

‘Estoy profundamente agradecido’

Por el Hmno. Carlos Medina, O.S.A.

Estoy profundamente agradecido con Dios y con la provincia por las experiencias inolvidables que viví con algunos de mis hermanos agustinos en España este verano.

El P. Kirk, el Hmno. Mark, el Hmno. Barney, y yo, junto con un par de acompañantes de Saint Augustine High School, acompañamos a un grupo de 17 estudiantes en un viaje de peregrinación a España este verano. Primero visitamos las catedrales y los monasterios del norte de España. Me impresionó especialmente la belleza de la basílica de la Sagrada Familia en Barcelona, y la ubicación fantástica del monasterio Benedictino de Montserrat.

Después de terminar nuestro recorrido por las catedrales, participamos en una caminata de peregrinación por 5 días a Santiago de Compostela. Además de disfrutar de los impresionantes paisajes de Galicia, el caminar sobre el “camino de Santiago” fue una meditación muy concreta sobre la vida como un caminar hacia Dios.

Después de nuestra caminata a Santiago, pasamos dos noches en el impresionante monasterio de El Escorial, que es una casa de nuestra Orden. Posteriormente comenzamos las actividades de la Jornada Mundial de la Juventud en Madrid. Durante esta semana, nuestro grupo participó en actividades religiosas y culturales como la oración de Taizé y la visita al Museo del Prado. La culminación de la semana fue la Misa con el Santo Padre, después de haber pasado la noche anterior en oración y celebración.

Al final de la JMJ, el P. Greg Heidenblut y el P. Gary Sanders se unieron a nuestro grupo en la Universidad María Cristina de El Escorial, para una conferencia Agustiniense sobre la pastoral juvenil. El P. Gary fue uno de los presentadores y el Hmno. Mark fue uno de los panelistas. Aprendimos de aspectos de la espiritualidad agustiniense, así como directrices prácticas para la evangelización de los jóvenes. Lo que más me gustó fue el encuentro y la interacción con hermanos agustinos de distintas partes del mundo.



Hmno. Carlos Medina, O.S.A.

HAWAIIAN PARADISE (continued from page 1)

amazingly varied assignments. He has worked in two schools; has done Province work, specifically administer the Augustinian Guild; served as a chaplain for a convent of nuns; and was a hermit for a year at an Augustinian house in the southern California desert. Parish work has been a recurring ministry, which he has served in four states, sometimes “on loan” to an archdiocese or diocese.

“I’m a person who responds to various needs of the Church in a variety of places rather than nesting somewhere for the long haul,” he reflects. “My enjoyment has always come primarily from knowing I was trying to do the Lord’s will as best I could. In this, the aid of my superiors has been a *sine qua non*.”

Ray Elam was born in Santa Maria, Calif., the youngest of three children. From the time he attended a parish mission at the age of 9 or 10, he felt some sense of calling to the priesthood. It was as a boarding student at Villanova Preparatory School, Ojai, that he met and got to know the Augustinians. Their influence drew him toward the Order. After three semesters at Santa Clara University, he entered the Augustinians and began his formation and studies for the priesthood.

“What I find most rewarding about being an Augustinian is the experience of freedom,” says Fr. Ray. “In a couple of years, I will have been in the Order for 50 years. Over those years, my Augustinian brothers have extended me tremendous opportunities to develop different aspects of myself, both through assignments and through supporting me in personal initiatives. I am very grateful for the continuing experience.”

Asked what he would tell a young man considering a call to religious life about the Augustinians, Fr. Ray has this to say: “Please come and see. Be prepared to grow, to be stretched and to experience life as it is. Start down this path of life and be willing to discern your experience sufficiently to see whether this path is yours for the rest of your life. If it is, commit yourself to it fully.”



• 1975 — The Augustinians assume administrative responsibility for an orphanage near Tijuana. Today all of the province’s ministries are involved in the work of Hogar Infantil La Gloria.

• 1980 — Continuing their expansion into northern California, the Augustinians assume pastoral responsibility for Our Lady of Grace parish in Castro Valley.

• 1981 — The Augustinians expand into Oregon, serving in parish ministry, a local Catholic high school, hospital chaplaincy and opening a retreat house. Austin House is established as a formation community in San Diego.

• 1982 — Villa Merced, a 100-unit, low-rent apartment complex for the elderly and handicapped, is opened under joint sponsorship of the Augustinians.

• 2000 — In contrast to the nationwide trend, vocations begin to increase in the Augustinians’ California province and continue over the next decade into the present.

• 2009 — More than 200 Augustinian friars from across the nation gather to discuss a federation of American and Canadian provinces. The initiative will soon be finalized.

• 2010 — The Western Province reaches out across the Pacific as one of its members becomes pastor of a rural church on the Big Island of Hawaii.

• 2011 — The West Coast Augustinians begin a year-long celebration of 90 years’ service in the western United States.



The Augustinians in California



now the Golden State.

• 1922 — The Villanova (eastern) Province expands to the west. The first Augustinian community in California, and St. Augustine’s High School, San Diego, are established.

• 1924 — Augustinians open Villanova Preparatory School, Ojai, California and take over nearby St. Thomas Aquinas parish.

• 1925 — The first Mass at the newly-established Our Mother of Good Counsel Augustinian parish in Los Angeles is celebrated in a modest storefront on North Vermont Avenue.

• 1966 — The first Augustinian formation house in California is established in Camarillo.

Three Augustinians become faculty members at the new Central Catholic High School, Modesto.

• 1968 — Some West Coast Augustinians begin their tenure of several years serving as missionaries in Peru and other Latin American countries.

• 1969 — California Augustinians are formed into their own Province, with the title of Province of St. Augustine. The Villa Nueva Apartments, 400 units of low-income housing sponsored by the Augustinians is opened. What would become a new formation house at 108 Cole Street, San Francisco, is purchased by the Augustinians and renovated.



Spiritu

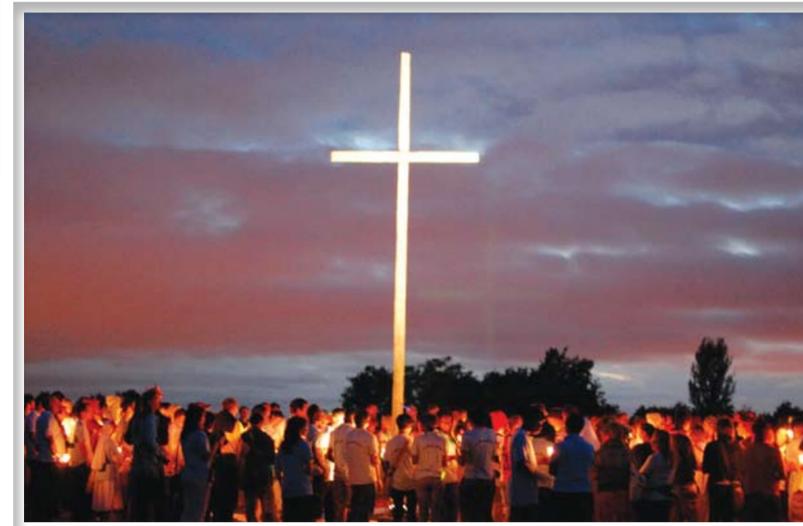
Fall 2011

Published by the Augustinians of the West

“Special attention should be given to the pastoral, catechetical and liturgical care of youth, who are to be encouraged both individually and in groups to follow Christ generously after the example and spirituality of our Holy Father, St. Augustine...”

Constitutions of the Order of St. Augustine #156

‘Enabling Young People to Soar’



Augustinian Youth Encounter, England 2010

the most amazing things I have ever experienced, and I wish it had been longer. It was that good...” — Melissa, Philippines.

There’s electricity in the air.

When young people from across the world converge at an Augustinian Youth Encounter (AYE), they arrive with a sense of adventure and anticipation. At the week-long session’s end, they commonly find the experience has exceeded their expectations:

- “I am so grateful to God for having granted me the opportunity of being a part of AYE. I met so many young people just like me and learned about how widespread our faith is...” — Raisia, Philippines.
- “AYE was simply amazing. It was definitely more than I hoped it would be, and being part of the praise and worship team was awesome. I loved coffee club. I’m thankful I was able to be part of AYE...” — Astrid, Australia.
- “Above all, I learned the true value of friendship...” — Ewan, U.K.
- “Seeing so many people who really love Jesus and are not ashamed of it gave me a power to be a witness to those who do not believe...” — Stanka, Slovakia.
- “(This was) an experience I’ll never forget, meeting other Augustinians... and spending time with each other understanding about our faith...” — Christopher, U.K.
- “In the 17 years that I’ve lived on earth, AYE was one of the most amazing things I have ever experienced, and I wish it had been longer. It was that good...” — Melissa, Philippines.

(continued inside)

Hawaiian Paradise is Latest Stop on His Spiritual Itinerary

The sign outside Sacred Heart church proclaiming “Aloha” signifies the spirit of the place.

Fr. Ray Elam, O.S.A., who traveled from the mainland last year to become pastor of the small, rural parish on the scenic northernmost tip of the Big Island of Hawaii, says he got a warm welcome from the people.

“This is not a particularly wealthy area, even though there are some people of means here,” he says. “The real wealth of this area is in the strong family and community bonds. The parish is a welcoming community.”

It’s also unique. One of the priests who served the local Catholic community from 1865 to 1873 and built the first Kohala Catholic church was the renowned Father Damien (St. Damien deVeuster, S.S.C.C.), who later ministered to victims of leprosy on Molokai. In 1927, Fr. Ludger Appelman, a priest of Fr. Damien’s order, built the present Sacred Heart church. The relatively small structure boasts exquisite stained glass windows crafted by artisans in Belgium and donated by parish members.

As the sole priest at the 400-plus family parish, Fr. Ray is assisted by a deacon and has a small staff including a half-time parish secretary/bookkeeper and a part-time religious education person. “And we have lots of volunteers who help make this parish go,” says Fr. Ray. “We could not do without them.”

Augustinians traditionally live in communities with their brother friars; although with some, like Fr. Ray, the ministry may dictate a solitary life. Fr. Ray has had similar living situations in the past and finds that the people of the parish take care of his need for community.

“I think what I enjoy most about serving the people in Hawaii is the pace of things,” says Fr. Ray. “While I always have things to do, it is extremely rare that there is insufficient time during the day for carrying on a healthy, balanced spiritual life. The combination is wonderful.”

Variety Spices His Life

Off-the-beaten-path ministries are nothing new for Fr. Ray. Throughout his priestly journey since his ordination in 1970, he has served in more than 20

(continued on back page)



Fr. Ray Elam, O.S.A.

‘And so I’ve felt at home’



Nick Porter

After graduating from the University of California, San Diego, Nick Porter took a job as a software engineer. He enjoyed the creativity, the mathematics and the logic in programming that the work entailed. Yet it was not enough.

Shortly after graduation while he was still new in his job, Nick began discerning a vocation to the religious life, a four-year process that culminated with entering the Augustinian pre-novice program at St. Rita House in San Francisco in September, 2010. This fall, he began a year at the Augustinian Novitiate in Racine, Wisconsin.

Looking back, Nick says he can now recognize a tug toward a vocation earlier in his life. But starting in 2006, he became more attentive and receptive toward the possibility. “For the most part, I progressed internally by prayer and reflection,” he recalls. “Externally, I read whatever I could get my hands on about the priesthood; visited different places to learn about the different ways of life — diocesan, monastic and so on; and helped with a number of catechetical, charitable and liturgical ministries at my parish.”

He attended an Augustinian vocation discernment weekend in San Diego and then a second nine months later. He began interacting with the Augustinians occasionally, going to the monastery for prayer and dinner, and visiting the orphanage and Augustinian parishes and ministries in California.

“Over time, I began to think that a religious life in the fraternal model would suit me better than monastic life or the secular priesthood, although I was far from certain about that at the time,” recalls Nick. “However, the Augustinians I met all seemed to think I had a vocation, and this made the idea less fantastic, less a distant hope. I began to think I could actually do it.”

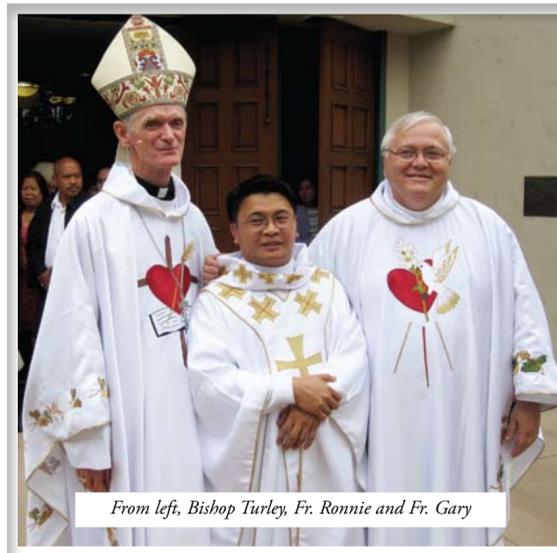
“There’s a great deal of courtesy and genuine charity in the Order,” reflects Nick. “The people are good. I’ve yet to meet someone I didn’t like. And so I’ve felt at home.”

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Nick, 27, is a Southern California native who grew up in the Los Angeles area. After joining the San Francisco Augustinian community, he studied philosophy at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology. During the year he also served on the R. C. I. A. team at St. Ignatius Church, a ministry he had previously pursued at the Newman Center in La Jolla.



‘A Moment of Happiness and Hope’



From left, Bishop Turley, Fr. Ronnie and Fr. Gary

philosophy in 1997, he emigrated to the U.S. the following year.

His education and spiritual formation since joining the Augustinians have changed him as a person, elevating his spiritual consciousness, he says. “But spiritual formation is an ongoing process throughout life. Every day is always another step in learning.”

Fr. Ronnie now ministers in San Francisco as a member of the Augustinians’ St. Rita Community. He is continuing his studies in the city.



Experiencing a profound sense of humility and great awe, Ronnie B-Sy Custorio, O.S.A. was ordained to the priesthood June 11 at St. Thomas Aquinas, the Augustinian parish in Ojai, Calif.

The presiding prelate is an Augustinian, Most Rev. Daniel Turley, O.S.A., Bishop of Chulucanas, Peru. Bishop Turley described the rite as “a joyful celebration; a moment of happiness and hope.”

And so it was for Fr. Ronnie. Reflecting on his journey to the priesthood in the days after his ordination, he expressed gratitude for the support he has received from his Augustinian brothers, his family and friends. “This momentous event in my life was so meaningful because of you, your presence and your prayers,” said Fr. Ronnie. “You have impressed me and inspired me to become your servant priest.”

In 2002, Fr. Ronnie was accepted into the Augustinian Western Province Pre-Novice program, which is a “trial run” of living in community with Augustinians and assisting in various ministries.

“Living with the individually unique Augustinians during my Pre-Novitiate stage was a great blessing to me,” recalls Fr. Ronnie. “They modeled spirituality and the values of community life. My Pre-Novitiate Director, Fr. Harry Neely (O.S.A.), has been very instrumental to me as a big-brother Augustinian and guide.”

Fr. Ronnie is the youngest of seven children in a farming family in the Philippines. He graduated from Catholic Schools there. After earning a B.A. in



Bishop Turley and Fr. Ronnie share a moment.

YOUTH MINISTRY (continued from front page)

Held every three years, the Augustinian Youth Encounter brings together young people aged 16 and older from Augustinian parishes, high schools, colleges and communities throughout the world. The AYE enables them to further explore and share their faith and Augustinian values together in a festive, fun-filled, joyful atmosphere.

Among the activities at the most recent AYE 2010, in England, were discussions in language groups, drama, outdoor Mass, a hog roast, music, prayer, presentations on social action, a festival of nations and lots of socializing. The next AYE will be held in July, 2013 in Brazil.

Animating Youth Ministers

AYE is a project of the Order of St. Augustine’s International Commission for Youth Ministry, which also organized the recent Augustinian Youth Animators’ Congress, held in late August in Spain following World Youth Day. The program sought to further educate campus and youth ministers, with an emphasis on exploring the Augustinian identity.

One of the speakers at the Congress was Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A., Prior Provincial of the West Coast Augustinians, and a member of the International Commission. Other Commissioners are from the U.S. Villanova Province, Australia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Spain and Argentina.

Fr. Gary is in fact the oldest member of the Commission “The majority of the members are very young friars, and I have great rapport with them,” says Fr. Gary. “The friars from Spain and Argentina call me *abuelito* (grandpa).”

Grandpa or not, Fr. Gary’s enthusiasm for youth

ministry has not diminished one whit since he was a seminarian focusing on the subject more than 30 years ago.

He fondly recalls his days as a young Augustinian youth minister from 1979 to 1983 at St. Patrick’s parish in San Diego. The program earned a reputation for being one of the finest, most vibrant in Southern California.

“Of all the wonderful gifts my religious life and priesthood have brought me, no single work has brought me more joy than that,” he says. “I still keep in contact with a number of men and women who were members of that youth group. Now they’re parents of their own

teenagers and college students. These people became great Catholic adults, just as I was certain they would.”

Passing the Torch

Fr. Gary notes that the Augustinian Western Province has placed much confidence in one of its young friars, Brother Mark Menegatti, O.S.A., a seminarian, to prepare for youth ministry. “While I think I still might make a difference in youth ministry,” says Fr. Gary, “young people are drawn to the dynamism of young religious and priests.”

Dynamic is a good description of Br. Mark. He has a talent for connecting with teens and young adults. Sometimes contemporary music is the medium, when he shares his encounter with the Living Christ by rapping his own spiritual lyrics to hip hop’s driving rhythms. But that is only a part of his evangelizing

endeavors among young people.

Br. Mark attended the Animators’ Congress to both share and learn. He helped lead a forum in which he talked about his own background and his experiences as a youth minister. “I came into an active ecclesial life in the Church through my home parish youth ministry,” he recalls. “As a result, I am in service to youth in the same way that I needed adult mentors in my life. I am rewarded now by youth ministry precisely because of what was given to me when I was a youth.”

“I have taken youth ministry seriously over the years, by actually listening to young people and

finding out where they’re coming from. I mix that with my own experience.”

Having St. Augustine as a central figure in spirituality is important for an Augustinian approach to youth ministry, Br. Mark believes. “This would help others to identify themselves with Augustine, their own restlessness and their own journeys,” says Br. Mark. “It could perhaps be facilitated at retreats, or other prayerful activities where we can teach youth to journal their own journey. It also happens in a direct way, when the youth can see that we are willing to accompany them as friends on their own journey, in the same way that Augustine journeyed with his.”

Proclaiming the Augustinian Core Values

In his presentation at the Youth Animators’ Congress, Fr. Gary told participants that a good Augustinian youth program consists of a caring community steeped in

knowing Jesus Christ, one that emphasizes the Order’s core values of unity, truth and love.

Accordingly, it is the job of Augustinian youth animators to integrate into their ministry three interlocking dimensions:

- Teaching the message revealed by God, which the Church proclaims;
- Fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit;
- Service to the Christian community and the entire human community.

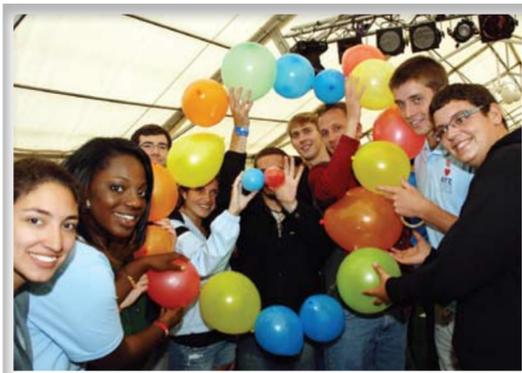
In a general sense, the

Augustinian youth animator is called on to help young people find their individual journeys. “I suggest that a credo to follow for every youth minister is: ‘I don’t bring Jesus

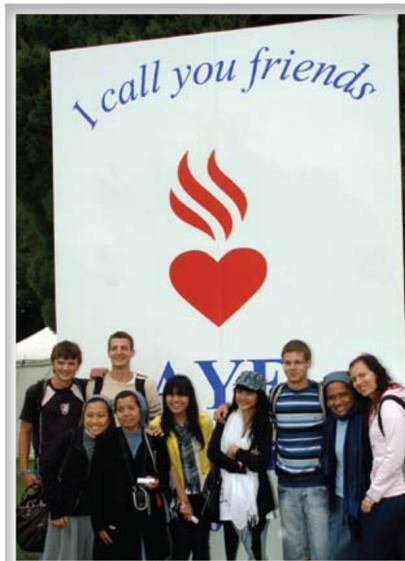
anywhere. I simply help others find Him where *they* are,” Fr. Gary exhorted the attendees.

He said young people should want to come to what is being offered them, and the main way to do this is to make sure that animators don’t dominate the thought process nor control the common good. No one knows what young adults need and want better than the young adults themselves, he emphasized.

“The role of the Augustinian youth animator/leader/minister is to enable young people to soar, and to be there for them if they don’t have a good landing,” Fr. Gary said. “And then after listening to them and being present to them, encourage them to spread their wings once more.”



Br. Mark (left) with Fr. Gary



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