

# Los Estudios de Seminaristas en Español Beneficiarán a Los Ministerios

Este verano, dos seminaristas agustinos de la Costa Oeste avanzaron significativamente en el aprendizaje del idioma español y en su conocimiento de la cultura Latina. Anticipan que sus estudios intensos beneficiarán en el futuro a sus ministerios en todo California.

El hermano Máxime Villeneuve, O.S.A. y el Hermano Philip Yang, O.S.A. son parte de varios agustinos de la costa oeste que han estudiado español en los últimos años. El Padre Tom Whelan, OSA, por ejemplo, ha estudiado en los Estados Unidos y en Ensenada desde el 2003. El Padre Tom es el Director de Vocaciones de Provincia.

EL Hermano Max asistió a un riguroso programa de seis semanas en la Escuela de Idiomas en Ensenada, México. La filosofía de la escuela es "aprendizaje mediante la acción", por lo que el Hermano Max y sus compañeros se comunicaron y pensaron constantemente en español.

El Hermano Max estaba muy interesado en la búsqueda de la inmersión local de la cultura Latina. Fue ayudado por la familia que lo acogió,

la cuál le introdujo a la cocina típica mexicana, y el estilo de vida en Ensenada.

"Cuando entré en el programa, diría que hablaba el español de Tarzán", recuerda el Hermano Max. "Yo sabía de palabras y frases básicas. Pero debido a mi origen francés, fue que pude entender más de lo que podía hablar. Mi experiencia en Ensenada fue una lección de humildad y me sirvió para darme cuenta de mi realidad".

Teniendo un progreso constante en el programa de español en seis semanas, el Hermano Max fue trasladado del grupo intermedio al grupo más avanzado. "El programa fue realmente genial en general, fue precisamente lo que estaba buscando: una escuela donde podía aprender el estilo y lenguaje de conversación que me falta en español", apuntó. "Pero todavía tengo mucho que aprender, ya que tengo la fundación para seguir adelante."

Para el Hermano Phil, su participación en el Programa Intensivo de Verano del Idioma Español en el Instituto de Middlebury para estudios de idiomas en Monterey, CA, fue sólo una parte de su plan para ganar fluidez en varios idiomas. Él creció hablando coreano en casa con su familia. Quiere aprender coreano con un énfasis más académico, y con tiempo ser capaz de predicar en

ese idioma. Dice que en su tiempo libre, también le gustaría aprender hebreo y cantonés".

El Programa Intensivo de Verano en Middlebury hizo honor a su nombre. La clase conto con cuatro horas y media de instrucción por día, tres a cinco horas de tarea cada noche con actividades semanales y tutoría diseñado para aumentar el aprendizaje fuera del aula.

"Este fue uno de los mejores programas de idiomas que he tomado", dice el Hermano Phil. "El reto era que el programa estaba condensado. Estudiar un idioma durante ocho horas al día durante varias semanas puede tener consecuencias en las capacidades mentales de uno".

El Hermano Phil dice que hay cinco niveles de fluidez, el comenzó en el primer nivel y ahora, está en el tercer nivel. "Ahora tengo los fundamentos para continuar y mejorar, y puedo hablar frases básicas. Mi plan es trabajar de forma constante en los ministerios de habla hispana, y también continuar los estudios en el idioma".



Hmo. Phil



Hmo. Max



# Spiritu

Fall 2015

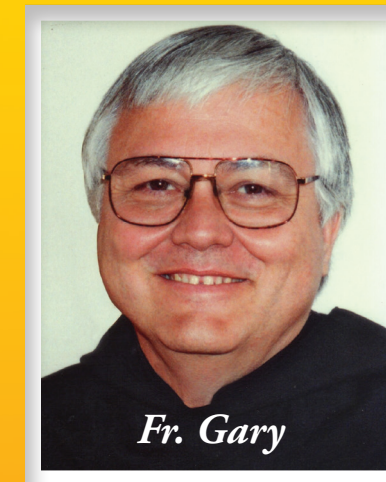
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Meet Very Rev. Kevin C. Mullins, O.S.A.

## New Provincial: 'Flexibility and Humility are Vital'

### Letter From the Editor

Fr. Gary Sanders, OSA  
Spiritu Editor



Fr. Gary

In his great opus, *The Trinity*, St. Augustine celebrates the benefits of seeking the Truth:

"When truth is eagerly sought, finding it produces greater enjoyment. Found, it is sought again with renewed desire." (15, 2, 2)

With this issue of *Spiritu*, the Western province of the Order of St. Augustine shares with you some of the wellsprings of our joy that have come from our continuing search for the Truth, who is Jesus Christ. For some, there is an exciting newness of discovery, for others, it is the *renewed desire* to continue the search.

While two of our newest members have come all the way from Pakistan to search for the deeper meaning of Augustinian life, another friar has been called to seek a different dimension to his life by beginning his role as servant-leader of our province after twenty-five years as a parish priest.

Much of our search for truth is rooted in a desire to best serve the people to whom we minister, and the colleagues with whom we serve. Friars in formation honing their language skills, a professed friar acclimating people of Myanmar to our country, and encouraging young people to embrace a life-long service to the poor all lead to a *greater enjoyment* of the search for Truth.

The purpose of *Spiritu* is to share our joy of the search with our colleagues, students, parishioners, family members and friends. Many of you know the good work we do. By means of this issue of *Spiritu* we hope that more of you will get to know us as people who have searched for Truth, found it, and celebrate the joy of both the search and the rediscovery.

Fr. Gary

As Fr. Kevin C. Mullins, O.S.A. ponders his roles as the new Prior Provincial of the West Coast Augustinians, he does so with a healthy dose of realism, optimism rooted in his faith, a sense of challenge and a sense of humor.

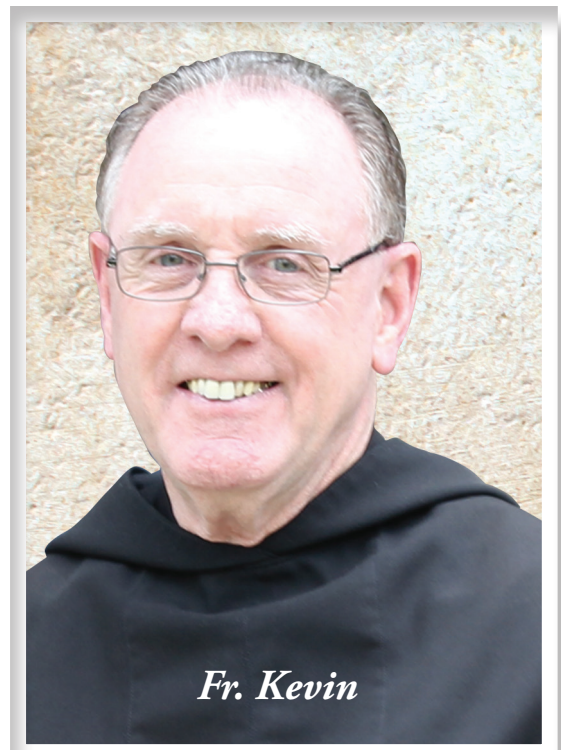
Meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of the church while coping with the needs and limitations of the friars is a continual challenge for almost every religious community in today's world, he points out.

"That requires flexibility, adaptation, an openness to change, an eye for adventure and a letting go of the old 'but that's the way it's always been' mindset," says Fr. Kevin. "I also believe it requires a huge dose of humility on our part, recognizing we cannot be everything for everyone, that we cannot do it all, and that what we do must be done well - because the Church and God's people deserve that.

"Our Province has a rich and storied history that leads me to believe we can employ that flexibility and humility in ways that will truly make a difference in the world around us — both within and outside the community and the Province," he says.

Fr. Kevin is already receiving high marks. "Kevin is a person who knows what needs to be done," says a brother Augustinian. "I was very impressed with one of his first plans of action, when he decided that we must withdraw from Our Lady of Grace parish in Castro Valley. Not only had this been his home parish, but he had been pastor there for 11 years. It was a personally painful decision for him to make, but he did what he felt was best for all concerned. That's a sign of a good provincial."

(continued back page)



Fr. Kevin

## NEW PROVINCIAL (continued from front page)

### Fit for the Challenges

No question Fr. Kevin's new job is complex and demanding. The Provincial is called upon to be the public face of the Province, a representative of the Order and the Province and its members, a communicator, a convener and a decision-maker (with the help of his advisors). These responsibilities involve a cascade of meetings, phone calls and emails that seem to eat up the time each day.

With his customary self-deprecating wit, Fr. Kevin puts it this way: "At the end of the day, I sometimes feel I've accomplished very little, but it took all day to do it, and please, don't ask me what it was..."

His fundamental optimism does seem well-founded, however, given the strong support he is receiving from his brother Augustinians, close at hand in the San Diego community of which he is a member, and from throughout the Province. There are three former Provincials and a Provincial Council to whom he can turn for advice.

His background is a plus. In college, he was trained in business and worked in a family-owned travel agency until he entered the Augustinians at

age 38 in 1984. More on point, of his 25 years as an Augustinian priest, 24-and-a-half were spent in parish ministry, 15-plus years as a pastor.

He points out that being a pastor or a Provincial are both very public roles that call for strong administrative and organizational skills, a good sense of balance, familiarity with Church and civil law and a knowledge of best practices in managing all the requirements of the work.

"At the same time, however, one can never forget or in any way underestimate the need for a pastoral approach," says Fr. Kevin, "because it will always be about serving God's holy people. The challenge is to keep these two areas of responsibility in balance as much as possible."

### Unitas, Veritas, Caritas

Foundational to the Augustinian social and spiritual life are the three core values of Unitas, Veritas and Caritas (Unity, Truth and Love). These values, says Fr. Kevin, call the priests and brothers to interiority, prayer and reflection.

He says he firmly believes in the old adage which holds that spiritual formation is ongoing. "For 31 years, my formation has been underway

and continues today. We are always people on the way, people who need to continue growing in age and wisdom, people who are aided by the experience and expertise of others. It's been a great blessing for me to have had mentors and companions who have helped me to grow in my faith, in my Augustinian and priestly identity, and in my trust in the goodness of the Lord on this journey towards God."

Fr. Kevin is acutely aware of the need for recreational pursuits to help decompress from the unrelenting demands of ministry. He has resumed exercising regularly, taking long walks around the neighborhoods of San Diego. He also enjoys occasional shopping trips to Costco and Trader Joe's, cooking, reading good books, and a little gardening.

Meanwhile, he muses about his first intense few months as Provincial: "Do you know where I can buy some time? The hours and days just go by all too quickly. Maybe that's my excuse to tell everyone to stop and smell the roses, to laugh out loud, and to never forget that it is God who is in charge. To borrow a movie line, 'It will all work out in the end. And if it's not working out, it's not the end.'"

## Yes! I would like to learn more about the Augustinians.

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Br. Carlos Medina, O.S.A. (second from right) visits a Catholic family at their home in Mae La refugee camp in Thailand. The man on the right has been resettled in North Carolina for several years. He just happened to be visiting his parents (on the left in the photo). He has learned English, so he translated for Br. Carlos. They all prayed together.

## Emulating the Intellectual Honesty of St. Augustine

When Augustinian seminarian Brother Nick Porter leaves his room every morning in Santa Monica's, the Augustinian student house in Rome, he never fails to look across to see the dome of St. Peter's Basilica.

"This is a wonderful place to be," says Br. Nick. "This College is one of the most vibrant communities I've lived in. I think of Santa Monica's as a kind of tiny microcosm of the Church. The people here are from many nations, of different races and speak a variety of languages. Yet they live together here in genuine unity. The cause of that unity is their Catholic faith."

Br. Nick has come a long way since he joined the West Coast Augustinian community in San Francisco as a pre-novice in 2010. He is now in his second year of theology. "When I first entered as a pre-novice," he recalls, "I was making an uncertain attempt at religious life. In time, and imperceptibly, I grew into religious life or it grew into me. I can see clearly looking back that the habits of prayer and study formed and strengthened me bit by bit."

Br. Nick says it is not that his perspective on religious life has changed over the intervening years, but rather his perspectives on life have been changed by his religious formation.

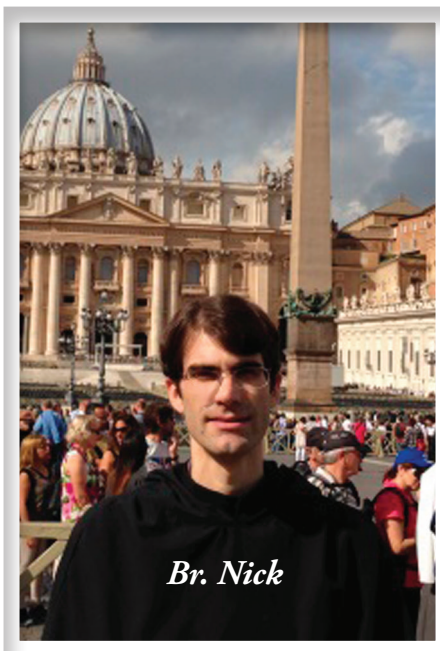
"I think I can say that I've learned to judge various things in life — fortune, whether good or bad, health, time, virtue and innumerable things which men seek and prize — more accurately. It may sound glib, but the Catholic faith does more than save a person's soul, great as that is. It also saves people from an awful lot of confusion."

Accompanying Br. Nick on his journey and lighting his way has been the wisdom of St. Augustine.

One of Augustine's qualities that Br. Nick singles out is what he calls the Saint's intellectual sincerity. Nick sees this as a kind of frank honesty and impartiality that Augustine had toward his own thoughts and those of others. Augustine cared more about being right than to think himself right. Therefore, he was ready to change his mind at once if he saw he had been wrong in any way.

"This is so plainly admirable that I could hardly help but try to imitate it," reflects Br. Nick. "I would say that in addition to the many other things I have

learned from St. Augustine, I have gained something from his humility before the truth and the labor with which he sought it."



Br. Nick

## Two Pakistanis Join Western Province

The Augustinians of the West are taking on an increasingly international character as they recently welcomed two new pre-novices from Pakistan, Adnan Ghani and Sarfraz Alam.



Adnan

Both have had several years of seminary training in their native country. But they started over again in a sense as pre-novices with the California Augustinians, because that is required for acceptance into the Novitiate. Both completed their pre-novice experience and have left for the Novitiate in Racine, Wisconsin.

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Adnan, 30, was born in Lalamusa, the third in a family of six children. He attended a Catholic school and seminaries. In 2013, after completing four years of theological study, he was doing a pastoral internship in a parish. In that role, he taught catechism in the school, did home visits to the parishioners and served in youth programs, an old age home and a leprosy center.

Adnan learned about the Augustinians from his spiritual advisor. The more he studied and learned about

the Order, the more he felt drawn to Augustinian life. Now with the pre-novice experience behind him, these positive early impressions are confirmed in his mind.

"I was struck by the teaching, interiority and community life of Augustinians, so I decided to apply to become part of the Augustinian Order," reflects Adnan.

When he joined the pre-novitiate program, he found it to be a wonderful and different experience. "I felt inner peace in my life. The love, belongingness and the community life I experienced are great. I was really happy when I was given the opportunity to attend the Chapter (Province retreat/conference) last June. It was a really nice experience. Even though I met so many priests and seminarians for the first time, I never felt I was new to them and meeting them for the first time. The reason was they accepted me and treated me as their family member."

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Sarfraz, 31, was born in a small town called Latifabad, one of ten siblings. In his early teen years, he dreamed of becoming a pilot. But he was rejected for training, which he attributed to his Christian religion.

He eventually joined a band as a singer. His mother disapproved of that lifestyle and prayed for change in his life. Her prayers were answered when Sarfraz was invited by some protestant friends to hear an Australian preacher.

"He was preaching on Matthew's call and I saw Christ calling me on that same night," recalls Sarfraz. "He asked me to come follow him. I asked 'where?' He said come and see, and then disappeared."

Not long after that, Sarfraz' father shared this with the local bishop, who said God was calling him to be a priest. Sarfraz started seminary training in 2002.

In his final year of theology, he was doing a research assignment and became intrigued about the Augustinians. "When I was learning about their charism and community life, living in fraternity, I fell in love with the Augustinians," recalls Sarfraz. "The quote that touched my heart was from St. Augustine: 'Our hearts, O Lord, are made by you and they are restless until they rest in you.'"

Sarfraz contacted the West Coast Augustinians and began communicating with them via email and Skype. He received notice he was selected to join, and in September, 2014, he arrived in San Francisco to begin life as a pre-novice at the Augustinians' St. Rita House.



Sarfraz

## BROTHERS AND SISTERS (continued from page 1)

Br. Carlos was almost instantly drawn to these ethnically diverse refugees who are poverty-stricken and longtime victims of oppression.

"Almost every family I know well has a story of survival they cannot tell without tears — stories of hunger, persecution, separation, torture," says Br. Carlos. "They tell me these stories only after building trust over months. The great suffering they have endured has definitely marked them, but their hearts have not been hardened and they continue to be very kind, innocent, faith-filled and generous."

Br. Carlos points out that the newly-arrived refugees, speaking little or no English, have no familiarity with American life, customs and the daily tasks and routines of getting by. So he is guided in his ministry by their most urgent everyday needs.

### Doing What It Takes to Help Refugees Navigate

He has prayed with them at homes, churches, hospitals. He has taught them about American culture and history. He has helped people find jobs, figure out the transportation system, apply for college and financial aid. He has taken people to the emergency room and medical appointments, helped people with lease or rental agreements, taken their cars to the auto shop for repair, taken groups of parents to register their kids for school and has written letters of endorsement for grants or scholarships. He has taught an after school program for high school students. He has helped people buy everything from groceries to cars. He has cooked for them, has helped them make

funeral arrangements and has advocated for them with utility companies and landlords.

Br. Carlos manages to do all this depending mostly on translators. The Burmese speak several entirely distinct languages, depending on their ethnicity. He is only in the early stages of learning two of the different languages that the refugees speak.



Br. Carlos (left) visits with U Zaw Lwin Oo, a Buddhist monk who is the founder and headmaster of the New Blood Learning Center, a school for Burmese children of undocumented migrants in Thailand. U Zaw Lwin Oo was a former political refugee in Burma because of his support for democracy. He escaped to Thailand, founding the school in 2003 and later becoming a monk.

The percentage of Catholics among the Burmese immigrants is very small. Most are Baptist or Buddhist. Br. Carlos represents the Catholic Church to both Catholics and

non-Catholics, so his main form of evangelization is witness.

Br. Carlos observes that some protestant pastors seek to help this community, but only if the individual or family will attend the particular protestant church.

"I have heard refugees speak about me, saying that I am there for people in need regardless of their religion," says Br. Carlos. "I tell them that God loves everyone, Catholic or not." Some have expressed interest in becoming Catholics.

This past summer, Br. Carlos traveled across the world to Thailand and Myanmar (Burma) to further learn about the people and ways in which he can be most effective in ministering to them. He conferred with leaders, religious and otherwise, visited four refugee camps in Thailand observing the primitive conditions in which the refugees live, and spent a day across the border in Burma.

Br. Carlos' journey to Thailand and Myanmar strengthened his desire to minister to Burmese refugees. He says he hopes he will be able to do so to some extent after his ordination. It will depend on his assignments and the time he has available.

Meanwhile, whenever he comes back to San Diego, he sees his Burmese friends and helps out however he can. When he is in Chicago pursuing his studies, he visits communities of Burmese in the Midwest.

His empathy for the Burmese refugees seems limitless. "I will probably never know the kind of emotional pain and suffering they have endured, nor will I ever know what it is to live for years without much food locked in a refugee camp," Br. Carlos reflects. "So I am grateful that God uses me to make their lives a little better in this country. I am also very grateful that many of them have welcomed me into their lives and consider me their friend. Whenever I get to pray with them, or hear how they speak of their faith, my own faith is strengthened."

## Young Voices

A group of Villanova Preparatory School students spent a few days on a community service trip to San Diego in which they reached out in several different ways to those in need. They learned about the people they served, and learned something about themselves in the process. Some reflections:

*"We all had a wonderful learning experience while volunteering at the Soup Kitchen at St. Vincent de Paul, Father Joe's Kitchen. Many of us came to the realization that the people we were helping out truly appreciated everything we did for them, even if the task was as simple as serving them food..."*

*"It was very hard not to like how these wonderful people at Border Angels are passionate about helping their neighbor, just as we are called to do as Catholics..."*

*"We followed the border until it reached the sea, where we saw Friendship Circle, a place where people can come to the border every weekend to talk to friends and family on the other side. We heard that this year on Children's Day, a door at Friendship Circle was opened for the second time and several families were able to meet for a few minutes. One father was able to hug his little five-year-old daughter for the first time."*

*"This trip has been amazing. We have been able to serve others just like Jesus did..."*

*"While serving, I had the opportunity to have conversations with many of the soup kitchen's clients. They were a diverse and interesting group of people. Many of them were veterans. Something that struck me as interesting was how personable they were. They were very willing to talk to me and oftentimes were friendlier than people who are well-off. This definitely had an impact on me. It's something that I took home with me."*

Here are reflections from some St. Augustine's High School students written after returning from a 2 ½ week service immersion in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala:

*"I met people who had been through so much....like the civil war. They always stay positive through everything bad that's happening to them. We met people that are happy through all the pain, finding the best in life. We in America focus too much on the bad and anticipate a perfect life and want nothing less. The Guatemalans are making perfection through a really hard life, the complete opposite."*

*"Each of them is 'Jesus in disguise.' They say to love one another is to see the face of God, and it's true. Every Guatemalan child, elderly woman or man...they each have God in them. For me, serving and learning from and with them was way more than I would have ever wanted, because being able to work and play with them was a gift from God."*

*"I was expecting poverty but there was one thing I wasn't quite expecting. The warmth of the people. Ramiro was one of my most favorite people during the trip most likely because of how he opened up to us and understood where we were coming from. He laughed at things we told him and he told us much about himself..."*

*"I got to try new foods...and to celebrate Mass in Spanish... I helped make a difference by building a school and stoves. I learned some life skills like how to wash my clothes by hand, carry a bucket of try clothes on my head, make tortillas from scratch, and carry a load of firewood on my back. I got to play soccer in another country with the locals, which was cool."*

