

Bishop Michael Marshall
3 September 2006

SAINTS ALIVE!

During the coming 'silly season' of summer, I thought that it might be a good idea each Sunday in the weekly bulletin to take one of the Saints (with a capital S), whose saint's day occurs during August and write a short piece about that particular saint as well as printing the prayer for that particular saint's day at the conclusion of the article.

In many ways it is a tragedy that we do not know more about the saints and martyr throughout the centuries, because it is in the 'communion' and fellowship of the saints that we seek to live out our discipleship in our own day and in our own culture. I like to think of the saints as being to Christ the light of the world what the spectrum is to the light of this world. They show us in differing shades and colouring something of the greater glory of God. One of the lovely things about the saints is that they are not cloned – they represent a huge variety of characteristics and personalities and all together reflecting something of the light of that infinity which is invisible to our limited sight.

Get to know the saints for what they are and not for what they are not! They are not superstars, superhuman nor even heroes. They have feet of clay and they know it, and don't need any investigative reporter to reveal it! They are gloriously flawed human beings, who have found the gift of God's amazing grace to be sufficient to redeem their weaknesses and to turn them into strengths. They are not ashamed of their wounds, - indeed their wounds are the marks which authenticate their love and their 'profession' as the wounded healers of the world.

They do not seek to impress, precisely because they are too busy trying to express something of the love of God that has made them what they are. So they do not point us to themselves or seek to draw attention to themselves: rather they point us to Jesus, 'the Author and Perfecter of their faith and ours. We don't so much pray to the saints so much as we ask the saints to pray to God for us, as we frequently ask our friends on earth to pray for us – only they do it from the nearer Presence.

ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO : 28TH AUGUST

Augustine was born in North Africa in 354. His career as an orator and rhetorician led him from Carthage to Rome, and from there to Milan where the Imperial Court at that time resided. By temperament, he was passionate and sensual, and as a young man he rejected Christianity. Gradually, however, under the influence first of Monica his mother, and then of Ambrose Bishop of Milan, Augustine began to look afresh at the Scriptures.

He was baptized by Bishop Ambrose at the Easter Vigil in 387, along with Adeodatus, his illegitimate son and Alypius, his best friend.

Not long after returning to North Africa he was ordained priest, and then became Bishop of Hippo. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Augustine on the subsequent development of European thought and theology for hundreds of years to come. A huge body of his sermons and writings has been preserved, through all of which runs the theme of the sovereignty of the grace of God. He is sometimes called the Doctor of Grace. He died at the age of seventy-six in the year 430.

Collect

Merciful Lord,

You turned Augustine from his sins

To be a faithful bishop and teacher:

Grant that we may follow him in penitence and discipline

Till our restless hearts find their rest in you;

Through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen