

Tomorrow is the Feast of
the Holy Name. Offer your
Mass and Communion...

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
January 4, 1936

...as reparation for all
sins of speech committed
throughout the world.

Augustine Thinks.

Conversion is not only for confirmed sinners. It is for everyone who wants to overcome any form of weakness. At the beginning of a new year, let us reflect for a moment on the example of the great St. Augustine.

The gayest, most gifted and sensual scholar in the University of Carthage, Augustine once chanced upon this passage in Cicero:

"If a man has a soul, as the greatest philosophers maintain, and if that soul is immortal and divine, then must it needs be that the more it has been steeped in reason, and true love, and the pursuit of truth, and the less it has been stained by vice and passion, so much the more surely it will rise above this earth and ascend into the skies."

That sentence made Augustine restless and he continually went back to it. He looked for an intellectual solution of the difficulties it set up. He knew something about the Manichees. They had a solution; it was this: sin and weakness cannot be resisted, passion is a necessity. The Manichean doctrine Augustine embraced to quiet the storm in his own conscience.

Augustine Suffers.

Years slipped by and Augustine, the rhetorician, moved up from Carthage to Milan to criticize and judge Ambrose the man of letters. But in Ambrose's church Augustine forgot Ambrose the man of letters and began to listen to Ambrose the saint. Augustine became interested in the Church's liturgy, watched the people in full contentment at their prayers around him, longed to tears that he might be one with them. But he couldn't make up his mind to pay the price. In his own words:

"The enemy held my soul still captive; therefore, he kept me chained down and bound. For out of a forward will lust had sprung; and lust pampered became custom; and custom indulged became necessity. Thou, O Lord, didst show me that what Thou didst say was true. I had nothing at all to answer but those dull and dreary words: After a while, Soon, Leave me alone a little while. With scourges of condemnation I lashed my soul to force it....yet it drew back...its self-defense was spent, yet it feared, as it would death itself, to have that disease of habit healed, whereby it was wasting to death. Thou, O Lord, didst harry me within with Thy merciless mercy; Thou didst multiply the lashes of fear and shame, lest I should again give way to lust."

Augustine Turns.

Augustine was alone in his garden. He lay down beneath a tree; his tears wet the ground. "How long?" he cried, "How long shall this be? It is always tomorrow and tomorrow. Why not this hour an end to all my meannesses?"

As he spoke a little child in a house nearby sang a nursery rhyme. The refrain was this: "Take up and read, take up and read." Mechanically Augustine stretched his hand to a book he had brought with him. It was St. Paul's Epistles, and this is what he read: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Here were the terms of conversion. Augustine accepted them. He knew that if he really wanted to, he could manage them. He rose, went into his mother's room and there at her feet surrendered his past forever. Afterwards he wrote this memorable sentence: "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart shall find no rest till it rest in Thee."

PRAYERS: (deceased) father of Tom Bulger (Dillon). Ill, mother of Gene Casoy (O.C.)