

## Saint Augustine, saint and seal

Written by augustinian recollects

Sunday, 04 September 2016 14:48 - Last Updated Sunday, 04 September 2016 14:54

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**For almost three centuries, the Augustinian recollects identified themselves in the Church with this representation of St. Augustine. Today, August 28, the liturgical feast of the Saint of Hippo, once again we raise the old emblem and knit over it a brief reflection.**

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The Augustinian recollects identified themselves with St. Augustine right from the start. And it could not be in any other way, proclaiming him by word and through plastic representations. Among these, the official seal of the Recollection occupies the highest place, which remained untouched for almost three centuries. On that seal they champion an Augustine kneeling before the Crucified Christ of normal size, portrayed as living Christ.

The St. Augustine on the seal of the Order is barefooted and clothed as recollect. Portrayed also as bishop, but the episcopal ensigns –staff and miter are on the ground as if showing disregard of the honor and title as a bishop. It is clear that it wants to portray a concrete image of the Saint, as real saint.

But the habit does not make a monk much less a saint. It is not the representation of Augustine that matters: being a bishop or not, neither a recollect nor Augustinian... just as in saying that renewal does not consist in knowing better the doctrine and life of our Father. These days we know about St. Augustine much better than our predecessors. And we have at our disposal countless and better instruments at the hour of looking for quotations and data. But it is not because of this that we say we are better Augustinian Recollects.

What is more important in the representation of St. Augustine is the kneeling Augustine before the Crucified Christ. His gesture of adoration, his posture of contemplation and the bareness of everything else. In this lies the recollect originality, the newness of his inspiration.

At the time of inception of the Recollection, towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Augustinian Order was in its moment of grandeur which sums up figures of great importance, monumental churches and monasteries, admirable evangelizing enterprises. But nothing of that sort is

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important as how the recollects would say. What matters are not the statistics, nor the structures, nor the works, of whatever kind they may be.

The Recollection wants to reassert the radical experience of Augustine, depicted in this seal. The experience of the encounter with Christ. A personal and direct encounter with Christ, with a bare Christ nailed on the cross. This is what we call “prayer”, in all its true and deep sense of the word. “Knowledge and Love” of God; and the more in parishes, missions, schools, the better. But in as much and is always they are revitalized by prayer.

Today, we are invited on it, on this day of St. Augustine. It is good that we know better our Father; that we show his doctrine the best way possible; that we educate augustinologists and spread everywhere the mind of the Saint. But an Augustinian Recollect will only be when, taking aside all the rest, daily cultivate the encounter and dialogue with the Lord and Glory of the Cross.



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