

Dear Brothers and Sisters



As a child he was, in his own words, disobedient to his parents, not because he had chosen a better way, but from a sheer love of doing so.

As a youth, his mother deplored and, as he remembered, warned him privately with great solicitude, “not to commit fornication.” These appeared to him but womanish counsels, which he would have blushed to obey. Rather, he experienced the mists of passion steaming up out of the concupiscence of the flesh, and they so obscured and overcast his heart that he was unable to distinguish pure affection from unholy desire. Both boiled confusedly within him, and dragged his unstable youth down over the cliffs of unchaste desires and plunged him into a gulf of infamy.

He was tossed to and fro, and wasted, and poured out, and boiled over in his fornications. He followed the rushing of his own tide, and burst out of all bounds. The madness of lust held full sway in him - that madness which grants indulgence to human shamelessness, even though it is forbidden, and he gave himself entirely to it; wandering still farther into more and yet more barren fields of sorrow, in proud dejection and restless lassitude.

These may seem rather strong words, but they are his own, the words of St. Augustine, whose feast we celebrate next Saturday August 28th.

What did all these experiences do to him? They led him to seek God and become one of the greatest saints in the history of the church. As he puts it:

“I fell away from thee, O my God, and wandered too far from thee, my support. And became to myself a wasteland. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart-- which thou didst pity even in that bottomless pit.”

Each of us has experienced that bottomless pit, be it in the form of lust, pride, greed, envy, gluttony, wrath or sloth.

At the bottom of that pit, you will find Jesus Christ, who, for our sake, descended into hell, is raised from the dead, and intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father.

Fr. Sean