiable with God.⁶¹ This is one's process of self-perfection, identified with Augustine as the *beata vita* or happy life possible to attain only in an ambiance wherein the others play an important role, wherein this perfection is a shared or common goal.

This mystical ambiance is the context, the historical and cultural root of the growth of the spirit, who cannot grow alone (therefore, he needs the community) and who cannot grow without any direction nor origin nor driving force (therefore, he has to be directed towards God).

As a mystical ambiance of the development of spirituality, the community, or the church in miniature or Augustine's paradigm for the church at large, is the ambiance for transformation, for the move towards transcendence, towards holiness in this immanent life leaving a history not of individual achievements but of communitarian achievements, of communion towards God.

Augustine's spirituality puts premium on the community and from here the individual is nourished in his profoundness or interiority, geared towards God with community practices of sharing, friendship, common prayer and living playing subordinate roles. This is how his spirituality or itinerary is different

⁶⁰ "The foundation of Augustinian life is that common life by which friars who are rooted and united in the charity of Christ serve one another, strive to develop the natural talents of the human person by the grace of God, and work with all their energy for the benefit of the community, so that no one 'eats his bread gratis simply because it is common property.' In this life, the friars possess nothing as their own but live for the common good." *Constitutions*, I, 8.

⁶¹ *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 102, 8.

from other classical models like St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross⁶² which put premium on the individual, but within the Carmelite Community. Augustine commences emphasizing the community and within it the individual and his interiority.

Taking the Jerusalem Church as model, love is first and foremost a communitarian act taught to the individual and nurtured by him. It is the community that builds, forms and trains the individual person in love, whereas in Teresa and John, love is first that of the individual with the aim of building the community.

Therefore, the community in building the individual has a pedagogical function, made very concrete in the *Rule* in the notion of fraternal correction. This pedagogical function can only be defined in terms of evangelizing: evangelical in root and evangelization as projection, with a mystagogical process. This is the contextual basis of Augustinian spirituality. The most profound lesson of the community to the individual is interiority: the search for the truth in the profound dimension and this profound dimension is God. It is worth quoting at this point the following paragraphs from *The Augustinian Community between the Real and Ideal*:

What has the Augustinian spirituality to offer to the modern world? The basic principles of Augustine's spirituality can be summarized in the following three values; love of neighbor as the most sure norm of our love of God; community life in brotherhood; brotherhood culminating in friendship, where possible. Community life is not something abstract or an end in itself, but it is to be seen as an expression of love for the brother or sister. It is a realization of unselfish love, and – if possible – of mutual love, giving love and being loved in a more intimate way. Thus the three basic principles are interconnected.

⁶² Cfr. A. de la V. del Carmen, "Presencia de San Agustín en Santa Teresa y San Juan de la Cruz" *Revista de Espiritualidad* 14 (1955), 170-184; N. de Santa Teresa, "La 'Ciudad de Dios': Filosofía de la mística. De San Agustín a San Juan de la Cruz" *Ciudad de Dios* 167 (1955), 151-178; B. Jiménez Duque, "La alegría en la esperanza: el testimonio de San Agustín y San Juan de la Cruz" *Teología Espiritual* 18 (1974), 95-106.

From this emphasis on community life some other accents follow, such as the importance of dialogue and communication, common prayer, common recreation, and a democratic atmosphere. The emphasis on community also colors the practice of the vows; poverty is to be seen as the sharing of material and spiritual goods; obedience is essentially an act of love; celibacy is directed toward loving relationships with one another, different from married relationships.

These are values we can offer to the Church and the world of today. A community based on unselfish love is an evangelical value. Augustine's spirituality is a call and summons to equality of all people, to real brotherhood and sisterhood, to friendship among human beings. Is this not the most important, but also the most difficult task for the human person, wherever he may be, within married or religious life, within organizations or nations, within the dialogue between West and East, between North and South? An authentic community is an ideal for all times, but perhaps the world never needed so many values such as loving relationships, the sharing of goods, the promotion of the well-being of others, warmth and affection in a bureaucratic and technological world. Humanity never felt so strongly the need for unity and community, for everyone has become more and more aware that this world will not survive without these.⁶³

The mystical space of the community finds its mystical fulfillment, since mystical comes from the word mystery, in the mystery of the human person enclosed in his interiority. Any act of discipline or asceticism in Augustinian spirituality is directed to the community with the purpose of building the human individual. Therefore, abstinence, discipline, etc. and all ascetic practices are all given a specific twist: that of conquering one's egoism, one's self-seeking nature in order to put the community first, not as a goal, but as the builder of the individual, which is the real goal of the community because only in one's interiority can Augustine's exhortation "in Deum" could be attained. "The hermeneutical key

⁶³ *The Augustinian Community Between the Ideal and the Real. Documents of the Intermediate General Chapter 1992* (Rome: Pubblicazioni Agostiniane, 1992), 58-59.

to a religious community is and ought to be the in Deum of the Rule: a religious community is a group of Christians who freely come together as a community in order to live in harmony in the monastery and together to travel the way to God.”⁶⁴ Other mystical or spiritual schools, like the Carmelite school we have just cited, would make the community or Church, as built by the individual’s ascesis or exercise, the final goal.

The Relative Value of the Community: Journey and Pedagogy in the Mystery towards God

In my view, the premium given by Augustine to the community does not mean that the community has absolute value. What is of importance is God, the Triune God, Himself found in the interiority of each individual (Trinitarian Indwelling).⁶⁵ The Christian God is community: Father, Son and Holy Spirit! This is the basis of Augustine’s notion of community and the journey

⁶⁴ S. Folgado Flórez, “Prayer in the Augustinian ‘Intention’ for Religious Life” *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism*, 170.

⁶⁵ Cfr. the studies of M. Schmaus, *Die pscilologische trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus* (Munich: Verlag Universitäts, 1966); E.J. Brotóns Tena, *Felicidad y Trinidad. A la luz del De Trinitate de San Agustín* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 2004); M.A. Vannier, *Saint Augustin et le mytstère trinitaire* (Paris: Cerf, 1993); A. Gardeil, “La mens d’après st. Augustin et st. Thomas d’Aquin” *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* XIII (1924), 145-161; E. Müller, *Augustins Lehre von der Einheit und Dreienheit für Sein und Erkennen* (Erlangen, 1929); J. Stiglmayr, “Zur Trinitätspekulation und Trinitätsmystik des hl. Augustinus” *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik* IV (1929), 168-172; F. Cavallera, “Les premières formules trinitaires de saint Augustin” *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* XXXI (1930), 97-123; I. Chevalier, “La théorie augustinienne des relations trinitaires. Analyse explicative des textes” *Divus Thomas* XVIII (1940), 317-384; R. Tremblay, “La théorie psychologique de la Trinité chez saint Augustin” *Etudes et Recherches* VIII (1952), 83-109; C. Boyer, “L’image de la Trinité. Synthèse de la pensée augustinienne” *Gregorianum* XXVII (1946), 173-199, 333-352; G. Verbeke, “Connaissance de soi et connaissance de Dieu chez saint Augustin” *Augustiniana* IV (1954), 495-515; O. du Roy, *L’intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin. Genèse de la théologie trinitaire jusqu’en 391* (Paris: Cerf, 1966); E. Bailluex, “L’Esprit du Père et du Fils selon saint Augustin”, *Revue Thomiste* 85 (1977), 5-29; F. Bourassa, “Théologie trinitaire chez saint Augustin” *Gregorianum* 58 (1977), 675-735, 59 (1978), 375-411; Idem., “Le don de Dieu” *Gregorianum* 50 (1969), 301-337.

of the community to the God who is community because He is Trinity!⁶⁶ This journey of discovery is aided, facilitated by the community. Thus, according to Augustine, the community has the aim of being a religious educator, a pedagogue, a mystagogue, so to speak!

The individual in touch with his interiority and living out the fullness of communion with God, of having one mind and one heart with God is the final goal of the Augustinian community with its pedagogical and mystagogical role for the individual, who makes up the community. For Augustine, "religious life is before all else a quest of God."⁶⁷ Religious life or Augustine's ideals in religious life, for us laypersons, is not limited to the institutional barriers but must embrace all charisms and forms of Christian living, especially in a lay and pedagogical setting like the Augustinian school. All these forms must be joined into one, into one heart and one mind, in communion which means many or plural⁶⁸ in a single love.⁶⁹

The community is the teacher not only of the individual in itself, but in as much as the individuals make up the community. The community is the teacher of the community to pursue the interiority. The 1992 Intermediate General Chapter of the Augustinian Order declares in this light: "The community has a *raison d'être* and purpose that go beyond the community itself: the common intention to seek and find God, i.e. interiority, which is proclaimed as the 'chief reason for your coming together' in the Rule.

Interiority is, therefore, an essential characteristic of Augustinian community and the basis on which it rests. Immediately

⁶⁶ For a panoramic vision, cfr. F. Moriones, "La Santísima Trinidad según San Agustín," *Augustinus* 39 (1993), 359-377.

⁶⁷ S. Folgado Flórez, "Prayer in the Augustinian 'Intention' for Religious Life", *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism*, 168.

⁶⁸ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 72ff.

⁶⁹ E. Cavallari, "The Message of the Reform Movements in the Augustinian Order", *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism*, 137.

after this opening sentence of the Rule, Augustine speaks of the common life, understood as a communion of goods that is not only, nor primarily, a gesture of charity, but the means which makes possible a liberation of heart and mind from whatever impedes the love of God and of neighbor, namely the love of self."⁷⁰ In St. Augustine's *Rule*, "the accent shifts more to life in community as a victory over self-seeking. What the Rule asks is that attention should be directed to the upbuilding of relationships of love."⁷¹ "In the Augustinian community personality does not lose its identity. On the contrary, it is more easily developed because the community is the fruit of friendship, which gives rise to and sustains loyalty, trust, sincerity, and mutual understanding."⁷²

This does not mean that the community is only a means to an end. "According to Augustine, community life is meaningful in itself. It cannot be considered as a means to another goal, useful, for example, for this or that work. A utilitarian concept of community life is contrary to Augustine's mind."⁷³ The following words referring to Augustinian friars in formation are also applicable for our lay students and teachers: "While 'community life plays a privileged part in formation at every stage' (PI 26) in

⁷⁰ *Between the Real and the Ideal*, 44.

⁷¹ T.J. van Bavel, "Introduction" *The Rule of Saint Augustine. Masculine and Feminine Versions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), 7. Van Bavel states furthermore that "Pachomius, Basil and Augustine all laid great stress on community life. The reason for this was that they were convinced that the orientation to one's own self and individualism formed the greatest obstacle to the realization of the gospel. For them the first community of Jerusalem plays the role of an ancient dream which becomes an ideal for the present and for the future. We could characterize the Rule of Saint Augustine as a call to the evangelical equality of all people. It voices the Christian demand to bring all men and women into full community. At the same time it sounds an implicit protest against inequality in a society which is so clearly marked by possessiveness, pride and power. According to Augustine, therefore, a monastic community should offer an alternative by striving to build up a community that is not motivated by possessiveness, pride and power, but by love for one another. And, in this sense, the Rule of Augustine is also socially critical", *ibid.*, 8.

⁷² *Between the Real and the Ideal*, 56.

⁷³ *Ratio Instructionis Ordinis Sancti Augustini*. English ed. (Rome: Pubblicazioni Augustine, 1993), no. 16.

almost all congregations, for us Augustinians it is at the very heart of our identity and charism. Community life for us is not simply a means towards an end. Rather it is meaningful in itself, since it is the first place where our professed love of God is realized concretely in love of neighbor. The central nature of community life in our spirituality underlines the importance of the formation community, how it is made up, and the structures and spirit which pervade it. It is primarily through the lived experience of community life that candidates are formed in what it means to be an Augustinian."⁷⁴ Furthermore, "The members of a community have to care first for good interpersonal relationships among themselves in daily life, for this is the first way to God."⁷⁵ This act of caring is evangelization in action in a community, responding to what Paul VI reminded the Sacred College of Cardinals in 1973: "To seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answer to his questions and the energy for his commitment of human solidarity."⁷⁶

The way to God, for Augustine, is clearly interpersonal relationships in communion, in a community setting, stored up in the memory which changes from *memoria sui* to *memoria Dei*.⁷⁷ "Common life remains the mirror, the litmus paper for checking the genuineness of our life in light of the Augustinian charism."⁷⁸ Only by having one mind and one heart towards God, not in terms of colorless and lifeless conformity but with a legitimate plurality, can one be of one mind and one heart with God: "Primum, propter quod in unum estis congregati, ut unanimes habitetis in domo

⁷⁴ Ibid., no. 76.

⁷⁵ Ibid., no. 16.

⁷⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.

⁷⁷ Cfr. J. Morán, *La teoría del conocimiento en San Agustín. Enchiridión sistemático de su doctrina* (Valladolid: Archivo Agustiniiano, 1961). By the same author, as applied to religious life: *El equilibrio, ideal de la vida monástica en San Agustín* (Valladolid: Archivo Agustiniiano, 1964), 106ff.

⁷⁸ E. Cavallari, "The Message of the Reform Movements in the Augustinian Order" *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism*, 138.

(cf. Ps 67, 7), et sit vobis anima una et cor unum in Deum (Cf. Act 4, 32).⁷⁹ Truly, "in searching for God you will meet him in men and women everywhere."⁸⁰

Love: Gravitational Force for the Community of Augustinian Learners

Philosophy is love of wisdom. More often than not, the focus is exclusive towards wisdom. Wisdom without love cannot be love. It is just pure knowledge. Wisdom is practical knowledge, knowledge put to use, knowledge in the service of a greater end, transcending the fact of knowledge in itself. Augustine would prefer to emphasize love instead of wisdom.

In a set-up built for learning, following Augustinian anthropology, love has primacy over knowledge, love is the existential weight of the human person and happiness and the meaning of one's life depends on one's orientation of the heart.⁸¹ "*Amor meus, pondus meum...* My love is my weight", says Augustine in the *Confessions*.⁸²

Love leads us to where we want to be: ultimately it is with God together as a community, as a Church. In the same vein, we could also say that without love we are weightless, worthless, just like leaves flown by the wind, with no grounding, firm basis, no philosophy speaking from an intellectual and existential and experiential viewpoint. We all need a philosophy: a guiding principle in life, a basis for our actions, the foundations of how we construe reality to be.

Love gives value to the community. It gives it firmness. Teaching and learning is an enterprise founded on love. We cannot teach and learn unless we love the truth, unless we love one

⁷⁹ *Regula*, I, 2.

⁸⁰ Ad F. Vermeulen, "Augustinian Spirituality, A Source of Fruitful Apostolate" *Augustinian Spirituality and the Charism*, 209.

⁸¹ M.A. Keller, "Human Formation and Augustinian Anthropology" Several Authors, *Elements of an Augustinian Formation*, 216-217

⁸² *Confessiones* XIII, 9, 10.

another, unless we love God: the goal of all our activities as an Augustinian educational community.

In Cassiciacum, Augustine envisioned a community of philosophers, a community of lovers of wisdom wherein love made knowledge into wisdom, wherein love makes each person truly human and a better or good person. Love is the ontological power responsible for our existence, for our life, for our search for truth, and for guaranteeing that in our teaching and learning the cupidity of the flesh or egocentrism be avoided. Let us now cite a significant paragraph from Augustine's *Enchiridion* on this regard:

*Jam porro charitas, quam duabus istis, id est, fide ac spe majorem dixit Apostolus (I Cor. XIII, 13)... Now as for love, which the apostle says is superior to the other two, faith and hope. The greater is love in a person, the better is that person in whom it is. For when we inquire as to somebody is a good person, we do not ask what he believes in or what he hopes for, but what he loves. Because one who rightly loves without doubt rightly believes and hopes; and the one who does not love only believes in vain, though what he believes in is true; he also hopes in vain, despite that the things for which he hopes, according to our teaching, pertain to true happiness... *Regnant enim carnalis cupiditas, ubi non est Dei charitas...* Cupidity of the flesh reigns, where the love or charity of God is not present.⁸³*

In the *Rule*, we find instructions with regard to sexual temptations, to carnal desires. Augustine is interested in them not because they are sexual or carnal in nature, but because they stem from an egocentric attitude, bereft of love and destructive to the common good. They are the most individualized forms of selfishness, wherein the selfish good of the self becomes the absolute center.

From a Pauline inspiration, the teachings of the faith that we share in Religious Education, the hope of eternal life that we all hold as members of the church or as believers, the immediate

⁸³ *Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive de Fide, Spe et Charitate*, CXVII.

hope for justice, peace and prosperity in our social teachings are all worthless though they may true without love. We could be excellent pedagogues given our competence, our mastery of the content of our subject matter, but we would not be authentic, true, genuine, sincere persons and pedagogues without love. We would be leaves blown by the wind: with no direction, grounding, firm foundation. We would be impostors. We would not be true witnesses. We would not be true Christians. As Benedict XVI reminds us: "We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John's Gospel describes that even in these words: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should... have eternal life' (3:16). In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel's faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth."⁸⁴ We do not have a place in an Augustinian set-up if we are like this. We have to give up all our egocentricism and start loving in order to be Augustinian members of a community and educators.

According to the Augustinian spirit and philosophy, love is more important than wisdom because it is love that makes knowledge wisdom. Love is the entire criterion of all acting, of all teaching and learning in an Augustinian set-up and this is what really matters for us, teachers and students, growing together in one mind and heart towards God: the source of all love, especially in a word when love is the most abused term, the most confusing word, the most obscure reality for it easily gets mixed up with other things or concepts that do not even come close.

Final Reflections: The Inexhaustibility of Love

Following Augustine in the *Rule*, the only way to determine whether what we feel or do is really love is that the center

⁸⁴ *Deus Caritas Est*, Introduction, 1.

of gravitation is not the self, but the other, the community.⁸⁵ In this light, it is worth quoting this significant paragraph from the Intermediate General Chapter of the Augustinians held in 1992: "What has Augustinian spirituality to offer to the modern world? The basic principles of Augustine's spirituality can be summarized in the following three values: love of neighbor as the most sure norm of our love of God; community life in brotherhood; brotherhood culminating in friendship, where possible. Community life is not something abstract or an end in itself, but it is to be seen as an expression of love for the brother or sister. It is a realization of unselfish love, and – if possible – of mutual love, giving love and being loved in a more intimate way."⁸⁶

Augustine's doctrine on love is practically inexhaustible in its richness. My presentation is necessarily very limited and must be taken in the light of the reflections above: within the context of a teaching and learning community, within the dynamics of mystagogy, evangelization and catechesis, within the framework of education, taken in the light of Spirituality, and our vocation both as teachers and students.

Because of love, all teachers will forever be students, fellow students of their students. In philosophy, because it is love of wisdom, we are all students all our lives. □

⁸⁵ Cfr. C. Morán Fernández, "The Community in St. Augustine. Philosophical and Theological Aspects" Several Authors, *Elements of an Augustinian Formation*, 286-316; D. Natal Alvarez, "The Augustinian Community in Practice", *Ibid.*, 317-337.

⁸⁶ *The Augustinian Community between the Ideal and the Real*, p. 58.