

Trinity 13 – 6th September 2020

6 th September Trinity 13	9.30 Family Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985	SoF 192 Our God Reigns 22 A New Commandment Psalm 119 vv 33-40 329 Let There be Love Creed p 146 (Blaenwern) 50 Break Thou the Bread 10 All Heaven Declares
6 th September Trinity 13	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985	A&MR 171 For the Beauty 169 My God How Wonderful Psalm 119 vv 33-40 174 (tune 279) Lord of 185 Praise to the Holiest 186 Firmly I Believe &

ALMIGHTY and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Saturday 28th August was S Augustine’s Day and I’m slightly ashamed to admit that I had to look up which Augustine – Augustine of Canterbury who brought the Gospel to Kent in 597 or Augustine of Hippo, the famous North African theologian who lived more than a century earlier. We celebrate Augustine of Canterbury because he led the Christian mission to this part of the world and celebrating him inspires us to be missionaries too and to pray for mission at home and abroad. Pray that God will raise up many to serve Him in this way and help to bring many to faith and to the knowledge of God. We celebrate him on 26th May, which is the probable anniversary of his death.

The Augustine we commemorate on 28th August is the much more famous Augustine of Hippo (354-430). He was brought up in a fairly well to do Roman household in what we now call Algeria. Apparently, he was a Berber and quite proud of both his African and Roman heritage. His mother, Monica, was a devout Christian and prayed earnestly for her son’s conversion. As a young man, however, Augustine lived the not atypical life of a student of those days - very bright, but promiscuous and wont to boast about his conquests. He became an adherent of a non-Christian religion (Manichaeism). As he wrestled with God and with his conscience, Augustine famously prayed, *Give me chastity and continency, but not yet!*

His travels, however, took him to Milan to study, where he grew very close to the saintly Bishop of Milan, S Ambrose. Ambrose became the student’s confidante and mentor and played a big part in Augustine’s eventually coming to know Jesus. His mother’s prayers and his friend’s faithfulness worked together to bring the young Augustine to faith.

Augustine struggled to make sense of life, to find fulfilment. He had tried dissipation and excess. He explored different philosophies and religions. Sitting in a garden one day, he cried out, *How long, O Lord, how long?* Just then, he heard a child’s voice say, *Take up and read.* Augustine picked up a bible and read vv 13 & 14 of today’s epistle: *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness,*

not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. And that is just what Augustine did. He gave his life to Jesus. Everything changed. He was at peace with God. He no longer vainly sought fulfilment in sin. Although, like every one of us Christians, Augustine remained far from perfect and there is much to find fault with in his later life, Augustine became a great servant of God and his influence and insights not only blessed the Church in his own lifetime, but also enlightened Martin Luther's thought at the time of the Reformation, a thousand years later, and they continue to inform the Church's teaching in the present day – Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant.

Later Augustine would write: *In contrast to God, he muses, what is man? Yet there is a connection between the two. Humans, such a small part of creation and short-lived as they are, still find a need to praise God. In spite of sin, each feels the longing to reach out to his Creator. Why is this? He realizes it is the doing of God. "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you."*

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That's the truth. That's the truth we live by and the truth we have to share with the world. *"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you."* It's the fundamental fact of life that we cannot live, we cannot truly live, without the love of God.

And what does this mean for the way we live our lives? One more quotation from Augustine. *Love and do what you will.* That's very close to what S Paul had written earlier in our epistle. *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* If you truly love, what you will is to do good. If you truly love, what you will is to be good. If you love, you will keep God's commandments. There is no other way. *"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you."*