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Lenten Message

from Pope Leo XIV

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”[1]

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.”[2] Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.”[3] As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”[4]





In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires – both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity's thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr

LEO PP. XIV

[1] Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025)

[2] Augustine *The Usefulness of Fasting*, 1, 1.

[3] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (9 March 2011).

[4] Paul VI, *Catechesis* (8 February 1978).





**THIS IS MY BELOVED SON
LISTEN TO HIM** MK 9,7



AUGUSTINIANUM

Pope Leo XIV and the
Fathers of the Church:
**a profound
and vital bond**

The Augustinianum, born from the heart of the patristic tradition and at the service of the Holy See, recognizes in every initiative of theological and cultural study a form of diakonia to the truth. The new Leo XIV International Institute represents a sign of hope for the Church and for the academic world: a place where reflection becomes dialogue, and knowledge becomes service. We are pleased to share the words spoken by Father Juan Antonio Cabrera Montero, President of the Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum, during the opening of the Center.

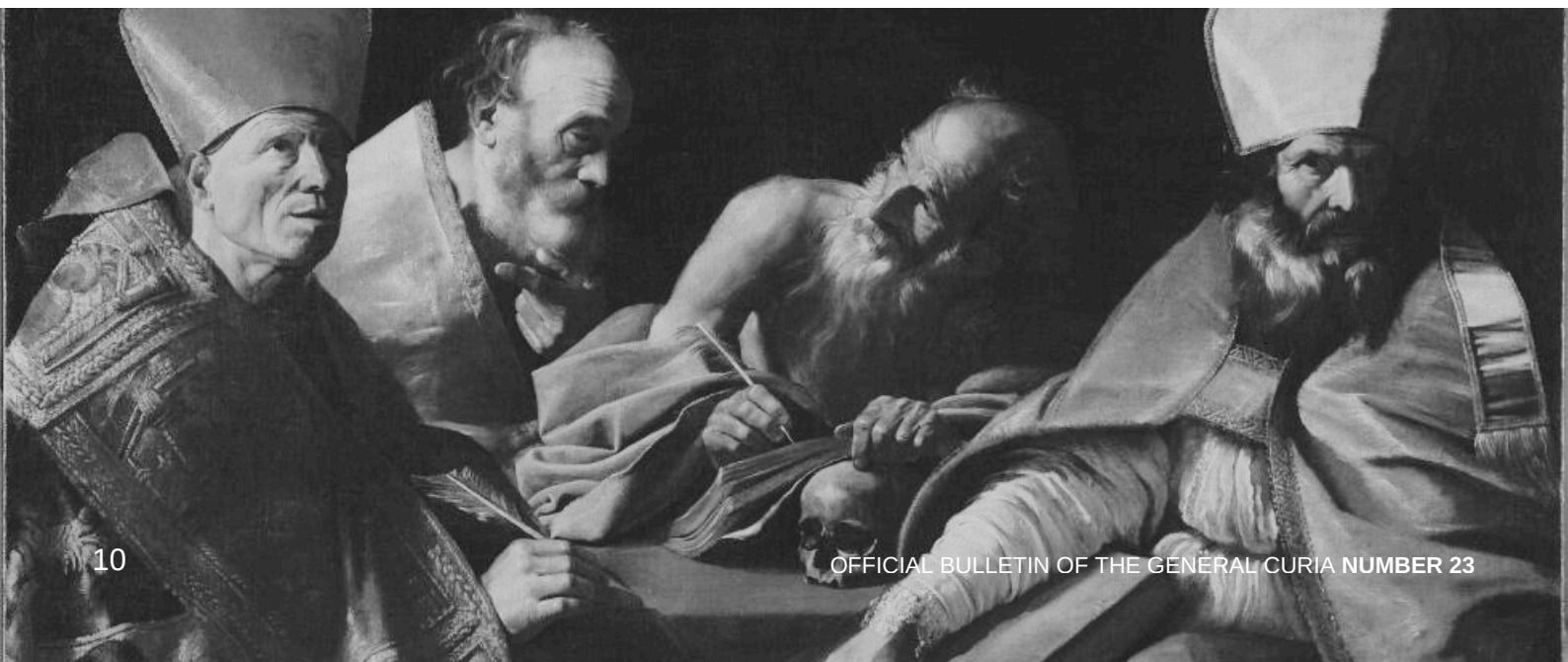
BY FR. JUAN ANTONIO CABRERA MONTERO

The bond between the thought of the Church Fathers and the teaching of Pope Leo XIV is deep and vital. This is evident not only in the first statements of this newly inaugurated pontificate, but also in the life and spirituality of Robert Prevost, as a son of Saint Augustine. It is not a mere scholarly reference or ornamental quote, but a true source of inspiration. The patristic tradition has been for Leo XIV a fertile theological ground from which to draw light and discernment to face the challenges of our time.

In his magisterium — and even more in his spiritual life — the Pope has shown that returning to the Fathers is not an exercise in theological archaeology, but an act of fidelity to the living source of faith. The Fathers, in fact, teach us that Christian truth is always current because it is incarnate, and that every age is called to rediscover it with an intelligent heart and a prayerful spirit.

The Fathers taught that returning to the origins means advancing in charity. This is the key to Leo XIV's thought: a wisdom rooted in tradition, yet open to the future; a theology unafraid of dialogue, because it is grounded in the communion of saints.

The study of the Church Fathers, therefore, is not a mere philological exercise: it is a spiritual and communal journey. The Fathers transmit to us an integral vision of truth, in which intellectual inquiry and ecclesial life support each other. They remind us that faith is not reduced to a system of ideas, but is manifested as shared life, as love that builds community.





Pope Leo XIV has embraced this horizon, recently inviting contemporary theology to rediscover the taste for wisdom, the sense of unity between thought and prayer, between doctrine and life. In his perspective, patristics is not just one of many chapters in theological history, but a permanent language of the Spirit in the Church.

The new Leo XIV International Institute, in this light, is born as a space of dialogue between memory and prophecy: memory, because it is rooted in the great ecclesial tradition that has nourished the faith of generations; prophecy, because it opens to the task of reinterpreting that same faith today in a world marked by fragmentation, the search for meaning, and the thirst for authenticity.

The Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum regards this initiative with deep esteem, recognizing in it a shared horizon of research. Patristics, in fact, is by nature interdisciplinary and universal: it encompasses theology, philosophy, history, liturgy, art, and spirituality. It is a knowledge that unites, not divides; that preserves differences in communion, as the ancient Church did.

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In this sense, the Leo XIV Institute may become a bridge between generations and cultures, between academic theology and pastoral life, between Western reflection and the riches of Eastern traditions. And it is precisely in this direction that the Augustinianum wishes to offer its collaboration, convinced that dialogue between ecclesiastical institutions and Catholic and state universities is today one of the most promising paths for the rebirth of Christian thought.

Saint Leo the Great, another great Pontiff rooted in the wisdom of the Fathers, affirmed that “what was visible in our Redeemer has passed into the sacraments of the Church” [Leo the Great, s. 74,2 (PL 54, 398)]. We could say, by analogy, that what was luminous in the thought of the Fathers continues to shine in the magisterium of the Popes and in the institutions that safeguard their living memory.

Pope Leo XIV invites us today to continue this path of creative fidelity: not to fear confrontation with modernity, but to face it with the serenity of one who knows that truth is greater than any era and that charity is its most eloquent face.



Florence opens the Leo XIV Study Center:

“A place of light, listening, and communion”

BY OSA CURIA. INFORMATION BY FR. JUAN ANTONIO CABRERA, TIZIANA CAMPISI AND LUCA COLLODI

On October 14th, at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the presentation of the León XIV Institute took place.

The purpose of this new institution is to promote a genuine encounter with the contemporary world by offering “a perspective on everyday life grounded in the Gospel teaching and in the Social Doctrine of the Church.” The goal, as its organizers affirm, is none other than to educate young people and

adults in religious, cultural, social, and political life through a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be human, inspired by the teachings of Saint Augustine.

This initiative has been made possible through the joint efforts of the Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum in Rome, the Theological Faculty of Central Italy, the University of Florence, and the University of Saint Thomas of Villanova in the United States.

Pope León XIV, in a message read by the Prior General of the Order, Father Joseph Farrell, expressed his wish that the fruits of this new institute might offer “to everyone the Christian vision of a life founded upon the Gospel.”

The Augustinian Community

“The Order of Saint Augustine rejoices in taking part in this new initiative,” said Father **Joseph Farrell**, who, while reading the Holy Father’s message of congratulations, emphasized that with the **León XIV International Institute**, “we will be able to bring together scholars and students from all over the world to explore the link between culture and theology, society and Saint Augustine.”

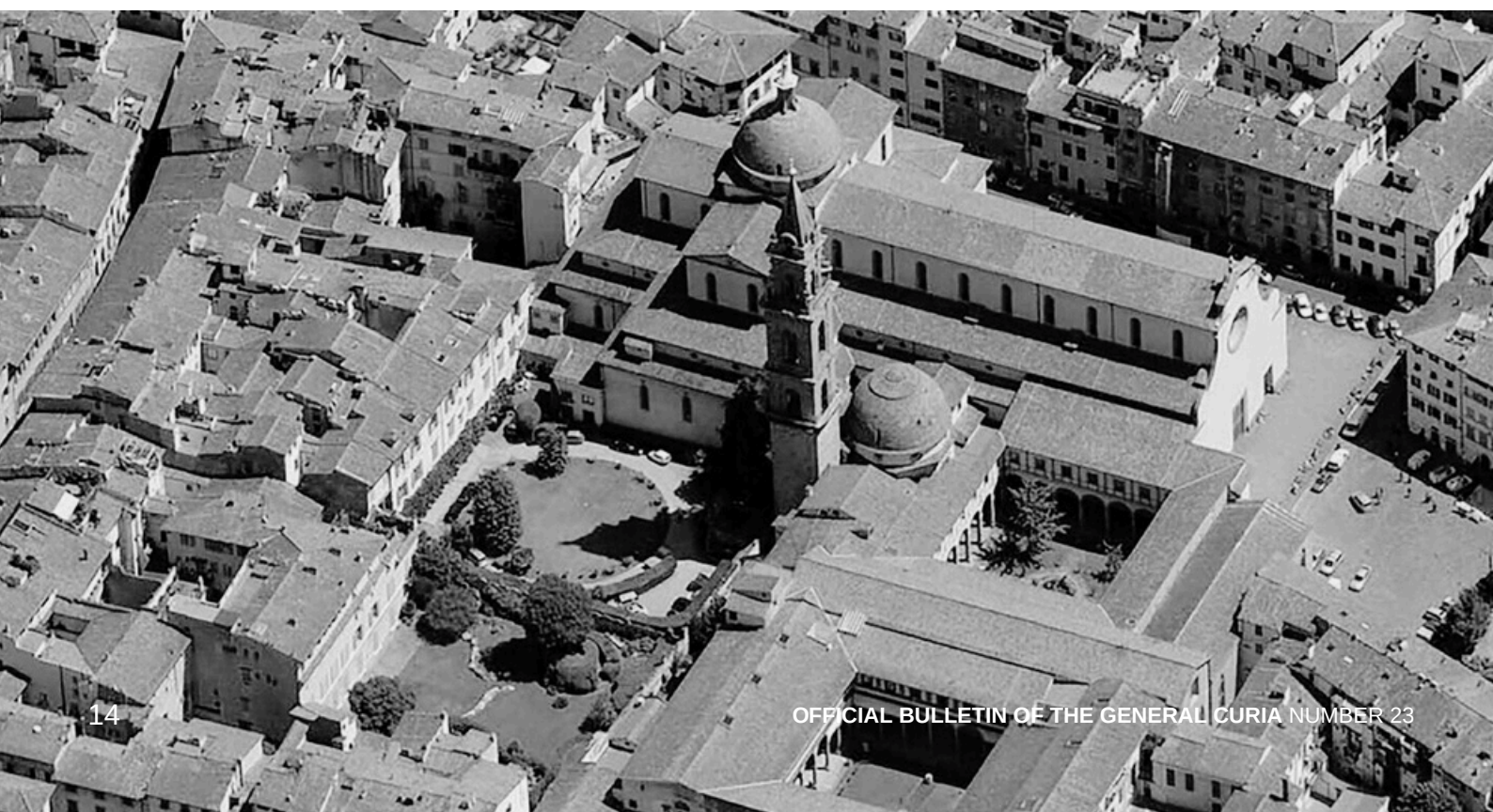
“Sixty years ago,” he recalled, “Pope Paul VI reminded us in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* that the Church is part of the world and cannot exist apart from it.” “In every aspect of what it means to be on our human pilgrimage,” he underlined, “the Church becomes an integral contributor.”

For his part, **Father Gabriele Pedicino**, Provincial of the Italian Augustinians, has

welcomed “with great enthusiasm” the creation of this International Institute dedicated to Pope León XIV. “It is particularly significant that the Institute should arise in Florence, at the Basilica of Santo Spirito, which was the cradle of Humanism and the Renaissance.”

“Augustine,” continued Father Pedicino, “was drawn to beauty from his youth, and around the age of twenty-five he dedicated his first work—unfortunately lost—to this very theme. When, at thirty-two, he discovered the true face of wisdom, his passion for beauty did not fade but deepened, transforming into love for God.”

In his magisterium and even more so in his spiritual life, said **Father Juan Antonio Cabrera**, Rector of the Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum, “the Pope has shown that returning to the Fathers is not an exercise in theological archaeology, but an act of fidelity to the living source of faith. The Fathers, in fact, teach us that Christian truth is always contemporary because it is incarnate, and that every age is called to rediscover it with an intelligent heart and a prayerful spirit.” They have taught us “that to return to the origins means to advance in charity.



THE POPE HAS SHOWN THAT RETURNING TO THE FATHERS IS NOT AN EXERCISE IN THEOLOGICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, BUT AN ACT OF FIDELITY TO THE LIVING SOURCE OF FAITH. THE FATHERS, IN FACT, TEACH US THAT CHRISTIAN TRUTH IS ALWAYS CONTEMPORARY BECAUSE IT IS INCARNATE, AND THAT EVERY AGE IS CALLED TO REDISCOVER IT WITH AN INTELLIGENT HEART AND A PRAYERFUL SPIRIT

This is the key to the thought of León XIV: a wisdom rooted in tradition yet open to the future; a theology unafraid of dialogue, for it draws its strength from the communion of saints.”

The Institute

“Our main desire is to build something beautiful—through art and culture,” finally emphasized **Father Giuseppe Pagano**, Prior of the Augustinian community of the Basilica of Santo Spirito in Florence. “An experience born from a dream nurtured over the years and constructed like a mosaic, to which each person has contributed a piece, highlighting how valuable it is for a religious community to be willing to share a path with young people, with all their needs.”

“We will do everything wisely and in collaboration with the civil and religious institutions of the city,” Fr. Pagano stressed, defining the Institute as “an opportunity to open ourselves to those most in need—individuals and families—so that we do not remain always among the same people, but broaden our gaze. Daily bread is essential, but within that bread,” he affirmed, “we must also include culture, for culture helps one defend oneself in a difficult world. The mind often risks drifting away from the heart: it is there that we must accompany people.”

The **Institute** will begin with an initial series of public lectures. The first, on **November 6th, 2025**, will be delivered by **Monsignor Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi**, Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church.

The Order of Saint Augustine establishes an institute on migration in the United States

Villanova University, sponsored by the Order of Saint Augustine in Pennsylvania, has created the Mother Cabrini Institute to promote education and research on migration, as well as public advocacy and service related to migrants and refugees. The institute was presented at the Vatican Film Library on September 30, with the screening of the film Cabrini and an event at the Patristic Augustinian Institute attended by Fr. Joseph Farrell, OSA Prior General.

BY THE COMMUNICATION OFFICE PROV. S. JUAN DE SAH.

Cabrini is the title of the film that tells the story and legacy of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, patron saint of immigrants. The film by Alejandro Monteverde was screened on the morning of September 30 at the Vatican Film Library, an event that served as the launching point for the official opening of Villanova University's Mother Cabrini Institute on Migration, located just a few kilometers from Philadelphia.

Founded in 1842 by the Order of Saint Augustine, Villanova University is one of the few Augustinian Catholic universities in the United States. Its motto, "Veritas, Unitas, Caritas" (Truth, Unity, Charity), summarizes the essence of its mission: to form professionals committed to truth, community, and love for others. With over 9,800



undergraduate and graduate students, it offers programs in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Law, Business, Nursing, and Professional Studies. Among its alumni is Robert Francis Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, who earned his bachelor's degree in Mathematical Sciences in 1977 and received an honorary doctorate in Humanities from the same university in 2014.

First steps

The institute's launch was attended by academic and religious leaders, including Joseph Farrell, Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, who spoke about how the Augustinian tradition of unity and service aligns with the institute's mission to respond with compassion to migration and displacement.

Fr. Joseph Farrell expressed his joy and said that the Augustinians are honored that Villanova University's new Cabrini Institute is taking on the great work of evangelization by helping those

WE KNOW THAT NONE OF US CAN DO IT ALONE," HE SAID. "THE INSTITUTE WILL BE ABLE TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO WORK FOR A COMMON CAUSE: TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING OUR SOCIETY AND MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

most in need, especially immigrants and migrants.

"We know that none of us can do it alone," he said. "The institute will be able to bring people together to work for a common cause: to contribute to improving our society and making the world a better place."



The day after the film screening, the institute participated as a sponsoring entity in the conference “*Refugees and Migrants in Our Common Home*,” held from October 1 to 3 at the *Pontificium Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum* in Rome. Through these two Vatican events, the Mother Cabrini Institute reaffirms Villanova University’s leadership in building global academic networks for systemic change.

Michele R. Pistone is the founder and academic director of the Mother Cabrini Institute on Migration, which seeks to bring together university and community partners to develop research, promote innovative teaching, and foster actions that respond to the challenges of migration.





**The augustinian school
that is making its way
in the Nyamasaria slum, Kenia**

The Augustinians in the World Foundation believes that quality education is the driving force behind the transformation of society. That is why, in Kenya, the Order of Saint Augustine is building a model school that guarantees the education of the most disadvantaged children in Kisumu, Kenya.

BY OSA CURIA. INFORMATION BY FUNDACIÓN AGUSTINOS EN EL MUNDO

In the midst of an informal settlement—more commonly known in popular jargon as *slums*—this school rises within a context of extreme vulnerability.

Maurizio Misitano and **Simona Cipriani**, coordinators of the Foundation, have witnessed it firsthand during their most recent visit to the project: the deterioration of social coexistence in **Nyamasaria** is growing.

With high levels of crime, early marriages and pregnancies, and numerous cases of infections such as HIV/AIDS, the reality in this region of the country is increasingly dire.

These facts stand in contrast with the sustained growth that the country has experienced in economic, educational, and human development over the past two decades. Growth is not reaching all





regions of the country at the same pace, which means that the necessary investment is not being made in a nation whose population increases by millions each year. In the last five years alone, there have been over six million new births. It is expected that by 2030 the population will surpass 65 million people and continue to rise among the countries with the highest population density on the African continent.

“School overcrowding is alarming”

In its latest report following the visit to assess the project’s progress, the Foundation has found that these children from the Nyamasaria slum in Kisumu live in conditions of extreme precariousness, forcing them to work in order to sustain their fragile family ecosystems. For 36% of the population, additional school costs—such as uniforms, meals, or essential school materials—are an insurmountable barrier.

“In public schools, overcrowding is alarming,” says Maurizio. According to information provided by the Foundation, the current average is 51 students per class, with peaks reaching 80. This means the teacher–student ratio stands at 1:60. “Many families choose low-quality informal schools out of desperation.”

Only 1 in every 6 children in the area manages to complete primary education.

The last and the most excluded: children with disabilities in Kenya

The situation worsens with the marginalization of children who have some form of disability. More than 40% of them, notes the Foundation, have never been enrolled in school. “They often remain at home in difficult conditions, without receiving adequate support, and most teachers lack the training to address their needs,” the statement adds.

The Project: Development Without Barriers

The overall goal is to contribute to reducing social inequalities in **Kisumu** by completing the construction of the next phase of the school project so that it becomes a true center of inclusion and educational quality. This new Augustinian educational center provides access to quality education for the youngest children of Nyamasaria, while actively promoting the schooling of girls.

The school, in turn, has been designed to welcome and integrate children with disabilities, who will make up at least 10% of the student body. “This,” the Foundation assures, “includes adequate spaces and equipment, as well as a specific educational program for their full social reintegration, staff training to ensure effective methodologies, and measures to reduce classroom overcrowding in order to improve the quality of education for everyone.”

Furthermore, the school will be the first in the area to offer training in techniques that promote sustainable development.

The Augustinians in the World Foundation urgently needs the support of the community. “Every donation we receive helps us build an educational environment that combats school dropout and child exploitation at its roots. Help us ensure that in Kenya, no child—especially one with a disability or living in poverty—is left behind.”



A GOAL AND A BEGINNING:

Panama celebrates its first Provincial Chapter 60 years after the beginning of the mission



During the last week of January, the first Chapter of the Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus took place at the Franciscan retreat house in Boquete, in western Panama.

BY OSA CURIA. INFORMATION BY FR. ALEXANDER LAM, GENERAL VICAR

Four months after the 188th General Chapter, at which the decision was made to elevate the Augustinians of Panama from Vicariate to Province, more than forty participating brothers were able to share in the “great joy” of this new stage together with the Prior General, who presided over the Chapter.

With Father Joseph L. Farrell, those present as guests included the Vicar General, Father Alexander Lam; the Prior Provincial of San Juan de Sahagún, Father Domingo Amigo, who was accompanied by Father Carlos José Sánchez and the former Prior General, Father Miguel Ángel Orcasitas, who delivered one of the opening conferences of the Chapter.

A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE, JOYFUL, PARTICIPATORY, RESPECTFUL, AND HOPEFUL CONSIDERING THE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN FOSTERING AN INCREASE IN VOCTIONS AND IN CONTINUING TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMIC STABILITY NEEDED TO UNDERTAKE THE MAJOR PROJECTS ENVISIONED

Fr. Orcasitas had the opportunity to share with the Augustinian friars the bond that this land has had with the Order since 1612. He recalled his own experiences and those of the friars still alive today who were present at the beginning of the contemporary mission, as well as his “deep joy” at the recent establishment of the new Province.

Joy and expectations

The first capitular session was marked by the installation of the new Prior Provincial, Father Carlos de la Cruz Murillo, along with his Provincial Council, including Fathers Carlos Flores Haylock, who in addition to serving as councilor will assume responsibility for the provincial secretariat; Oscar González Villalobos, who will take on the duties of treasurer; and councilors Jorge Luis Arcia, Ángel Luis Quintero Sánchez, and José Alexánder Quirós Tencio.

The new Province is made up of 59 friars, including 50 with solemn vows –among them brothers who collaborate in other

circumscriptions or are in formation processes outside the country– and 9 professed with temporary vows.

As reported by the Vicar General to the General Secretariat of the Order of Saint Augustine, the remaining sessions focused on evaluating reports from the province communities, the work of the commissions, and group discussions on the statutes, while the final two sessions were reserved for the Chapter program and the written approval of the proposals that will guide the coming years of governance of the Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“There is great joy and high expectation, because this goal has been achieved in a relatively short time since the beginning of this mission sixty years ago,” notes Father Lam. “It is indeed a milestone, but at the same time it marks a new beginning. Now comes the responsibility of embracing, with maturity and autonomous commitment, the challenges that lie ahead as a Province.”





The Augustinian friars of the Antilles gather in Cabo Rojo for their 6th Vicariate Chapter

At the Retreat House of the Schoenstatt Shrine in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, the friars of the Vicariate of the Antilles gathered for our Sixth Ordinary Vicariate Chapter. We began arriving at the retreat house from the various communities of Puerto Rico on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 7, together with those coming from the Dominican Republic, who had traveled to Puerto Rico beforehand.

POR OSA CURIA



Fr. Carlos José Sánchez, OSA, Provincial Counselor for Latin America and delegate of the Prior Provincial of the Province of St. John of Sahagún to preside over the Chapter, accompanied by Fr. Víctor Fernández, OSA, Provincial Treasurer, were unable to arrive that evening due to flight delays. They therefore authorized the Chapter to begin on the morning of Wednesday, October 8, with the first part of the opening session, as they would be joining us later that afternoon.

Thus, the Vicariate Chapter officially commenced on the morning of October 8. During this initial session, the schedule, regulations, and program of the Chapter were approved, as is customary; likewise, moderators, scrutineers, and other capitular officers were elected. The outgoing Regional Vicar, Fr. Quirilio Matos, OSA, presented his report on the current state of the Vicariate. In addition, the election was held for the BASE Delegate of OALA, resulting in the selection of Fr. José Daniel de la Cruz Quezada, OSA.

We began our afternoon session at 3:00 p.m. with the votive Eucharist of the Holy Spirit, presided over by Fr. Carlos José Sánchez, OSA, who had by then arrived in Cabo Rojo. During this Eucharist, Fr. Rafael Santana Durán, OSA, assumed the duties of Regional Vicar of the Vicariate of the Antilles, and the Vicariate Councilors were confirmed: Fr. Reinaldo Rivera, OSA; Fr. Carlos Cordero, OSA; Fr. Antonio Then, OSA; and Fr. Oscar Jiménez, OSA.

Afterwards, we proceeded to the meeting hall, where Fr. Carlos José Sánchez, OSA, conveyed greetings from Fr. Domingo Amigo, Prior Provincial, who was unable to attend the Vicariate Chapter. Fr. Sánchez then offered us words of encouragement, urging us to seek the best for our Vicariate wholeheartedly, with diligence and authenticity. He reminded us that the purpose of the Chapter is to reflect on our journey—our strengths and our weaknesses alike—and to respond faithfully to what the Church asks of us.

The afternoon session continued with the Vicariate's financial report presented by Fr. Edwin Lorenzo, OSA, who was concluding his service as Vicariate Treasurer. Finally, we heard the address of the new Regional Vicar, Fr. Rafael Santana Durán, OSA, who delivered his Programmatic Discourse, exhorting us to work together for the Vicariate we all aspire to build.

The second day of the Chapter, Thursday, October 9, was devoted to discussing the proposals submitted to the Vicariate Secretariat. After a brief session explaining the procedure and organizing the working groups, we divided into five groups to examine the proposals. Later, in plenary assembly, each group presented its findings, and the proposals were reviewed and analyzed. We extended the session beyond dinner to complete the scheduled discussions, postponing the final vote to the following day.

That day's Eucharist was presided over by Fr. Héctor Luis Rosario, OSA, Seminary Formator, and was offered for Augustinian Vocations.

The third and final day of our Chapter, Friday, October 10, was marked by the voting on proposals, the group photograph, the reading, approval, and signing of the Acts, among other activities. The closing Eucharist was presided over by the Regional Vicar, Fr. Rafael Santana, OSA, accompanied by the Vicariate Councilors. It was a moment of grace, celebrated on the Feast of St. Thomas of Villanova, inspiring us to give thanks to God for the pastoral and social work we Augustinians continue to carry out in these Antillean lands, and to renew our dedication to fostering vocations.

Chapter Chroniclers:

Fr. Héctor Luis Rosario, OSA

Fr. Oscar Jiménez, OSA



Fr. Joseph Farrell at the Augustinian Theological Study of Valladolid:

“Unless the warmth of charity burns, there can be no fusion of many into one”



On Friday, October 10, coinciding with the feast of Saint Thomas of Villanova, patron of studies in the Order of Saint Augustine, the Prior General of the OSA, Fr. Joseph Farrell, presided over the opening of the academic year at the Augustinian Theological Institute in Valladolid, where attendees heard an inaugural message from Pope Leo XIV.

BY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION PROV. S. JUAN DE SAH.

The day included several significant moments. In the morning, at 11:00 a.m., the Prior General met with the professed students of the Valladolid House of Professed, their formators, and other religious members of the conventual community. For an hour, Fr. Farrell got to know the group of young students, asking them about their origins, studies, and vocations.

At midday, they shared lunch together with some professors from the Augustinian Theological Institute and Augustinians from other cities who had come to Valladolid. Among them were the Provincial Prior, Fr. Domingo Amigo, and Fr. Alejandro Moral, former Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine.

Eucharist

At 6:00 p.m., the Church of Saint Augustine hosted the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Valladolid, Msgr. Jesús Fernández Lubiano, and accompanied by the choir of professed students, who performed songs from various countries.

In his homily, Msgr. Fernández highlighted the figure of Saint Thomas of Villanova: “A wise man, bishop, and father of the poor,” he said, “who dedicated himself to cultivating the science of truth and practicing charity toward the poor.”



He also referred to Pope Francis's latest encyclical, *Dilexit nos*, on the Heart of Jesus, and to Pope Leo XIV's first apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi te*, on love for the poor. Speaking about love as the source of knowledge, he said: "The most intimate, and perhaps the truest part of reality, is love."

He explained that, traditionally, reason, will, and freedom have been emphasized, but that it is necessary to speak again of the heart as the unifying center that gives coherence to our lives and brings understanding.

Academic Ceremony

The formal academic opening ceremony followed, beginning with an address by the Director of the Augustinian Theological Institute, Fr. David Álvarez Cineira.

In his remarks, Fr. David first referred to Saint Thomas of Villanova: "A prominent 16th-century figure, theologian, and professor of Arts at the University of Alcalá. His solid formation was reflected both in his preaching and in his writings, deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture and in the Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Augustine. His legacy endures not only in the promotion of Augustinian studies and missions but also in his charity toward those most in need."

He also emphasized the fruitful union between theological reflection and mission that has characterized the Order of Saint Augustine throughout its history.

Fr. Gilbert de Vera, Secretary of the Theological Institute, then read the report of the 2024–2025 academic year, summarizing the main activities of the center and expressing his joy at the election of Pope Leo XIV.



Last year, the center had 38 regular students in the Institutional Cycle of Theology; 7 in the Licentiate in Fundamental Theology; 22 extraordinary students; 38 auditing students—most of whom attended the special seminar "The Stones Will Cry Out: The Spiritual Meaning of Romanesque Art", organized by the ZamorArte Foundation and the Oriental Biblical Institute; 7 students in online formation courses for the Permanent Diaconate and for laypeople, in collaboration with the Diocese of Zamora; 12 students in the DECA course for Secondary Education (online); and 16 students in biblical language courses.



In addition to philosophy and theology courses leading to a degree, the center also offers Oriental Language courses in collaboration with the Biblical and Oriental Institute (Greek, Hebrew, Egyptian, Akkadian, Sumerian).

Inaugural Lecture

The Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, Fr. Joseph Farrell, delivered the inaugural lecture entitled “*A Reflection on the Christus Totus in Saint Augustine.*”

Speaking in Spanish, Fr. Farrell discussed the theology of the *Christus totus*—“a combination of theology, ecclesiology, spirituality, and Christology interwoven to understand what it means not only to belong to Christ but also to *be* Christ,” with which Augustine encouraged his community to live in communion.

“Unless the warmth of charity burns, there can be no fusion of many into one,” emphasized the Prior General. “That warmth of charity is most

visible when we look at the Cross of Christ. It was Christ’s total and unconditional self-giving for the world that fused us into one body. It is how Christ becomes real in all his members.”

The Provincial Prior, Fr. Domingo Amigo, also spoke, thanking the Prior General for his presence and inviting students and professors to follow Saint Thomas of Villanova’s example—so that science and charity may lead to the knowledge of God. He wished the entire academic community an intense year of study dedicated to discovering and transmitting the truth.

Before concluding the event, the director, Fr. David Álvarez, introduced a video message from Pope Leo XIV, who wished everyone a year “fruitful in knowledge and in the experience of truth,” and declared the 2025–2026 academic year of the Augustinian Theological Institute of Valladolid officially open.

SAINT THOMAS OF VILLANOVA

THE NEXT DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH?



The Emeritus Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, Father Miguel Ángel Orcasitas OSA, provides context for what may become the thirty-ninth Doctor of the Holy Church. It is a long process, spanning over 150 years, involving numerous ecclesial realities. This is its history, legacy, and influence.

BY FR. MIGUEL ANGEL ORCASITAS

What does it mean to be a Doctor of the Church?

In the Catholic Church’s calendar of saints, some are prominently designated as “Doctors of the Church.” The conditions for a saint to be declared a Doctor were established by Pope Benedict XIV in the 18th century, although several saints had already been proclaimed doctors earlier. First, the individual must be a canonized saint. Second, their writings must contain eminent doctrine—meaning they contributed theological or spiritual insights that clarify doctrine in significant areas, making them a reliable teacher not only for their time but for the Church throughout history. Third, the Pope or a council must officially declare them a Doctor.

When did the declarations begin?

This practice began in the Middle Ages. Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) issued a decretal in 1298 proclaiming the first Doctors of the Church: the four principal Fathers of the Western Church—St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Jerome. Their recognition affirmed their role in shaping essential theological concepts during times of doctrinal controversy.

Nearly three centuries later, Pope Pius V, after the Council of Trent, declared St. Thomas Aquinas a Doctor on April 11, 1567. Notably, both the Pope and the new Doctor belonged to the Dominican Order. In 1568, Pius V also declared four Eastern Fathers as Doctors: St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. John Chrysostom—an important acknowledgment of the Eastern Church.

In 1588, Pope Sixtus V added St. Bonaventure to the list. Again, both the Pope and the new Doctor were Franciscans. Their shared religious affiliation did not hinder their recognition.

Recently proclaimed Doctors

Most recent Popes have named Doctors: Paul VI, Benedict XVI, Francis, and recently Leo XIV. Pope John XXIII named none but supported the idea of declaring St. Teresa a Doctor. Paul VI did so on September 27, 1970, making her the first female Doctor. Just days later, on October 4, he declared St. Catherine of Siena a Doctor.

Subsequent Popes expanded the list: John Paul II named St. Thérèse of Lisieux in 1997; Benedict XVI named St. Hildegard of Bingen and St. John of Ávila in 2012; Pope Francis named St. Gregory of Narek in 2015 and St. Irenaeus of Lyon in 2022. Finally, in 2025, Pope Leo XIV named St. John Henry Newman, bringing the total to 38 Doctors.

Why propose Doctor of the Church for St. Thomas of Villanova?

The key is identifying where his doctrine is eminent and influential. His sermons, or “conciones,” are central. First published in Alcalá de Henares in 1572, they have been reprinted for centuries worldwide. Over 1080 studies and articles attest to his theological and pastoral impact.

His image as the “almsgiving saint” is widespread in art and devotion. Churches, schools, and hospitals invoke him as patron; religious communities and associations continue his charitable legacy.

His sermons, originally in Spanish but published in Latin, are now available in a bilingual critical edition (Latin-Spanish) in the BAC’s Complete Works—11 volumes, 7500 pages.

His spiritual mastery, sharp intellect, and dedication to study earned him recognition as patron of studies by the Augustinian Order in 1953. As Bishop of Valencia, he led reform aligned with Catholic doctrine, anticipating Trent in some dogmatic and disciplinary areas.

Gonzalo Tejerina highlights preaching as his major theological contribution. St. Thomas emphasized boldness, sincerity, and purity in preaching, calling for holiness and doctrinal authenticity: “The preacher must possess holiness of life and authenticity of doctrine” (Conción 138, III, 571). He demanded study, prayer, fasting, chastity, humility, and

temperance—true doctrine and holy life are inseparable.

He was a master of faith through preaching, devoted to teaching the people the Word of God. He likely learned the use of Sacred Scripture in the classrooms of Alcalá, which became deeply assimilated into his thought and was brought into his preaching, where he quoted it profusely.

His sermons are filled with biblical references, through which he affirmed the truths he preached. Yet in his preaching, he remained faithful to the tradition of the Church and the Holy Fathers, as he sought to offer sound nourishment to his listeners.

He preached with pastoral zeal and from a deep experience of God, cultivated in prayer. He addressed many theological topics because he explained the faith. His doctrine is profound and rich in content. Moreover, he offered a theory of preaching: how it should be done and how the preacher should prepare for this ministry. He practiced what he preached.

He trusted in truth when explaining the faith because

he was convinced of the rationality of the revealed mystery. The truths of faith, though beyond human understanding, are not contrary to reason but above it. There is an internal coherence between divine revelation and human reason. St. Thomas said: “I am overwhelmed with joy whenever I see such perfect harmony between the sacred texts and

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reason” (Sermon 232, VI, 109). Thomas strove to show the internal logic of the mystery believed.

His sermons and writings are full of theological depth and mystical anointing, penetrating and explaining the mysteries of Christ and the Virgin Mary. His words served the Gospel, grounded in Sacred Scripture and the Holy Fathers. His intellectual preparation is evident, revealing him in his sermons as one of the great masters of spirituality and theology. His erudition was the fruit of his university education in Alcalá and his dedication to study, which he always considered fundamental to the ministry of preaching.

In the theological context of his time, Thomas of Villanova preached the Catholic faith, while Luther, with his rebellion and heretical doctrines, caused a deep division in the Church that endures to this day. In 1517, the same year Luther posted his 95 theses, St. Thomas professed in the Order of St. Augustine. And in 1521, when Luther broke with the Church, Thomas, as prior of the Salamanca convent, preached a series of sermons in the cathedral on Psalm 113 (“In exitu Israel de Aegypto”), which had great impact in the city and inspired many religious vocations.

St. Thomas distanced himself from Luther and Protestantism on fundamental theological points, such as the understanding of justification and the promotion and defense of religious life, rooting it in Mary and John the Baptist. He argued against Luther’s harsh attacks on religious vows, which were discredited and violently criticized in his treatise *De votis monasticis*.

Doctrinally, his preaching can be compared to the Council of Trent’s teaching on justification. Disciplinarily, he anticipated the Council by founding in 1550 the Colegio Mayor de la Presentación, a seminary for priestly vocations. Concerned with priestly formation, he desired a devout, educated, and holy clergy in his diocese, formed in prayer and study. He defended clerical holiness against absenteeism and concubinage.

St. Thomas was a spiritual master, rooted in St. Augustine, who pointed out paths of perfection from prayer to contemplation. A path suitable for both laypeople and consecrated persons, offering effective itineraries for Christian life toward contemplation.



He preached with filial devotion to the Virgin, defending truths later defined as dogmas in the 19th and 20th centuries by Pius IX and Pius XII: the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary. This is a notable aspect of his preaching. Not only did he dedicate specific sermons to Marian devotion, but his entire preaching is filled with references to the Virgin, which gain doctrinal weight in the historical moment in which he preached. For St. Thomas, Mary is the forerunner of consecrated life.

His theological reflection was not limited to the intellectual realm but became an extraordinary service of charity. In his preaching, almsgiving and mercy took on theological and pastoral significance, grounded in Scripture and the Fathers. Like Vatican II would later do, St. Thomas looked back reflectively to root life and thought in Scripture and tradition. He deepened the Word of God in the light of the Fathers' interpretation.

For Jaime García, mercy is the center and foundation of his life and theological, exegetical, and socio-political thought. He based his life, thought, and pastoral work on God's love, mercy, and hope. Mercy is made visible in the mystery of the Incarnation. With St. Thomas begins the modern "theology of the heart." His organization to help the poor was inspired by principles still valid today. He created a kind of social security system with doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. He founded a hospital, organized clothing banks for the poor, and established homes for abandoned children. Charity toward the poor was for him an aspect of justice. He appears as a forerunner of Catholic social teaching. He helped the poor not only with alms but by promoting their human and Christian development. His teaching here is both clear and demanding.

HE PREACHED WITH PASTORAL ZEAL AND FROM A PROFOUND EXPERIENCE OF GOD, CULTIVATED IN PRAYER. HE ADDRESSES MANY THEOLOGICAL THEMES BECAUSE HE EXPLAINS THE FAITH. HIS DOCTRINE IS DEEP AND RICH IN CONTENT. HE ALSO OFFERS TEACHING ON PREACHING ITSELF: HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE AND HOW THE PREACHER MUST PREPARE FOR THE EXERCISE OF THIS MINISTRY. HE PRACTICES WHAT HE ASKS OF THE PREACHER





His concept of poverty was not limited to material deprivation. In one sermon he said: “Do not think, brothers, that only those without food or clothing are poor. Is not one who lacks faith, knowledge, discernment, light, reason, or senses even poorer? Bodily misfortune is less than that of the heart, for the soul is more important than the body” (Sermon 199, 89, Complete Works, Vol. V, 150).

St. Thomas could not attend the Council of Trent due to health issues and the need to remain in a diocese abandoned by its pastors for over a century. Anticipating Trent’s decisions, he strongly defended the obligation of bishops to reside in their sees. He clearly understood this duty for the good of the faithful, justifying his request for dispensation from attending the Council. His reflection extended to episcopal duties, developing doctrine on the theology of episcopal ministry.

Petitions for the Doctorate of St. Thomas of Villanova Since the Late 19th Century

At various historical moments, the cause for the Doctorate of St. Thomas of Villanova has been promoted by the Archdiocese of Valencia, the Orders of St. Augustine, the Augustinian Recollects, and the Discalced Augustinians, several female congregations linked to these orders, as well as a significant number of bishops and educational or charitable institutions.

The first attempts to promote the doctorate took place in the 1870s, with postulatory letters sent to the then Congregation of Rites. Cardinal Antolín Monescillo, Archbishop of Valencia, addressed a petition to the Holy Father on October 8, 1890, requesting the granting of the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Thomas of Villanova. The Augustinian Father Manuel Díez

CHARITY TOWARD THE POOR WAS FOR HIM AN ASPECT OF JUSTICE. HE APPEARS AS A FORERUNNER OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE. SAINT THOMAS CARED FOR THE POOR NOT ONLY WITH ALMS, BUT BY EFFECTIVELY PROMOTING THEIR HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT. HIS TEACHING ON THIS POINT IS AS CLEAR AS IT IS DEMANDING

González, then Apostolic Commissioner of the Province in Spain, also submitted a petition. Later, Cardinal Monescillo reiterated the request, joined by the Augustinian Bishop of Salamanca, Tomás Cámara y Castro, as well as the Rector and doctors of the University of Salamanca.

A synod held in Valencia in 1951 under the presidency of Bishop Marcelino Olaechea reiterated the petition. Within the Order of St. Augustine, as previously mentioned, the General Chapter of 1953 declared St. Thomas the patron of studies in recognition of his magisterium.

Approaching the fifth centenary of the saint's birth, the then Archbishop of Valencia, Miguel Roca Cabanellas, and the Prior General of the Order of St. Augustine, Theodore Tack, submitted a new petition in Rome. This time, the request was accompanied by a large number of postulatory letters from bishops, universities, faculties, theological institutes, religious institutes, and seminaries. Documentation was also gathered in preparation for the future *Positio*, which would demonstrate the saint's eminent doctrine. All of this was compiled into a voluminous 800-page dossier, presented to the Spanish Augustinian Federation (FAE) in March 1983 and sent to Rome. The General Postulation in Rome responded to the FAE on June 21, 1983, stating that a critical edition of the saint's works was necessary to advance the cause for the Doctorate.

The cause of St. Thomas's doctorate has always been well received by Spanish bishops and bishops from other nations, with strong support from academic and ecclesial institutions. However, the lack of a recent, accessible edition of his works at that time appears to have been the main obstacle to progress.

Recent Efforts Following the Publication of His Complete Works

Faced with the impasse caused by the lack of a recent, publicly accessible edition of St. Thomas's works, Augustinian Father Laureano Manrique took the initiative to prepare a bilingual edition of the saint's complete works to make them easily accessible. He undertook the transcription of the texts, comparing various editions and producing a critical edition. For the Latin translation, he collaborated with Father Isidro Alvarez, who produced an excellent translation into high-quality Spanish. Both religious were members of the Augustinian community in Málaga and had retired from educational ministry years earlier, having long surpassed retirement age—one was around eighty, the other older. Both had been language

and literature teachers in various schools. To complete the team, the Provincial requested Father José Manuel Guirau, also retired, to take charge of the critical apparatus. The work they accomplished deserves the Order's gratitude. All three religious have passed away in recent years.

The FAE negotiated the publication of the *Complete Works* in the *Mayor* format of the BAC (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos), agreeing to finance the edition. Between 2010 and 2015, the ten volumes (eleven tomes) of this important publication were released. As a result, it became possible to resume the petition for the doctorate of St. Thomas of Villanova. The matter was presented to the Archbishop of Valencia, Cardinal Antonio Cañizares, who suggested organizing a congress. This was held in 2018 under the title "*From Justification to Charity in St. Thomas of Villanova.*" The congress was the result of collaboration between the FAE, the postulators of the Augustinian orders, the Archdiocese of Valencia, the Colegio de la Presentación (founded by St. Thomas), and the Catholic University of Valencia.



Already in 2016, the Spanish Episcopal Conference, at the request of the Orders of St. Augustine, the Augustinian Recollects, and the Discalced Augustinians, along with female congregations within the FAE (Contemplative Augustinians, Missionary Augustinians, Augustinians of Amparo, and Augustinian Recollect Missionaries), submitted a petition to the Pope for St. Thomas of Villanova to be proclaimed Doctor of the Church.

As president of the FAE, I have had the opportunity to invite several episcopal conferences, parishes, and ecclesiastical and civil institutions to also submit this petition to the Pope. Likewise, efforts have been made through the General Postulations of the three Augustinian orders.

The response from the bishops has been very positive, with a significant number of episcopal conferences joining the petition and sending it to the Pope—either directly, through the Congregation (now Dicastery) for the Causes of Saints, or through the General Postulation of the Order of St. Augustine.

The following episcopal conferences have petitioned the Pope for the doctorate of St. Thomas of Villanova (barring any omissions): Spain, Panama, Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, the Philippines, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Venezuela, and the Czech Republic. The Executive Board of CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Council) has also done so.

WE DO NOT GIVE UP ON THE EFFORT
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The large number of bishops represented in these episcopal conferences suggests that their voice will be heard.

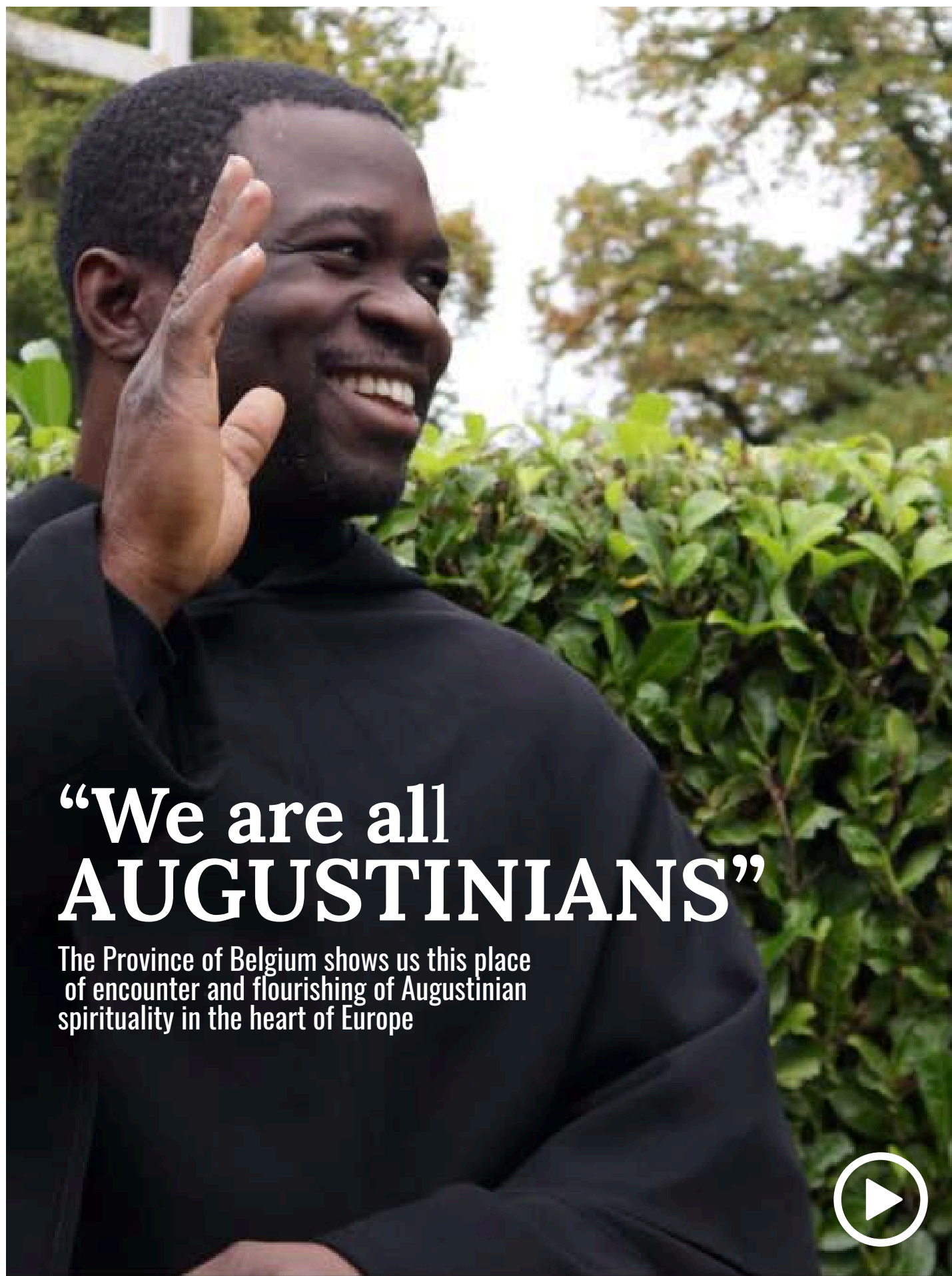
According to information from the General Postulation, the steps the dossier must follow in Rome are as follows:

The saint's writings are examined by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, reviewed by three theologians. This step has already been completed and, apparently, resolved positively with a favorable opinion from the theologians in the case of St. Thomas of Villanova. The plenary session of the Dicastery will examine the theologians' reports and the petitions received. If the plenary's opinion is positive, the next step will be to transfer the cause to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. There, the works must be re-examined by a group of theologians to assess the orthodoxy of his teachings and the eminence of his doctrine.

If this Dicastery's judgment is also positive, as we hope, the Positio must be drafted, giving legal form to the process, describing the history of the cause and the reasons supporting the declaration of St. Thomas of Villanova as a Doctor of the Church.

The path is long and arduous. The journey we have taken with St. Thomas has a very long history, dating back to the late 19th century. But we do not give up on the effort to obtain this declaration, knowing the good the Church can receive from proclaiming St. Thomas as a master of preaching, and from the doctrinal and spiritual richness his sermons offer to the entire Christian people—today and always.





“We are all AUGUSTINIANS”

The Province of Belgium shows us this place
of encounter and flourishing of Augustinian
spirituality in the heart of Europe





The rich and profound history of the Province of Belgium: 700 Years of Augustinian presence

The Prior General Emeritus of the Order of Saint Augustine, Father Miguel Ángel Orcasitas, wrote the following lines in 1996 in a special edition published in Belgium while he was serving as head of the Order. The subject concerns what was then—more than 700 years ago—the northernmost Augustinian enclave of the Order in the territory we now know as Europe. We delve into the historical and religious imprint that the Augustinians have left throughout their journey.

BY MIGUEL ÁNGEL ORCASITAS



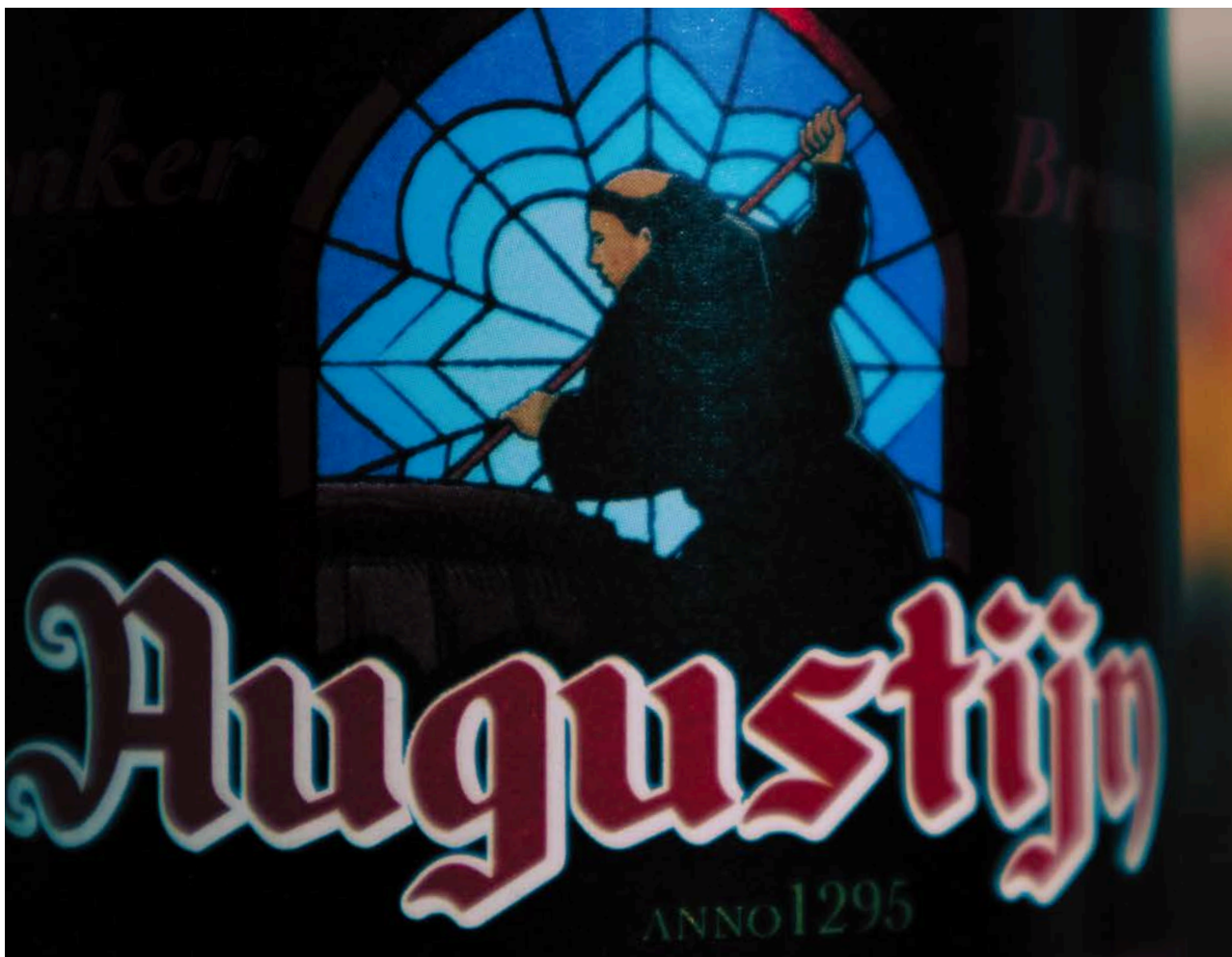
The history of the Convent of Saint Stephen in Ghent is a faithful reflection of the vicissitudes experienced by the history of Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as by the Church and the Order to which this convent belongs.

In 13th-century Europe, the Church witnessed the rise of the so-called ‘mendicant orders’: religious institutes that sought to live according to the evangelical commitment, but no longer in large rural abbeys—as was the case with the Benedictine tradition of the High Middle Ages—but rather in the heart of the cities, in the new ‘boroughs’ that had emerged as a social phenomenon. There, among the people, these new religious—friars—dedicated themselves to apostolic ministry, taught in the new universities that were springing up everywhere, and attended to the needs of the most vulnerable through works of charity.

The convent of Ghent is the most representative Augustinian house in Belgium and, in many ways, its central nucleus throughout history. It was founded in 1296, barely half a century after the foundation of the Order.

Among its treasures is a copy of the Order's Constitutions drafted at the General Chapter of Regensburg in 1290.

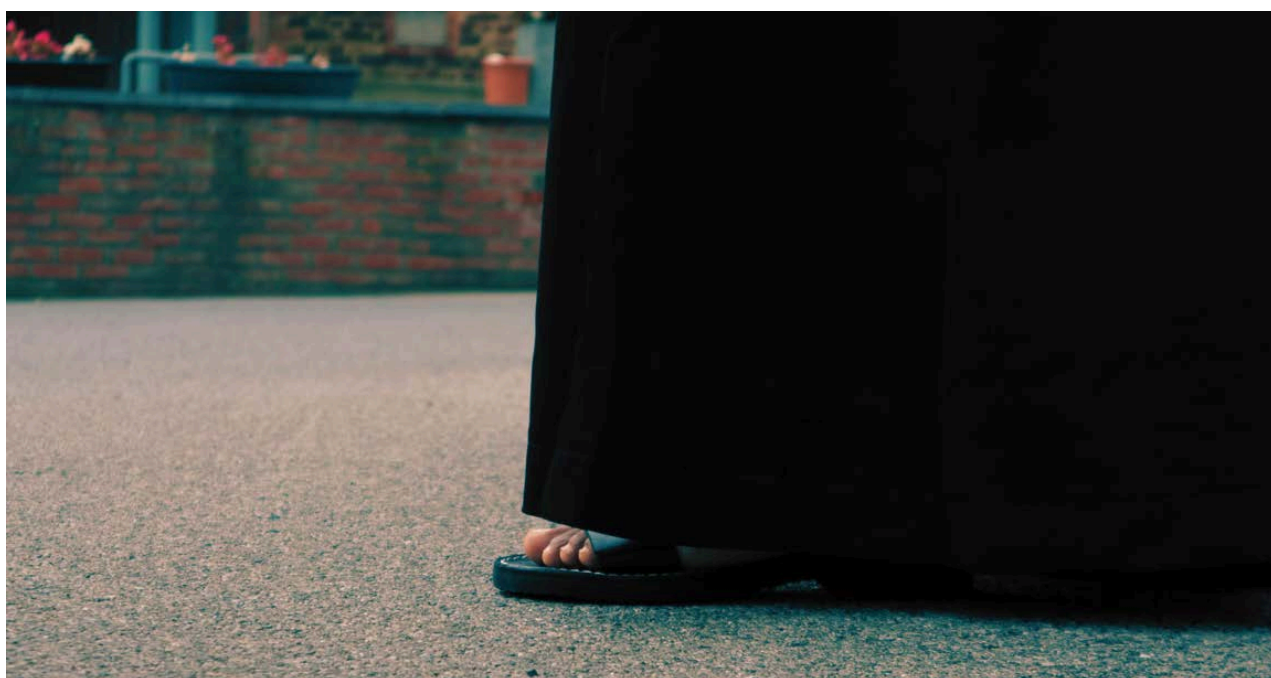
Saint Stephen's experienced its beginnings and great expansion during the Middle Ages, endured the upheavals of the 16th-century Reformation—during which it was set on fire and some of its friars were killed—and was later rebuilt with the help of the Borluut family. It then entered a golden age during the 17th and 18th centuries, distinguishing itself as a center for the education of youth.



The events linked to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars nearly brought about the disappearance of religious life throughout Europe. In Belgium, all Augustinian convents ceased to exist—except this one. Thanks to the bold decision of seven surviving friars, Augustinian life was rebuilt in Belgium and the Netherlands, fully re-establishing itself by the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The convent of Ghent once again became the cradle of the Augustinians in these nations, just as it had been in the 13th century. We must not forget that it is the only convent that has remained in the same location within the city for seven centuries.

The religious, cultural, social, and historical significance of this Augustinian presence shows how the process of evangelization engages every human and social dimension. The path of the Gospel is the path of humanity—a story of light and shadow, yet always guided by the proclamation of hope and by the call to life that the Church continues to make in the name of Jesus. Seven centuries of history stand as a perfect testimony to this.





Our novices speak: “The faithful help us live our religious life better”

Many young people around the world feel God’s call through the Order of Saint Augustine. Community life, integral formation, the desire to become better Christians... All of this converges in the personal and spiritual growth of those who seek to say “yes” to Christ.

BY RICARDO MORALES

This is the case of brothers Glidoh Jean, Jacques, and Jean Agbessenou, three young men from Togo who are currently doing their novitiate at the Shrine of Saint Rita in Bouge, Belgium, thanks to the effort and good work of the International Formation Center in fostering new vocations in Africa and Asia.





After a couple of years in the candidacy program, I contacted some brothers who had already joined the Order in my country in 2021. I was able to have a rich community experience with the brothers augustinians, see how they worked, and learn from them. During this time, I have been able to experience and deepen my religious life. I am getting to know what the Order is and has been, so that I may be better prepared for the Lord's call, whom we all desire to serve.

BR. JACQUES AMEVOR



In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verse 42, the Bible says the next sentence:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

This is what I found here. The desire to live what Saint Augustine asks of us: to be of one heart and one soul on the way to God. This community spirit, this search for God, shapes us as a community to seek His face. We do everything in community: we eat together, we share everything, and we try to live and follow the Rule of Saint Augustine. This is what attracts me to the Order.

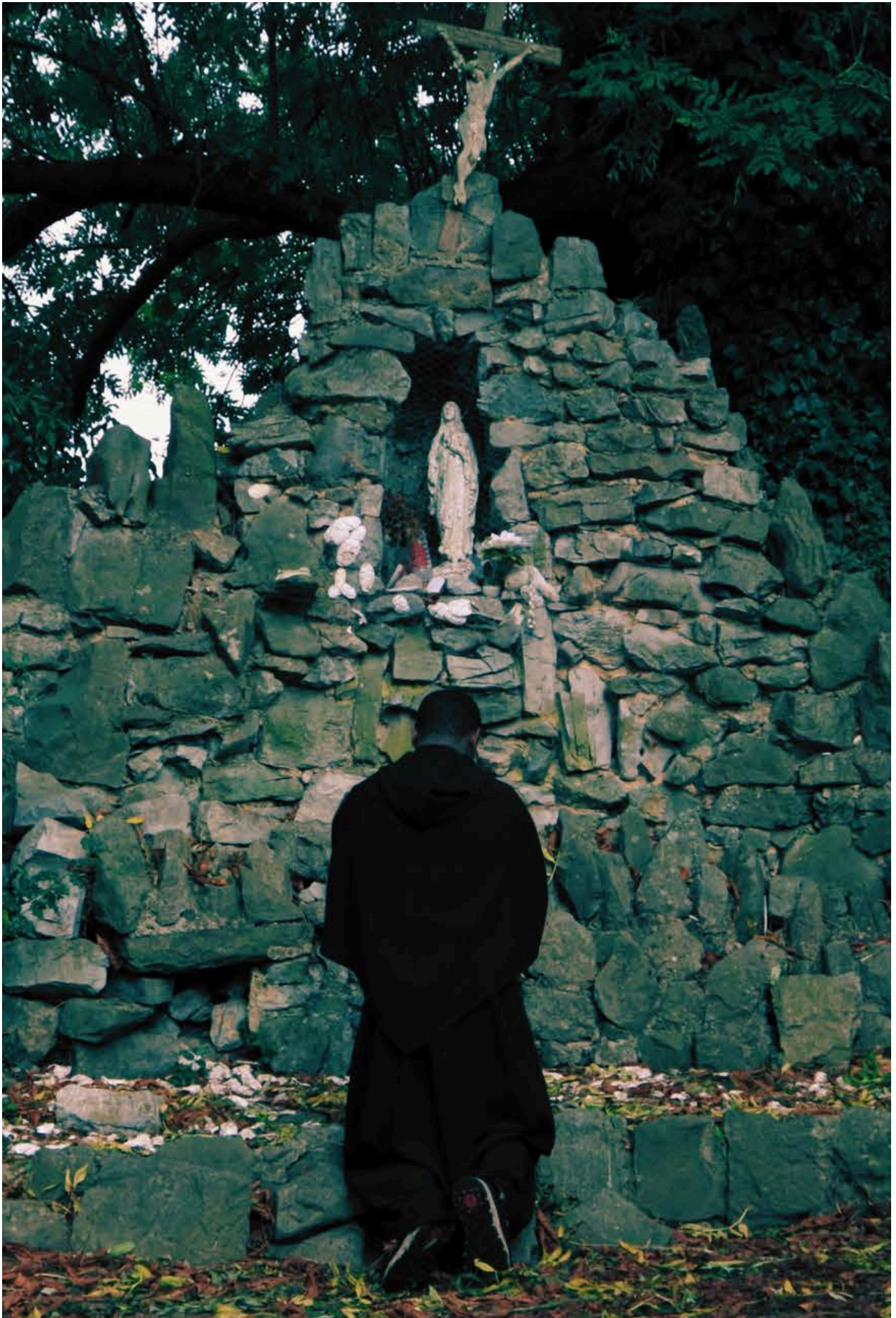


Saint Monica, Augustine’s mother, prayed much for her son’s conversion. Here, in Bouge, many faithful come to pray.

Their faith strengthens the community; it helps us learn from the people how to live our religious life better.

We want to be with the faithful, to form community with them, and we know that in this mission Saint Augustine always intercedes for us.

”





I I decided to come with the Augustinian brothers because at a certain moment in my life I felt I needed to be closer to the Lord.

So I applied to the brothers in Lomé, they accepted me into the Order, and later I asked to continue my formation as a novice. I chose the Augustinians because it corresponded to what I felt God was asking of me at that moment.

The pillars of this spirituality are embodied in the search for God together with the brothers and always in service to the Church. This corresponds to my aspirations. That is why I decided to be with them.

BR. JEAN AGBESSENOU



The community of Bouge offers me an essential environment to pray with the brothers in the search for God.

Our formators help us with their accompaniment, closeness, and experience, giving us the tools and formation programs necessary for this search. In the end, Augustinian life is full of challenges, and the Order helps us grow and fulfill ourselves as Christians. The integral formation they give us allows us to find that spiritual and human balance... It is a beautiful experience.

”



I saw the way the Augustinians lived in Togo, their spirituality, and that captivated me.

The way they relate to one another, how they care for each other... They make Christ present through their devotion.

I was first in France, and I asked to come to the community in Belgium because of the evangelization needs here. Today Europe is mission territory. My dream has always been to be a brother of the Order, a priest of Christ, to serve in His churches and support the entire community of the faithful.

BR. GLIDOH JEAN BOSCO

Here in the Order, young people will find a beautiful community centered on God:

Peace, love, attentive listening, a safe place to share what is in their hearts, and great formators to understand more deeply what they want to be: children of God.





Thus was the historic ordination of Msgr. Vidal, the first Augustinian bishop born in Brazil:

“For you I shall be a bishop; with you I shall be a Christian”

BY CURIA GENERAL, OALA AND PROVINCIA NUESTRA SEÑORA DE CONSOLACIÓN

This past Saturday, January 24, 2026, will forever remain a very special day on the calendar for the Catholic Church in Brazil and for the entire Augustinian family.

In the city of Bragança Paulista, in the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Fray Márcio Antonio Vidal de Negreiros was ordained auxiliary bishop of this see. Until now, he had been serving as Secretary General of the Organization of Augustinians of Latin America and the Caribbean (OALA), in addition to exercising his priestly ministry as parochial vicar at Nossa Senhora Aparecida, where—as stated in the communiqué of the Province of Our Lady of Consolation—“he served with pastoral dedication, closeness to the people, and evangelizing zeal.”

Now, Pope Leo XIV has entrusted Fray Márcio with a broader mission within the episcopal region of Sant’Ana, one of the six that make up the Archdiocese of São Paulo, which today includes 60 parishes in a geographical area of approximately 1.5 million inhabitants.

The episcopal celebration was marked by a deep spirituality, communion, and joy among the 20 concelebrating bishops and more than 150 religious men and women, family members, and faithful from various dioceses and regions of the country who filled the venue. In total, 2,500 faithful took part in the liturgical events presided over by Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, Archbishop of São Paulo. Also present were the Assistant General for Latin America, Father Benjamín García Franco, OSA, and the former Prior General of the Order, Father Alejandro Moral Antón, OSA.

Almost the entire OALA Board was also in attendance, as well as a delegation from the Augustinian Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus of Mexico, headed by its Prior Provincial, Father Usáí Heleodoro Romero Martínez, OSA, together with the Provincial Secretary and the Provincial Treasurer. The Major Superior of the Province of Our Lady of Grace of Colombia, Father Mauricio Saavedra Monroy, OSA, also concelebrated.



A profound “inner reorganization”

During his address, Bishop Fray Márcio noted that the past months, since his episcopal appointment, had been marked by a profound inner reorganization “in his feelings, in his thinking, and in the way of looking at his own vocational, religious, and priestly history.” Looking toward the future, he affirmed that he embraces the new mission entrusted to him by the Church in the Archdiocese of São Paulo “with faith, openness of heart, and full trust in the loving action of God.”



Renewed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Fray Márcio emphasized that “in the exercise of the episcopal ministry, the center of all apostolate must be the person of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel, with special attention to the poor, the humble, and the needy.” He recalled that the episcopate is “a path of self-giving, sacrifice, and offering of one’s own life, following Jesus, the Good Shepherd, whom the bishop is called to proclaim with courage, being a father and shepherd, a defender of human dignity and of the hope of the Kingdom.”

Inspired by the Letter to the Colossians, he assumed his ministry “clothed in mercy, kindness, and humility” (Col 3:12). Addressing the clergy, the religious men and women, the faithful of the ecclesial communities, the movements, educators, and pastoral ministers of the episcopal region of Sant’Ana, he recalled the words of Saint Augustine: “For you I am a bishop; with you I am a Christian,” expressing his desire to learn to be a bishop by walking with the People of God in communion with the other auxiliary bishops and with the Metropolitan Archbishop.

During the homily, Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer highlighted the theological depth of the rite of episcopal ordination, affirming that this is the moment in which “the Church is reborn and reshaped,” ensuring the continuity of apostolic succession—not as an honorary title for the person, but as “a service of friendship with Christ lived in generous self-giving.”

Addressing the new bishop, Cardinal Scherer exhorted him to be “a shepherd attentive to all the sheep, especially priests and deacons, the poor and the sick, pilgrims and migrants. The one who presides must always be like the one who serves.”

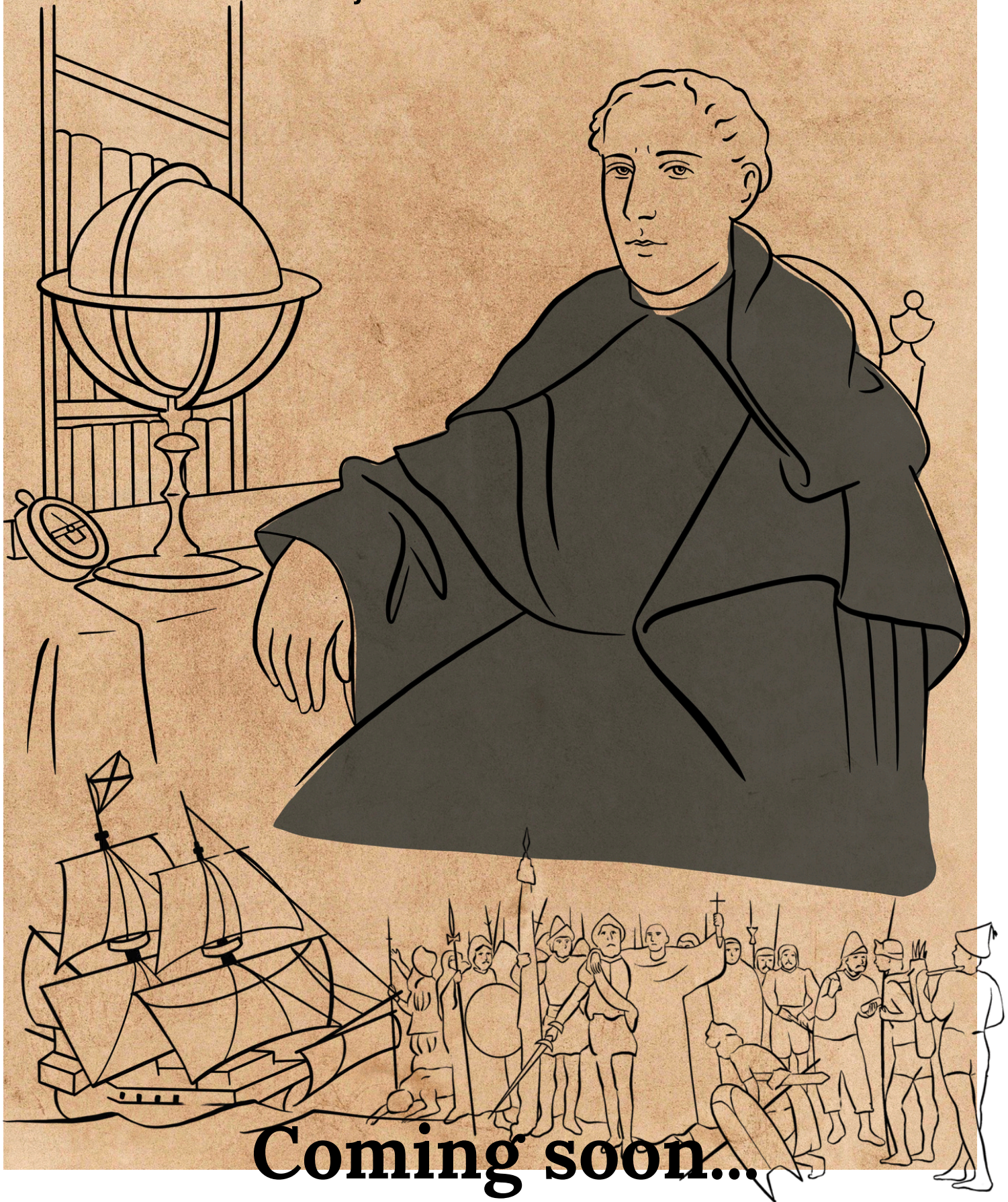
At the end, the new bishop entrusted his ministry to the intercession of Saint Anne, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Augustine, asking for prayers and assuring his own prayer for all those whom he will serve.

IN THE EXERCISE OF THE EPISCOPAL MINISTRY, THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF EVERY APOSTOLATE MUST BE THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE POOR, THE HUMBLE, AND THOSE IN NEED



URDANETA

The Augustinian who studied the southern winds and connected Asia with America: from the tornaviaje to the Manila Galleon





Br. Eduardo Ramírez, a professed student in Valladolid: **“Today I am certain that God wants me to serve His Church in the manner of Saint Augustine”**

BY RICARDO MORALES

Brother Eduardo Ramírez Olid, born in Olvera, Cádiz (Spain), tells us from Valladolid about his formation process, the lights and shadows, the daily life in the professed house, and his vocational journey within the Order of Saint Augustine.

At what moment did you experience that God was calling you to be an Augustinian?

In my case, my vocational path began in the diocesan seminary, and it had never crossed my mind to become a religious, much less an Augustinian (since there are no Augustinians in my area, I didn't even know they existed). It was during COVID, sharing that time of "confinement" with the other seminarians, living a more intense community life, that a desire to live in community awakened in me. And the Lord placed in my path a friar who showed me who the Augustinians were, what their charism was, and invited me to have an experience with them. From that moment, the desire to become an Augustinian arose in me as a response to the personal call God was making to me: to walk with brothers in search of God, deepening interiorly what He was asking of me.

That initial desire has been gradually shaped, day by day, as a daily response that molds one's life. And that initial spiritual restlessness has also been confirmed by the Order through admission to the novitiate, to first profession, and, when the time comes, to solemn profession. Today I have the certainty that God wants me to serve His Church through this particular vocation, following the way of Saint Augustine.

What is daily life like in the professed house?

Our daily life follows the rhythm of the community. We begin the morning with Lauds and Mass, followed by breakfast. On some days, Mass is in the afternoon, so we usually have a time of meditation/prayer together with Lauds.

Throughout the morning, each of us organizes a schedule to make good use of time for personal study, and we meet again at midday to pray the midday hour and go to lunch.

After lunch, we have a time we call community recreation or coffee break, where we can share with the brothers about our studies, daily life, etc. At four in the afternoon, classes begin at the Theological Institute and end at eight.

There we go deeper into the different areas of theology: from the first years with philosophical content, the intermediate year with introductions to the various theological disciplines, and what we call the cycle, where we study in depth areas such as Sacred Scripture, Moral Theology, Theological Anthropology, Canon Law, etc. Once classes are over, we pray Vespers, followed by a time of prayer/meditation, dinner, and recreation, where we sometimes play cards, checkers, chess, dominoes... After recreation, each brother goes to his room to continue personal study until bedtime—although this depends on each person—around eleven thirty.

**TODAY I AM CERTAIN THAT GOD
WANTS ME TO SERVE HIS
CHURCH IN THE MANNER OF
SAINT AUGUSTINE**



¿What stage of your path toward the priesthood are you in?

I am in the final years of what we call simple vows. These are the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, which are renewed each year. This stage, we could say, ends with solemn profession and diaconal ordination. After the diaconate, and after some time exercising that ministry, comes priestly ordination. It is a time to continue deepening in the Augustinian charism in view of embracing the vows definitively, for life, responding to God's call with joy and freedom.

What captivates you most about your vocation?

There are many aspects that captivate me about my vocation, but if I had to highlight one, it would be, on the one hand, the personal dimension of being able to deepen and communicate what one has received, of bringing Jesus to others, and doing so in a very special way: through the sacraments, acting as a priest "in the name of Christ." And on the other hand, that this mission is not carried out in isolation, but that we walk with the brothers, sharing our search for God in order to more effectively communicate to others our relationship with Him, with one heart and one soul. That gives everything a very profound meaning. It is a beautiful vocation, which involves going out to meet the other, the one who lives in community, being attentive to his needs, sharing his joys, and helping him carry his difficulties.



What do you find most difficult?

Without a doubt, learning to step outside of yourself each day: letting go of securities, accepting one's own limits, and growing in patience, especially in daily community life. As the vocation takes shape, difficulties arise, but part of the process is facing them and learning to be patient with oneself.

Why would you encourage other young men of your generation to follow this path?

Because it is an adventure worth living. We find ourselves in a world full of haste and noise, where relationships become superficial and everyone must

paddle their own canoe. The Augustinian vocation offers a different vision, one that fills life with depth, meaning, true joy, and a love that is shared. If a young man tells me he feels this restlessness, I would invite him to come and see how we live. Because perhaps that initial restlessness is the way God is inviting him to live his particular vocation. And only by responding to that divine call will he be fully happy. God asks us to give everything, but He gives much more than we can imagine.



VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI

ordenaciones/profesiones/decesos

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Sr. Clara María Snchez-Runde Regnard (08-11-2025) M.SOT
Sr. Carmen Corral Rivas (10-01-2026) M.SOT

Ordenaciones sacerdotales

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P. Juan Diego Aguilar Cazares (13-11-2025) Prov. MEC
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P. Joel Kaisama Dombodo (23-11-2025) Prov. CON
P. Maximilien Ligbita Nembayo (23-11-2025) Prov. CON
P. Juan Sebastian Bernal Bello (08-12-2025) Prov. COL
P. Miguel Angel Garcia Garcia (08-12-2025) Prov. COL
P. Martin Joseph Puthuveettil (29-12-2025) Prov. IND
P. Albert Justin Karakattu (06-01-2026) Prov. IND



Ordenaciones episcopales

P. Marcio Antonio Vidal de Negreiros (24-01-2026) BRN



Hermanos y hermanas fallecidos (Requiescant in pace)

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