

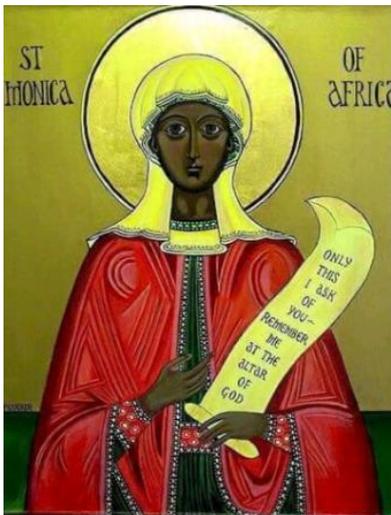
28th August 2021

Dear all,

Today is the feast day of St Augustine of Hippo. This is not the same Augustine who brought the Roman tradition of Christianity to this country, but rather a North African theologian – one of the most significant theologians in the early church. By all accounts, he was a ‘bit of a lad’, having a string of mistresses and concubines, and at least one child ‘out of wedlock’. He was converted when a mysterious voice came over the garden wall commanding him to “tolle, lege” (take, read) the closed Bible on his patio table, and the teachings of St Ambrose of Milan (the first person in recorded history to read without speaking the words out loud). As a result, he abandoned his ladies and child (quite literally – perhaps not the best of witnesses!), and developed a rather strict and austere theology of life. He is perhaps best (most infamously!) known for the development of the doctrine of original sin, whereby the sin of Adam is inherited from birth by all human beings. Sex got involved too, and became a bad thing – being ruled by the appetites – unless it was redeemed by God, principally through marriage. On the plus side, he was a strong advocate of the doctrine of Free Will, and tolerant of Jews at a time when many were anti-Semitic. And he loved a good wing-ding with heretics!

Augustine is often quoted as having said “he who sings, prays twice”. Sadly, true though the sentiment may be, there is no evidence that Augustine ever said it. However, he did write, “It was not long before this that the Church at Milan had begun to seek comfort and spiritual strength in the practice of singing hymns, in which the faithful fervently united with heart and voice... We sing God’s praise with living psalter, for more pleasant to God than any instrument is the harmony of the whole Christian people.”

(St. Augustine, Confessions Book 7.15).



What must be unique about the feast of St Augustine, is that it is preceded on the previous day by the feast day dedicated to his Mum, St Monica! St Monica had a bit of a hard time in her married life (thanks mainly to a nagging mother-in-law), but is famous for her commitment to prayer for her family. After 20 years or so of marriage, her husband became a believer. In desperation over the lifestyle of her son, Augustine, she initially threw him out of the house, but later followed him to Milan, where they shared a house. It was, so the account goes, through the faithfulness of her prayers that Augustine became converted. Monica became the patron saint of wives and mothers.

St Monica has become a figure of hope to many parents, especially mothers, who are worried about the dubious lifestyles and/or lack of faith of their children or partners. And perhaps too a reminder that we should never stop praying for them. My own mother, right until the end, would always ask me to phone her when I got back home after visiting her – so that she would know I arrived back safely. “I never stop being your mother” she would say!

Sunday is the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity (Proper 17). The hymns will be ‘Longing for Light (Christ be our light)’ [Christ Be Our Light - YouTube](#), and ‘O Jesus I have promised’ [O Jesus I have promised - YouTube](#). For those who don’t think it sacrilegious, here is a version to the Muppet Tune! [O Jesus i have promised to the tune of the Muppets Theme - YouTube](#)

The readings for the service are Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; James 1:17-27 & Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23. The Psalm is Psalm 45: 1-2, 6-9.

Anglican chant: [Psalm 45 "My Heart Is Inditing of a Good Matter" - YouTube](#)

And a modern version: [Psalm 45 - Fairest of All - by Shane & Shane \(Lyric Video\) | Christian Worship Music - YouTube](#)

Anthems suggested for this Sunday include:

[Blessed are the pure in heart \(Walford Davies\): Temple Church 1961 \(Thalben-Ball\) - YouTube](#) (recorded before I was born – performance style has changed a bit since then!).

[Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake - YouTube](#) by Farrant... or is it Hilton?

[Teach me, O Lord \(Thomas Attwood\) - Guildford Cathedral Choir \(Barry Rose\) - YouTube](#)

[Teach me, O Lord: Teach me, O Lord - YouTube](#) (William Byrd version).

[Os justi - Bruckner - Tenebrae conducted by Nigel Short - YouTube](#)

IMPORTANT NOTE!

For some reason, live streaming the service has all sorts of problems. It usually takes a while to log in to Facebook live. Sometimes it fails to happen. Two Sundays ago, it cut out halfway through. Last Sunday, it refused to accept that there was an image, despite there very obviously being one! In order to ensure the prompt start of the service, as well as to avoid lots of stress (and to allow me to actually meet people!), I have decided to record the service, and upload it later. As well as avoiding any of the issues we have faced recently, it also means it can be accessed by those who don't use Facebook as well. It usually takes 2-3 hours to upload, so should be available by mid-afternoon.

A very big thanks to all who have returned their MAP surveys. Some very interesting and challenging comments. More can still be added. We have set aside Saturday 11th September to discuss them, and I would encourage all who can to come along and share in our deliberations. This whole process, and the future of the church, can only be successful if all contribute to the process and commit to its outcome. The plan is to meet at 11.00am to discuss where we are at present. We will break for an hour for lunch – please bring a packed lunch – and then reconvene to discuss a vision for the future. We plan to finish by 3.00pm. We cannot just sit back and let things happen (or worse, stick our heads in the sand and wish it will all go away)! This is our chance to set the agenda as we feel God is calling us to.

One alternative style service that has been suggested is that we hold a short Pet Service, before the main Sunday service. To this end we would like to invite folk to:

Pet Blessing Service

(cuddly toys also invited!)

The Priory Church

Outside – weather permitting!



Sunday 19th September at 9.00am

Please make sure all pets are under control, and that you are prepared to help clear up if there are any 'accidents'

Another service coming up is the Nations' Climate Sunday Service at Glasgow cathedral on Sunday 5th September. You may recall we held our own earlier this year. To tune in to this national event, please book online at [Nations' Climate Sunday Service: Churches Prepare for COP 26 Tickets, Sun 5 Sep 2021 at 16:00 | Eventbrite](#)

The service starts at 4.00pm, so you should still be able to make Choral Evensong!



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark