

‘Estoy aqui para ti...’

Arturo Rentería nunca olvidará las poderosas experiencias que ha vivido durante los últimos años. “Fue en septiembre de 2006”, recuerda, “que tuve mi primer encuentro con Cristo. Sentí una llamada, pero no pudo escucharla. En un retiro en el 2009, me encontré de nuevo a Cristo y empecé a entender porque Él me estaba llamando. No fue hasta julio del 2011 que me encontré con el Señor una vez más. Pero esta vez le respondí con “Estoy aquí para que haga conmigo lo que quiera”.

Durante los próximos tres años, Arturo continuó trabajando en su trabajo de tiempo completo en Chicago, y exploró las oportunidades de la vida religiosa, al asistir a retiros vocacionales diocesanos.

Fue durante este tiempo que Arturo fue invitado por amigos a unirse a la radiodifusión religiosa en español. Trabajó en Chicago y más tarde continuó cuando se trasladó a San Diego. Habló sobre las vocaciones, el ayuno de Cuaresma, la oración y la penitencia, el Santo Triduo y después sobre la vida de los Agustinos, además apareció varias veces en San Diego en un programa llamado Hombre Nuevo.

“Me he sentido muy bendecido con las respuestas positivas que he recibido de los oyentes”, dice Arturo. “Ellos me han animado a seguir difundiendo la palabra de Dios a través de este medio.”

Dice que le gustaría estudiar las carreras en comunicaciones y la radiodifusión de televisión y, finalmente, tener la oportunidad de seguir evangelizando través de las ondas.

Cuando se reunió con los agustinos en el 2014, (un momento especial para él).

“Me enamoré con su estilo de comunidad y oración”, recuerda. “Me impresionó por el amor que irradiaban. Son una comunidad siempre dispuesta a servir a los demás. Vi esto en Chicago con algunos de los seminaristas que conocí. Cada persona tenía una educación espiritual

muy especial y lo transmitían”. Fr. Tom Whelan, O.S.A., Director de Vocaciones Provincia Occidental, invitó a Arturo a pasar una semana en San Francisco con los pre-novicios, y después asistió a un retiro profesional en San Diego. “Fue ahí que aprendí más acerca de los Agustinos”, recuerda, “y entender más claramente lo que el Señor quería de mí.” Arturo comenzó su pre-noviado en el monasterio agustino de San Diego, en agosto de 2015 y entró el Noviciado en Racine, WI, este mes de agosto.

Arturo, de 39 años, nació en el estado de Durango en México. Cuando tenía 11 años, él y su familia se trasladaron a Ciudad Obregón, donde asistió a la escuela primaria y secundaria, y trabajó con sus padres en su negocio. En el 2000, se trasladó a Chicago, y encontró un trabajo con una compañía de correo directo, donde trabajó en varias posiciones durante nueve años, donde llegó a ser un supervisor de turno. Luego se trasladó a otra empresa de correo directo, donde trabajó durante otros cinco años.

Arturo está agradecido con su familia por apoyar su vocación. También agradece a la comunidad de Mary Queen of Heaven Parish en Cicero, IL, cuyos miembros, dice, le han dado la confianza para poder servir en los diferentes ministerios que le han ayudado a formarlo.

“Doy las gracias a todos los que han sido parte de mi formación”, dice Arturo. “Que Dios los bendiga siempre.”



Arturo en el programa de radiodifusión, *Hombre Nuevo*.

Young Novice Exults in Feeling of Belonging

Mauricio Morales felt an initial tug toward religious life in 2014 and promptly ignored it.

“I was dating at the time, and I thought my musing about a vocation was just a curiosity rather than a genuine call to religious life,” recalls Mauricio. “But after starting the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and deepening my relationship with Christ, I began to discern what God wanted of me and I opened my heart to whatever that was.”

That fall, his spiritual director introduced him to Fr. Tom Whelan, O.S.A., Vocations Director of the Augustinian Western Province. Mauricio participated in a vocations retreat. Last year, he became a pre-novice.

“Since then, I have felt at home, a feeling of belonging,” reflects Mauricio. “It was none of my doing. I just let God guide me toward the path he wanted me to take.” Mauricio continued along that path this August when he left for the Augustinian Novitiate in Racine, WI.

The Augustinian emphasis on community inspires Mauricio. “I think the support from other people who have that same desire to follow Christ is important for anyone’s journey. We are all of different ages, cultures, backgrounds, skills, but we are united in our love for Christ and one



Mauricio participating in Nativity Day Aurora Mass at St. Anthony of Padua church in San Francisco.

another. Every single brother teaches me something about religious life and about community life. That fraternal brotherhood from everyone reinforces my commitment every day.”

Mauricio was born a quarter century ago in Nicaragua. When he was seven, his parents found themselves unable to get work to support the family, so they emigrated to the U.S., leaving Mauricio and his sisters to be reared by their grandmother. Because they could not travel back to Nicaragua at will, the children saw their parents only occasionally and relied on weekly phone calls.

“Growing up without parents on the scene can be tough because nothing can replace parents’ love for their children,” says Mauricio. “But I am very fortunate and blessed to have lived a life with the people I lived it with, and to recognize how God has been guiding me and my family all along.” Mauricio graduated at age 16 from high school and entered one of the best universities in Nicaragua, UNAM. When he was in high school, Mauricio was a standout soccer player. He remains an avid fan of soccer as well as other sports. In 2008, the family was reunited when Mauricio and his sisters joined their parents in San Francisco, becoming American citizens.



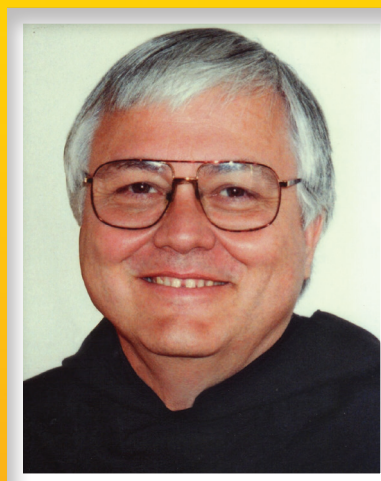
Spiritu

Published by the Augustinians of the West

‘Always in Motion, Ready to Make the Next Step’

Letter From the Editor

Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A.
Spiritu Editor



In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, (25, 2, 5) St. Augustine writes “It is wrong to think that there is nobody good. Or that there is no one who is good except oneself.”

In a society that sometimes trumpets skepticism and hails personal aggrandizement, it continues to be refreshing to hear about people whose only plan is to listen to what God wants them to do. In this issue of *Spiritu* we read of five men who have responded to God’s call to reflect upon the basic goodness that is within themselves --- all the time celebrating the goodness that is within those they meet and serve.

As is true of any group of selected Augustinian individuals, each of these people has unique stories of their personal spiritual journeys; in fact the term *journey* might be the common thread connecting all of their stories.

A convert to the faith, one friar traveled from his homeland in the United Kingdom to work in Japan and eventually ended up professing vows to the Augustinian Order and becoming a member of the California province. Another friar, the only one of those featured in this issue who was born in the United States, travelled to Korea to be better able to serve his fellow members of the Korean Catholic American community. Our province’s newest priest journeyed with his family from Colombia to the United States where he became an American citizen with a particular dedication to serve the people of Myanmar. Neither of our novices is living in his country of origin. They, like the others, had to physically make a journey.

The men featured in this issue of *Spiritu*, have an even greater journey than to travel from one country to another. Their spiritual journey is to discover the goodness within themselves interacting with the goodness of others. St. Augustine would be proud! I invite those who might be considering our way of life, as well as all of our colleagues, parishioners, and students to share in Augustinian goodness.

Fr. Gary

Brother Barnaby Johns, O.S.A. is a man of many interests and talents. He is a British-born gentleman and scholar, a graduate student in educational leadership, a musician who leads a student band, plays saxophone, loves jazz and most kinds of music from Rachmaninoff to rock. He runs marathons and coaches tennis. He manages to fit all this in around his main job as teacher of religion at St. Augustine’s High School, San Diego.

A conversation with Bro. Barney, as he is known to his friends, reveals a wry sense of humor and down-to-earth humility. His deep, joyful dedication to his vocation is apparent. He’s typically high energy. “Barney is like a calm whirling dervish,” says a brother Augustinian. “It seems like he’s always in motion, ready to make the next step. But he always stops to affirm each person in the community.”

Bro. Barney comes from Clifton-upon-Teme in Worcestershire, England, where his parents still live in the home in which he grew up. He has an older brother who lives with his family in Pennsylvania. At the age of 16, Bro. Barney was received as a convert into the Catholic Church after ten years of attending Catholic schools, and finding inspiration in the writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman. Bro. Barney was welcomed into the Church at Littlemore, just outside Oxford, where Newman himself had converted 150 years earlier.

Discerning God’s Will in His Life

While he was a student at Anglia University majoring in history, Bro. Barney became much more interested in his faith, helped by a new girlfriend who



Bro. Barney running in the Big Sur Marathon.

(continued inside)

A Memorable International Pilgrimage



The California contingent at Krakow, Poland.

A group of young California Catholics had a unique opportunity this summer to grow in their faith and meet like-minded peers from throughout the world at the 12th Augustinian Youth Encounter (AYE) held near Prague in the Czech Republic. They later attended World Youth Day in Krakow, at which Pope Francis presided.

The California delegation of 52 people included current students at St. Augustine’s High School, sisters of the students, St. Augustine’s alumni and four young adults from Our Mother of Good Counsel parish in Los Angeles. The young people were accompanied by faculty members from St. Augustine’s and several other Augustinian priests and brothers.

(continued inside)

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‘Flooded with gratitude and joy...’

“I was flooded with gratitude and joy for the privilege of receiving such a magnificent gift for the service of God’s people and the glory of God...”

Those were Fr. Carlos Medina’s thoughts at his ordination as an Augustinian priest this summer.

Since entering religious life in 2008, it has been an enriching, personally transforming journey for Fr. Carlos.

“Thanks to my superiors, formators, teachers, fellow Augustinian brothers in formation, and ministry experience during this time, I believe I have grown as a person,” reflects Fr. Carlos. “When I first entered religious life, I felt most at home in the realm of ideas and felt uncomfortable dealing with practical matters. As time in formation went on, I became more and more at home in the complexity of human realities and developed skills to serve human needs.”

He says a significant part of that learning curve took place in his ministry to Burmese refugees in the San Diego area.

Following his ordination, Fr. Carlos began his first priestly assignment as Associate Pastor at St. Patrick’s Church in San Diego, where he had been ministering as a deacon since February.

“Parishioners and staff have been extremely supportive since my first day as deacon, so I am happy to continue serving this faith community now as a priest. I am still in awe of the amazing power of God, who can work through weak human beings like myself to bring about peace and forgiveness to people’s lives.”

A native of Colombia, Fr. Carlos emigrated to the U.S. as a boy with his family in 2000. After graduating from high school, he attended Diablo Valley College and then the University of California at Berkeley, from which he graduated in 2009. Throughout his college years, he held various part-time jobs and worked in parish ministries. As a seminarian, he was assigned to volunteer with the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program in San Diego. It was in that role that he built a special relationship with Burmese refugees newly arrived in the U.S., helping them navigate the challenges of daily living in their new country.



Newly-ordained Fr. Carlos distributes the Eucharist.

BRO. BARNEY (continued from front cover)



Bro. Barney professing solemn vows last summer.

was particularly strong in her faith. “People I knew well at the time would comment on how I might become a priest one day, even a half-decent priest. I didn’t appreciate that at all,” he recalls.

But the inner musings and murmurings about the possibility of a vocation continued during three years he spent in Japan teaching English. He returned home and worked for three years in communications at a neuro-disability hospital. It was during this time in his late 20s that he sought out a spiritual director who helped him discern God’s will. At the same time, he moved into a community of lay men and women in London and established a time of prayer each day.

“People I worked with began to notice a difference in me — more peace-filled,” he remembers. “I was attracted to this peace and joy. And I slowly found myself falling in love... with God.”

Over the years, he had kept running into Augustinians, first at the University, then in Nagasaki, Japan on retreat, and again when he joined the lay community, which was being set up by an Augustinian. From there it was one small step at age 30 to enter the Augustinian pre-novitiate in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Joining the Augustinians was a natural fit for him. The Augustinians’ emphasis on community suited him very well and he felt comfortable with his newfound brothers. “The Augustinians have always been a very down-to-earth group,” says Bro. Barney. “There was no fantastical piety, but a greater humanity. I soon discovered that Augustine’s search for God didn’t make him more spiritual; it made him more human. That’s what attracted me to Augustine, and to his way of life.”

After his pre-novitiate year, he was off to Racine, Wisconsin for the Novitiate. Then it was back to London for two years’ study of philosophy followed by two years of theology in Rome. In the

Eternal City, he lived in an Augustinian community of 70 from all over the world. “It was a great experience to see the universal side of the Augustinians and the Church,” he says.

In 2010, he spent his pastoral year at St. Augustine’s High School in San Diego. When he returned from the U.S. in 2011, he first went to study for a Master’s in Biblical Theology at St. Andrew’s University in Scotland, then returned to London, where he served as chaplain at London University and worked in communications for the Diocese of Westminster. In 2014, California beckoned once again and he arrived back in San Diego and St. Augustine’s. He is now a permanent member of the Augustinian West Coast Province.

Helping Engage Minds and Hearts

His immediate focus these days is on helping the young men at St. Augustine’s in their learning, which he finds rewarding. “I hope they are gaining a positive understanding of religion, of their journey that in turn will help them understand for themselves the richness of faith, the Church, the Bible. When I see their brains and their hearts engage with the subject, then I think that good work is being done,” he reflects.

Bro. Barney speaks proper English straight from the Mother Country. Asked if he is teaching his students how to speak English or they’re teaching him, he says it’s a good question. “Sometimes I have to ask my students what on earth they are saying and sometimes they look at me with a quizzical look as if I’m speaking in a foreign language. We get by, and sometimes it can be quite amusing.”

At age 42, Bro. Barney says he will always be an Augustinian brother, and he thinks priesthood might be on the horizon. He continues to discern God’s will in his life.

Meanwhile, Bro. Barney feels blessed by the variety of Augustinian life.

“I have lived with so many people from all over the world who have different gifts, temperaments, quirks, charisms. It has been a community where I can explore academic pursuits, physical endeavors, the spiritual path as well as enjoy the company of people doing the same.

“There is unity,” he says, “without uniformity. I find that very appealing.”



Meeting the Need for Korean-Speaking Priests

“It’s important that our seminarians are supported in the gifts and skills they have, especially when that support meets needs in the Church...”

— Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A., Province Formation Director

Brother Philip Yang, O.S.A. spent the spring doing what few American seminarians have the occasion to experience. He participated in an intensive, ten-week Korean language course at Inha University in Incheon, Korea.

The challenging but rewarding experience had a clear practical purpose: to prepare him for his future ministry as a priest, specifically to help meet the growing need for Korean-speaking priests in the U.S. In California alone, he points out, there are 21 Korean Catholic churches.

He had a huge head start. Born in Los Angeles, he grew up in Orange County, where he spoke English in school and elsewhere, but at home spoke Korean with his Korean-born

parents and visiting relatives. When he first joined the course, he could speak Korean quite fluently. “My classmates were wondering why I was even in the course,” he recalls. “But they quickly realized that my spelling, writing and reading skills were at the same level as theirs if not worse.” Over the weeks with hard work, those skills improved significantly.

Looking ahead to ministry, Bro. Phil says this intensive language course will prove valuable. “Reading

the liturgy in Korean is not a problem and conversing is not a problem either, but what I still need to work on is the homily, most importantly, delivery. It’s not just the grammar, but it’s how you stress certain words and nuance them. But I have hope.”

Bro. Phil was one of 15 students from all over the world who were trained in listening, reading, writing, speaking and conversation. In his limited leisure hours,

he very much enjoyed being a tourist. “It was such an amazing experience being in Korea,” recalls Bro. Phil. “The funniest moments were when people assumed I was Korean, but the moment I opened my mouth to speak, they knew I was an American — specifically, a Californian.”



Bro. Philip Yang (right) pictured with Augustinian novices at picturesque Sambuyeon Falls in Yunchun, Korea.

Meeting

another need for California ministry, Bro. Phil last year completed the Summer Intensive Spanish Language Program at the Middlebury Institute of Language Studies in Monterey, CA. He has now returned to Chicago for his last year of theology.

“I want to thank the Order and the Province for all my experiences,” says Bro. Phil. “I am so happy to be an Augustinian friar and I would not have it any other way.”



INTERNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE (continued from front cover)

“I think my personal faith was greatly enriched by participating in the Sacrament of the Eucharist with other Catholics from around the world. I learned about God’s extensive love for all people and that we as Catholics are meant to share that love in everything we do.” —Sam Dixon, class of 2016, St. Augustine’s High School

The AYE offered the young participants the opportunity to share their common Augustinian backgrounds and to learn more about the Augustinian Order, according to Fr. Mark Menegatti, O.S.A., a member of the Augustinian International Commission on Youth, who helped plan the event and accompanied the group. “The young people were able to observe the friars sharing in common life, and they had the opportunity to visit historic sites that are part of the heritage of the Order. Some of the kids gained a very new perspective on Augustinian life.”

Convening some 250 youth from more than 20 countries, the AYE included workshops, icebreakers, retreat activities, daily Mass and social activities. Each nation presented something of its culture.

“I was very happy with this AYE,” says Fr. Mark. “There was time each night for the young people to gather informally. There was a good mix of groups, and our students were able to interact widely.”



The AYE full group.