

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Model for the Modern People Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time Friday,
August 28, 2015 8:15 AM 1 Thes 4:1-8; Mt 25:1-13 **St. Augustine**, bishop and
doctor (Divine grace of conversion open to everyone no matter how deeply ingrained in
wrong ways of thinking and wrong ways of acting.)

Today we celebrate the memorial of St. Augustine. St. Augustine has had a lot of influence on the Church, especially in the West, the Roman side of the universal Church. In many ways, Augustine is a very modern figure. For one thing, as a young man **he embraced some very poor philosophy**, similar to many contemporary philosophies, a form of gnosticism, which is relatively common today. The specific one he joined was called **Manicheanism**, and unlike some forms of modern philosophy, this actually had a church associated with it. So it was **a sort of imitation of the Christian Church, but its ideas were not very Christlike** at all. They were clearly false from the standpoint of Christian teaching and belief. So that was the first thing.

Secondly, because of his rather poor philosophy, **he embraced a very poor lifestyle**. Like many modern people he began living with a woman he did not marry and he sired a child. This did not lead to any kind of wholesome relationship. There was no relationship. There was no love, apparently, or commitment between the two of them. But the point he makes in his own autobiography is that he started in this very bad way of living, this habitual way of living, or this **set of bad habits, which really became a cross**.

Now when he began to encounter Christ, he realized that **there was a great distance between where Christ was inviting him to go and where he was**, and that he had this burden of bad habits that really were a burden on him. Bad habits are a burden. They do weigh upon people. They are not simple just to get rid of. **You don't get rid of bad habits just because you want to, because you choose to. You need to recover.**

Now **today** we also have many recovery movements, and they are all very wholesome: AA, for example, Alcoholics Anonymous; SA, Sex Offenders Anonymous; NA, Narcotics Anonymous. All these are **movements to help people overcome, basically, bad habits and addictions.**

So Augustine was in this boat. What he experienced was the great patience that God has—**the great patience God has in moving us ever so slowly toward a healthier, richer, more human way of living.** So **he is a good model for today** because he shares some of the great defects, if you want to put it that way, problems of modern times: **bad thinking, bad habits.** But at the same time, he exemplifies and models **a real determination to move out of addiction and unhealthy ways of living into a healthy, God-centered, God-inspired way of living.** And he shows us that it is not a simple task; but it is a task that is possible, **possible because of divine grace.** This movement is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is a work of God. It is inspired by the love of the Father. It is made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ, and it is applied to us through the Holy Spirit. And it is something **open to everyone no matter how deeply ingrained in wrong ways of thinking and wrong ways of acting.** The conversion of the whole person to God is something very real and possible. So Augustine is a model, a good model, a contemporary model for all of us and for our families and for our young people.