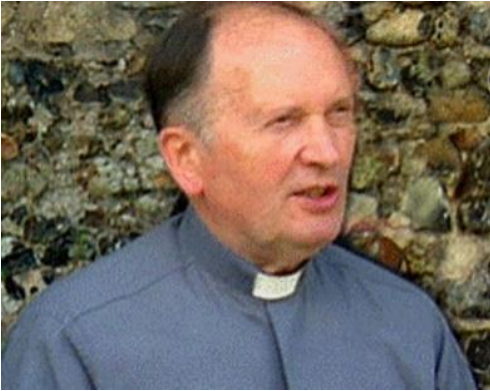


# FINDING YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE - by Benignus O'Rourke

*BENIGNUS O'ROURKE (1929-2019) was an Augustinian friar and a member of the Community at Clare Priory in Suffolk, who led hundreds of men and women, people of all faiths and none, on the way of silent prayer for more than forty years.*

## Chapter 4 - Return to Your Heart



For those who may not know much about him, Augustine of Hippo grew up in North Africa, in the remote part of the Roman Empire that is now Algeria. His mother Monica was a Christian.

His father, Patricius, was a pagan. Augustine had a restless and troubled youth and from his late teens spent many fruitless years searching outside himself for truth, happiness and fulfilment.

When he was about 33, after much mental torment and uncertainty, he made the life-changing discovery that what he was seeking was within himself. All we need to guide us, he realised, is to be found in our own hearts. There, in the depths of our being, are truth and goodness and love. And these are to be found there because the source of all life is within, the God who has made his home in us.

Augustine records this breakthrough in his Confessions. *'You were there before my eyes,'* he proclaims, *'but I had deserted even my own self, and I did not find the God of my own heart'* (Confessions 5.2). And so we get the great lament: the lament that Augustine had taken so long to discover that God had made his home in him; that he had spent half a lifetime searching in the wrong places for what he needed most.

And all the time he had been seeking God, God had never been absent.

This is what he wrote: *'Late have I loved you, beauty ever old yet ever new! Late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside. There I sought you, as I rushed about among the beautiful things you had made.'*

*You were with me, but I was not with you. The beautiful things of this world kept me far from you. You called. You cried. You burst through my deafness. You scattered my blindness. I breathed your fragrance, and now I pine for you. I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I burn with desire for your peace.'*

From the moment Augustine realised that God was not outside, one of the great adventures of life for him became the journey inwards. His discovery led him to accepting Christ and his gospel and for the rest of his life he loved God passionately.

He ceaselessly urged all those to whom he later preached or wrote to return to their hearts and seek God within. Only there, he told them, would they find rest and peace for their unquiet souls.

*'Come back to your heart,'* he implored. *'In your inner self Christ has made his home. In your inner self you will be renewed in God's image. And in his image you will recognise your creator.'*

For Augustine, returning to our heart is the key to discovering who we are and to discovering God.