

**Life**

St. Augustine, who was born in 354 in Tagaste, North Africa, is known as the "Doctor of Grace", and is one of the greatest philosopher in the history of the church. His parents belonged to the upper class of Roman Society. His mother, St. Monica, a devout Christian, taught him catechism in his childhood, but the practice at that time was believers would only be baptized when they became adults. As such, Augustine had not been baptized. Augustine's father died when he was 17 years old.

Augustine was intelligent but did not like discipline. At the time of his father's death, he was studying abroad. He lived an immoral life with friends. At the age of 17, he had a relationship with a woman of low social status who bore him a son when he was 18. Augustine was talented and very diligent, but the purpose of his studies was only to pursue fame and fortune. He denied the true faith but believed in the heresy of Manichaeism. His repeated refusal to be persuaded otherwise caused Monica many tears. Later, after talking with a renowned Manichean Bishop, Augustine found that he could not answer his questions, so he gave up Manichaeism. At the age of 30 while teaching in Milan, Augustine met St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, who was both talented and virtuous. Originally Augustine went to St. Ambrose's preaching only because he appreciated his eloquence, but through his sermons Augustine realized that Christianity is the true faith. He would like to be converted but had great hesitation. On the one hand, he prayed to God to cultivate his purity and piety. On the other hand, he was worried that even if God answered his prayers, he could not completely quit his vices. He struggled greatly over what he should do.

One day when Augustine was feeling torn while reflecting on this in a garden, he called out earnestly to the Lord. Suddenly he heard a child's voice saying: "Take up and read." He picked up a book of St. Paul's writings near him, opened at random and read: "not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy but put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Roman 13: 13-14), he was enlightened and repented. He ended his relationship with the woman, went with Monica and several friends to the countryside not far from Milan to pray, did repentance and studied theology, and was baptized in the year 387. Then he returned to North Africa. Monica and Augustine's son died respectively. In 391, Augustine moved to Hippo and lived in monastic life with several friends. At the age of 42, he was elected as the Bishop of Hippo. He died at the age of 75. Augustine's work has a great impact on future generations, and he is a Doctor of the Church.

**Reflection**

Pope Pius XI called St. Augustine "a man to whom none or very few can be compared from among those who have flourished from history's dawn to the present". However, such an intelligent person was completely blinded by the sins of lust and pride when he was young and wasted a lot of time to chase pleasures. When he knew the truth faith, he still had to struggle painfully. Fortunately, he was guided by the Holy Spirit to read the words of God and was completely converted. The popular culture of this world often advocates indulgence in the name of freedom, practically drowning young people in seductive messages and sexual temptations through social media, and unfortunately some sex addicts are unable to quit and free themselves from it. In 2018, the WHO listed compulsive sexual behaviour as a mental health disorder. May the affected people receive professional help, and may the young people who are seduced by internet pornography can also rely on the help of the Lord to resist temptations.

**Prayer**

In the autobiography "Confessions" of St. Augustine, he made us see that the power of man alone has no control over sins at all. It was at the time he acknowledged that he was powerless, was willing to accept God's grace in crying out to God in the abyss of pain, the sacred Word of the Lord released Augustine from the slavery of sin and enabled him to obtain the freedom of being a child of God. However, his journey after conversion was not a smooth one; he found that he was still seduced by the world even when he believed in the Lord and lived as a priest, but he relied on the Lord whole heartedly and fought against and overcame the sin of lust, pride and vanity. St Augustan once said: "Whoever thinks he can do it on his own, doesn't understand himself or Him whom he seeks". Let us learn from him that when facing temptations, to rely on the Lord and pray with all our heart.

May we learn from St. Augustine to rely on the Lord with all our heart during trials and call out to Him. We pray for the brothers and sister who are seduced.

St. Augustine, pray for us.