



Saturday 28th August 2021  
Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

## Gospel

Mt 23:8-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

*The greatest among you must be your servant.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

### Reflection - Fr Graham Fullick

Born in Thagaste in Africa in 354, he led a dissolute and tumultuous life until his conversion and Baptism in Milan at the hands of St. Ambrose of Milan in 387 aged 33. It had taken 17 years of entreaty and prayer from his mother St. Monica and 3 years of preaching and catechesis from St. Ambrose. St. Augustine is a Father and Doctor of the Church who was baptised and taught also by a Father and Doctor of the Church, St. Ambrose. There are only 36 Doctors of the Church, and Augustine is one of only 4 Latin Doctors along with St. Ambrose, St. Jerome (who translated the bible) and Pope St. Gregory the Great. St. Augustine is given the specific title "Doctor of Grace" for his refutation of the Pelagian errors of his day in the 4<sup>th</sup>. century. The monk Pelagius believed that we could earn our own salvation by sanctifying ourselves, unaided by God's grace. This teaching diminishes the need for Christ's Redemption and the impact of Original Sin on the human race (CCC406). In our new times this heresy is called the neo-Pelagian heresy. We hear it when people deny our sinfulness, deny the need for confession and say that we can be Christian or reach salvation without the help of the Church founded by Christ to the ends of the earth for the very purpose of our salvation. For his doctrine on Grace and the Church, St. Augustine is also called the Doctor OF the Church.

After his conversion and Baptism in Milan, Italy, St. Augustine sailed back to North Africa in 387 with his mother St. Monica who died at Ostia near Rome. Having amended his personal life, he led the life and ascetic. For his exemplary life and preaching, he was elected and Ordained Bishop of Hippo in modern day Algeria. He remained Bishop of Hippo for 34 years and died in 430, aged 75. He was instrumental in defending and explaining the founding dogmas of our faith between the Council of Nicaea in 325 which gave us the Nicene Creed through to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, 21 years after his death which defined that Jesus Christ is one Son, one Person, with two complete and distinct natures: a divine nature consubstantial with the Father and a human nature consubstantial with us. St. Augustine explained how Grace, Scripture, Tradition and the Church's sacramental economy worked together to Reveal God's working in our lives so that we may be sanctified not by ourselves, but through Divine Revelation. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, divinising us, making us holy, but we are not gods to ourselves and cannot reach our salvation reliant on ourselves, unaided by the Grace of God. God does the work; we co-operate with grace, by our free will and intellectual soul. By faith and reason we accept God's grace.

This is clear in 3 of St. Augustine's writings from his famous Confessions (Bk 7, 10, 18;10,27 cf. Breviary III pp. 224\*-225\*). 1. On the Blessed sacrament and becoming the Christ we eat he writes: "And I knew I was far from you in the region of unlikeness, as if I heard your voice from on high: 'I am the food of grown men: grow and you shall eat me; and you shall not change me into yourself as bodily food, but into me you shall be changed.'" 2. On the stirrings of our conscience by the Grace of God he writes: "You stir us up O Lord, and make us find joy in praising you, since you have made us for yourself; and our hearts find no rest til they rest in you." 3. On the Light of Christ's Revelation, not self-revelation he writes "Let Truth, the Light of my heart, speak to me, and not the voice of my own darkness. I wandered away, yet I remembered you. I myself am not the goal of my own existence. Left to myself I lived in sin, bringing death upon myself. In you I have discovered Life."

Cf. inter alia, Catholic Dictionary, Stravinskis: "Fathers", "Doctors", "Council of Nicaea", "Augustine".)