

PRESENZA AGOSTINIANA



Digital Edition

March/April 2026 - no 2



PIOUS EXERCISES

**Teology, Liturgy
and Religious Life**
Basis of Our Spirituality

Pious Exercises
Personal and Communal Devotion
of the Faithful and of Religious

*Visit to the Blessed Sacrament,
Rosary, Way of the Cross, Recitation of
the Angelus, Thanksgiving for Daily
Benefits, Fifteen Thursdays of Saint
Rita, Septenary of Saint Nicholas for
the Souls in Purgatory, Benedicta Tu,
Chaplet of the Blessed Virgin of the
Cinture/Consolation*





Presenza Agostiniana

Bimonthly Magazine

Order of the Discalced Augustinians
Year LIII (53) - no 2 (vol. 279)
Digital Edition
March/April 2026

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Cover

Concluding Celebration of the Fifteen
Thursdays of Saint Rita, in the Community
of Toledo – Brazil

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Editorial

Pious Exercises between Theology and Liturgy: at the Service of Personal and Communal Devotion

Dear Readers,

in the journey of the Church, the Liturgy and the pious exercises mutually illumine one another. If the Liturgy is the summit and the source of the Christian life, the pious exercises constitute its vital prolongation in the daily life of the faithful and, in a particular way, in the religious life of the Discalced Augustinians.

In this issue of *Presenza Agostiniana*, we have wished to dwell precisely upon this fruitful relationship, so dear to the tradition of our Order.

The celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the heart of the Liturgy, is a living reality that asks to be interiorized, assimilated, and lived. From this arises the authentic value of the pious exercises: they help to root in the heart that which the Liturgy celebrates sacramentally.

In this perspective, the articles proceed from a theological and liturgical approach so as to arrive at their expression in the religious life, wherein the pious exercises have

developed in a personal and communal dimension, both in communion with the Christian people and in a specific manner within our spirituality.

This issue, therefore, intends to be not only a theoretical deepening, but also a concrete invitation to recover spaces of silence, of listening, and of interiority, in which the grace celebrated in the Liturgy may become lived life.

As sons of Saint Augustine, we know that the heart of the human being is restless until it rests in God. The pious exercises, lived in harmony with the Liturgy, thus become simple and profound ways to orient the heart toward Him who is our only good.

Happy reading...



Theology and Liturgy

Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ

Fr. Jhosep Naoki Ochi Sanchez, oad



Before asking ourselves what the Liturgy is, it is appropriate to begin with a more fundamental question: **why the Liturgy?** The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* indicates:

The mystery of the will of the Father, who has given us his beloved Son, Emmanuel, and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his Name. This is the mystery of Christ, revealed and realized in history according to a plan which the patristic tradition will call the “Economy of salvation” (CCC 1066).

This work of human redemption and of the perfect glorification of God was accomplished by Christ the Lord, above all through the Paschal Mystery of his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension: precisely that which the Church always celebrates, the **Paschal Mystery**. If, therefore, Christ has already brought the work of salvation to completion, why does the Church continue to celebrate the Liturgy? What Christ accomplished in his mystery, the Church proclaims and celebrates in the Liturgy, so that the faithful may live it and bear witness to it in the world:

The Liturgy, indeed, through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, “the work of our redemption is accomplished,” contributes in the highest degree to the faithful expressing in their lives and manifesting to others the mystery of Christ and the true nature of the genuine Church.

For the Church is at once human and divine, visible yet endowed with invisible realities, fervent in action and devoted to contemplation, present in the world yet a pilgrim; and all this in such a way that what in her is human is ordered and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and the present reality to the future city toward which we journey (Sacrosanctum Concilium 2).

This is why the Liturgy continues to be celebrated **even today**: through the action of the Holy Spirit and sacramental signs, the Paschal Mystery is made present and actual in the life of the faithful.

1. Liturgy: Meaning and Terminology

At this point we may ask: **what does the term “Liturgy” mean?** It derives from the Greek *leitourgía*, which originally indicated a **public work** or a service carried out by the people and for the people. In the ancient Greek world it designated a service rendered to the community, at times also of a civil or financial nature.

In the **Christian tradition**, however, the term assumes a deeper meaning: it indicates the participation of the People of God in the work of God. Through the Liturgy, Christ, our Redeemer and High Priest, continues in the Church and through her the work of redemption (CCC 1069).

In the New Testament, this terminology is used not only for divine worship, but also for the proclamation of the Gospel and for charity lived concretely. In all these spheres, it is always a matter of service to God and to men.

In the liturgical celebration, the Church manifests herself as servant, in the image of her Lord, the one true “Liturge.” She participates in his **threefold office** (CCC 1070): priestly (worship), prophetic (proclamation), and kingly (charity).

As Christ was sent by the Father, so he sent the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. They

did not limit themselves to proclaiming the Gospel, but also made present the work of salvation through the sacrifice and the sacraments, around which the whole liturgical life develops (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 6).

2. Foundation: Christ, Head and Priest

As we have seen, the one true “Liturge” is Christ. Without Him there would be neither salvation nor liturgical action, since the Liturgy is precisely the actualization of the redemptive work in time. Christ continues to accomplish this work even today, in a particular way in liturgical actions.

*Rightly, therefore, the Liturgy is considered as the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In it, the sanctification of man is signified by means of sensible signs and is effected in a manner proper to each of them; in it the full public worship is exercised by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. Therefore every liturgical celebration, insofar as it is the work of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is the sacred action par excellence, and no other action of the Church equals its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7).*



3. The Paschal Mystery: Heart of Time and Rite

Liturgical life gravitates around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, that is, around the **Paschal Mystery**. Our *Constitutions* also affirm that the center of all liturgical worship is the Eucharist (Const. 13). The image of “gravity” expresses this reality well: the Paschal Mystery is the central nucleus, the heart of liturgical time and ritual action, which draws all things to itself.

When his Hour had come, he lived the unique event of history that does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father “once for all” (Rom 6:10; Heb 7:27; 9:12). It is a real event, which occurred in our history, yet it is unique: all other events of history happen once, then pass away, swallowed up by the past.

The Paschal Mystery of Christ, however, cannot remain only in the past, since by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is, all that he accomplished and suffered for all men, participates in the divine eternity and therefore embraces all times and is made present in them. The great event of the Cross and the Resurrection abides and draws all things toward life (CCC 1085).

Without this center, time, rites, and faith would lose their meaning. As the Apostle Paul affirms: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:14). In the Paschal Mystery is contained all the spiritual good of the Church: **Christ himself** (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5).

4. The Liturgical Act: Public Action of the Church

Our *Ritual*, promulgated in 2023, defines the Liturgy as the “public, solemn, and qualified action of worship whose celebrating subject is Christ and the Church, and whose object is the Paschal Mystery of Christ and the life of the Church” (Rit. 2).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, recalling Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, teaches that the sacraments are

“of the Church” in a twofold sense: they are “from the Church,” because she is the effective sign of Christ’s action at work in the Holy Spirit; and they are “for the Church,” because they communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God of Love, one and triune (CCC 1118).

The liturgical action is therefore the **summit** toward which all the action of the Church tends and, at the same time, the source from which it flows. In the Eucharist there is realized in an eminent way the Augustinian ideal of the *Totus Christus*, the whole Christ, Head and members (Const. 14).

Nevertheless, the Liturgy does not exhaust the whole of ecclesial life. For this reason, it is necessary also to deepen the meaning and value of the pious exercises, which accompany and sustain daily spiritual life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Liturgy reveals itself, in the light of what has been set forth, as the living place in which the mystery of Christ continues to be present and operative in history. It is not a mere commemoration, but a **real participation** in the work of salvation accomplished once for all in the Paschal Mystery.

In the Liturgy, through sensible signs and ritual actions, Christ himself acts in his Church, sanctifying men and making them participants in the divine life. Thus the community of the faithful is continually built up, called to live what it celebrates and to bear witness in the world to the mystery it has received.

Precisely because the Liturgy is the center and the source of ecclesial life, it also illuminates and sustains all the other expressions of the **spiritual life**.

The **pious exercises**, which will be examined subsequently, find in it their foundation and their orientation, helping the religious to prolong in daily life what they celebrate in the rite.



Liturgy and Religious Life

An Integral Part of Our Spirituality

Fr. Primi Russel Mayol, oad



The Liturgy is *“the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ”* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7), ordered to the sanctification of the faithful. In a particular way, it sustains the life of the consecrated, who fully offer their existence for the Church, the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head.

The **daily journey of communion** with Christ, in his Mystical Body, represents a real challenge for those who embrace the religious life. This union is nourished above all in the Liturgy, since *“in the Eucharist and in all the sacraments we are given the possibility of encountering the Lord Jesus and of being touched by the power of his Pasch”* (*Desiderio Desideravi* 11).

Thus the Liturgy becomes essential in the **religious life**, like a true daily breath, in which Christ is continually placed at the center. The Liturgy orients the interior pilgrimage of the consecrated person and sustains his vocation and mission. In this profound bond with the interior Master there arises a spiritual wisdom: the religious life is called to conform itself to the Paschal

Mystery, that is, to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, in the hope of full communion in ***Deus Trinitas***, the goal of the journey.

1. Liturgy in Formation

In the journey of consecration in the religious life there emerges the need *“to perfect the art of interior harmony,”* in order to love God above all things and one’s neighbor as oneself. At the beginning of formation, it is essential to educate the heart through prayer, which is *“the soul of the apostolate”* (*Vita Consecrata* 67).

The Liturgy must be received as the **source of the spiritual life**, the privileged place of the action of the Holy Spirit, divine love (*agápē*), who inwardly forms the consecrated person. The Second Vatican Council emphasizes: *“Clerics should receive a spiritual formation imbued with a liturgical spirit [...] capable of penetrating the meaning of the sacred rites and of participating in them with their whole being”* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 17).

3. Liturgy in Pastoral Life

The religious life is, by its very nature, **missionary**: *“it is a mission, as is the whole life of Christ”* (*Vita Consecrata* 72). Religious participate in this mission also through the celebration of the sacraments, making Christ present in the world.

When the consecrated person allows himself to be shaped by the Holy Spirit, divine love, Christ becomes visible in his life and in his pastoral activity. The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, through which God continues to work salvation.

As the Council affirms: *“from the Liturgy, and particularly from the Eucharist, grace flows into us as from a source”* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10). For this reason, the Liturgy is the source from which the strength for apostolic and pastoral life flows.

4. Liturgy in the Light of Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine affirms that Jesus Christ is *“present in the Liturgy, especially in the sacraments of the Church, through his power”* (Serm. 6,7). He is “the Word made flesh” (Jn 1:14), *“the word that purifies [...] when the word is joined to the element, the sacrament*

The community is the concrete place of this formation, a **true center of growth**. In it, through the Word of God, the heart is educated, so that it may mature not only for the good of the community itself, but also for the mission toward others.

2. Liturgy in the Common Life

Communion with Christ, lived in the Liturgy, finds its summit in the Eucharist, *“the heart of the life of the Church”* (*Vita Consecrata* 95), and is prolonged in the **Liturgy of the Hours**, which sanctifies daily time.

In the religious life there is a constant desire to unite one’s prayer to that of Christ, in order to receive the will of the Father and to live faithfully the vows that have been professed. The Liturgy sustains this **communal dynamic**, because it makes present the Paschal Mystery and directs the whole of life toward God.

Through the celebration, all the baptized faithful, and in a special way religious, are harmonized in praise and in daily service.

Religious are called to live attentively both the interiority of prayer and the dignity of the celebrations, so that the Liturgy may truly be an expression of the faith of the Church.



is formed, which is itself like a visible word" (Serm. 80,3).

Saint Augustine affirms that Jesus Christ is *"present in the Liturgy, especially in the sacraments of the Church, through his power"* (Serm. 6,7). He is *"the Word made flesh"* (Jn 1:14), *"the word that purifies... when the word is joined to the element, the sacrament is formed, which is itself like a visible word"* (Serm. 80,3).

For Saint Augustine, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, *"we have become Christ, if Christ is the Head and we are the members"* (Serm. 21,8). In the sacrament, we *"become one bread, that is, the Body of Christ, being kneaded by the water of Baptism and then by the fire of the Holy Spirit, which purifies our heart like gold"* (Serm. 227).

In this light, the Liturgy purifies and transforms the heart of man so that he may always be united to Christ, as his model in the interior pilgrimage toward the encounter with ***Deus Trinitas***.

Man is called to offer his own life as a living and pleasing gift to God, continually orienting his heart toward an authentic conversion.

In this journey, he is invited to renew interiorly his choices, walking the path of charity that enlightens and sustains others as well. Thus, step by step, he returns to unity in Jesus Christ, the source of life and the fulfillment of our salvation.

4. Liturgy in Studies

To deepen the gift of faith that we have received, particularly *"to learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth, especially through liturgical action"* (*Gravissimum Educationis* 2), is a most essential calling of every religious. Studies support the deepening of the knowledge of Jesus Christ through *"the study of Scripture and of divine things"* (Const. 6).

Religious must be educated *"to acquire that interior disposition which enables us to place and to understand liturgical symbols"* (*Desiderio Desideravi* 47).

The challenge is always to connect the Liturgy with the other disciplines, in order to

deepen the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation in their unity.

A sound preparation through the study of the Liturgy forms religious to live well the common life and to respond to the challenges of pastoral life.

Conclusion

The Liturgy manifests itself, in the religious life, as the vital center from which all things arise and toward which all things converge. It is not merely a set of rites, but the place in which Christ continues to act, sanctifying his faithful and configuring the consecrated to his Paschal Mystery.

In daily celebration, in common life, and in pastoral commitment, the religious finds in the Liturgy the source of his identity and the strength to live his vocation with fidelity, keeping his gaze fixed on Christ, the beginning and the fulfillment of every journey.

In this perspective, the whole of religious life acquires unity: formation, prayer, mission, and study are harmonized as expressions of a single reality, lived in the light of the mystery celebrated.

The Liturgy educates the heart, forms the community, and directs apostolic action, leading progressively to full communion with God.

It is precisely from this living experience that the pious exercises also arise and find their meaning: without replacing the Liturgy, they prolong it in daily life, helping the religious to live every moment as a concrete response to the love received.



Pious Exercises in the Religious Life

Personal and Communal Devotion

Fr. Diones Rafael Paganotto, oad

Pious exercises of devotion constitute an enrichment of the Liturgy within the Order of Discalced Augustinians. Indeed, if the Liturgy is “*the source and summit of the whole Christian life*” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10), the pious exercises represent a personal and communal response that flows from it and leads back to it. In this sense, they help to interiorize what the Liturgy celebrates and makes present.

1. Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy

The ***Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines***, published in 2002 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, is a document of great pastoral and theological importance. It was issued with the intention of offering sound criteria for understanding, valuing, and guiding the many expressions of the piety of the Christian people, placing them in harmonious relation with the Liturgy. The *Directory* does not limit itself to describing religious

phenomena, but proposes normative principles so that such practices may be authentically Christian, avoiding deviations and fostering growth in faith.

Terminology (no. 6): the document recognizes that, over the centuries, alongside the official Liturgy, numerous spontaneous forms of expression of faith have developed. These practices, very diverse, arise from the heart of the Christian people and manifest love for God, devotion to the saints, and a desire for conversion. However, precisely because of their variety, a unified terminology is lacking; for this reason, the *Directory* clarifies the meaning of the principal terms.

Pious exercise (no. 7): indicates those practices of prayer, both public and private, which do not form part of the Liturgy, but are in harmony with it. They must respect its spirit, draw inspiration from the mysteries celebrated, and lead to it. Pious exercises always have an ecclesial foundation and a reference to divine revelation, and are carried out according to norms approved by the Church.

Devotions (no. 8): these are external practices that express a personal and affective relationship of the faithful with God, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, or with the saints. They may include prayers, chants, pilgrimages, signs, and symbolic gestures. They are authentic when they arise from an interior faith and help the believer to live the Christian mystery more intensely.

Popular piety (no. 9): this comprises the ensemble of religious manifestations of the people which, although Christian, are expressed in forms different from the official liturgical ones. It is considered a true treasure of the Church, because it reveals a simple and profound faith, capable of sacrifice, trust in God, and concrete love. Moreover, it fosters interior attitudes such as patience, the sense of the Cross, and solidarity.

Popular religiosity (no. 10): this is an even broader reality, present in every culture and people. It expresses the universal religious sense of the human person, even outside Christian revelation. When it develops within a Christian context, it can give rise to forms of “popular Catholicism,” where cultural elements and Christian faith are interwoven in a more or less harmonious manner.

Primacy of the Liturgy (no. 11): the *Directory* clearly affirms that the Liturgy is the sacred action par excellence of the Church, superior to every other form of prayer. Although in certain historical periods popular practices have enjoyed great diffusion, they cannot substitute the Liturgy. The sacraments, in fact, are necessary for the Christian life, whereas pious exercises are optional. For this reason, it is essential to educate the faithful to give the proper primacy to the Liturgy, without, however, devaluing popular piety.

Distinction and harmony (no. 13): it is finally necessary to maintain a clear distinction between Liturgy and practices of piety, avoiding confusion or overlap. Pious exercises must preserve their simple and popular character. At the same time, they must not enter into competition with the Liturgy, but rather orient toward it. The balance between distinction and harmony is essential for an authentic and well-ordered Christian life.

In liturgical language, the **rite** is the ensemble of gestures, words, and sensible signs through which the mystery of salvation is expressed and effected. It is not a mere external form, but a reality that renders present the action of Christ in the Church.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms, God “speaks to man through visible creation” (CCC 1145), and precisely through ritual signs the human being enters into communion with God. In this sense, the rite is the visible expression of the invisible mystery, a living memorial of the saving work, according to the command of the Lord: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19).

The **Ritual**, on the other hand, is the liturgical book that gathers and orders the rites according to the norms established by ecclesiastical authority. It guarantees the unity, fidelity, and orthodoxy of the celebration, safeguarding the deposit of faith and regulating the Church’s worship. Hence the fundamental theological principle: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, that is, the prayer of the Church expresses and safeguards her faith (CCC 1124).

The pious exercises follow a specific rite and are included in the Ritual of the Discalced Augustinians so that all the religious may celebrate and live them in communion with the whole Order and the Church.

3. The Ritual: History, Function, and Use

The *Ritual of the Order of Discalced Augustinians* is situated within the living tradition of the Church, applying its principles according to the Discalced Augustinian charism. It is not a mere practical manual, but an **instrument of spiritual and communal formation**, intended to preserve and transmit the proper forms of prayer and devotion of the Order.

It is the fruit of a long journey in the light of our spirituality and charism. The first edition, prepared by a study commission, was published *ad experimentum* in **1999**, with the aim of collecting, ordering, and proposing the liturgical and devotional practices proper to the Order.

Subsequently, a further commission deepened and updated the text, leading to the definitive publication in **2023**. This process bears witness to careful discernment, faithful to tradition and attentive to the needs of Discalced Augustinian religious life.

From the beginning, the *Ritual* has incorporated the pious exercises matured throughout the history of the Order and of the Augustinian family, thus presenting itself as a living synthesis of its spiritual memory. Its function, from this point of view, is twofold: to regulate acts of worship according to liturgical norms and to orient the religious toward a deeper spiritual and liturgical life.

The use of the *Ritual* requires fidelity and discernment: it pertains to the Prior and to the entire Community to determine the manner, times, and places of the pious exercises as communal as well as individual liturgical acts.

3. Liturgy and Pious Exercises

Certain pious exercises also form part of the personal devotion of all members of the Church and are inserted into ecclesial life as expressions of popular piety which, although not belonging to the Liturgy in the strict sense, are intimately connected with it.

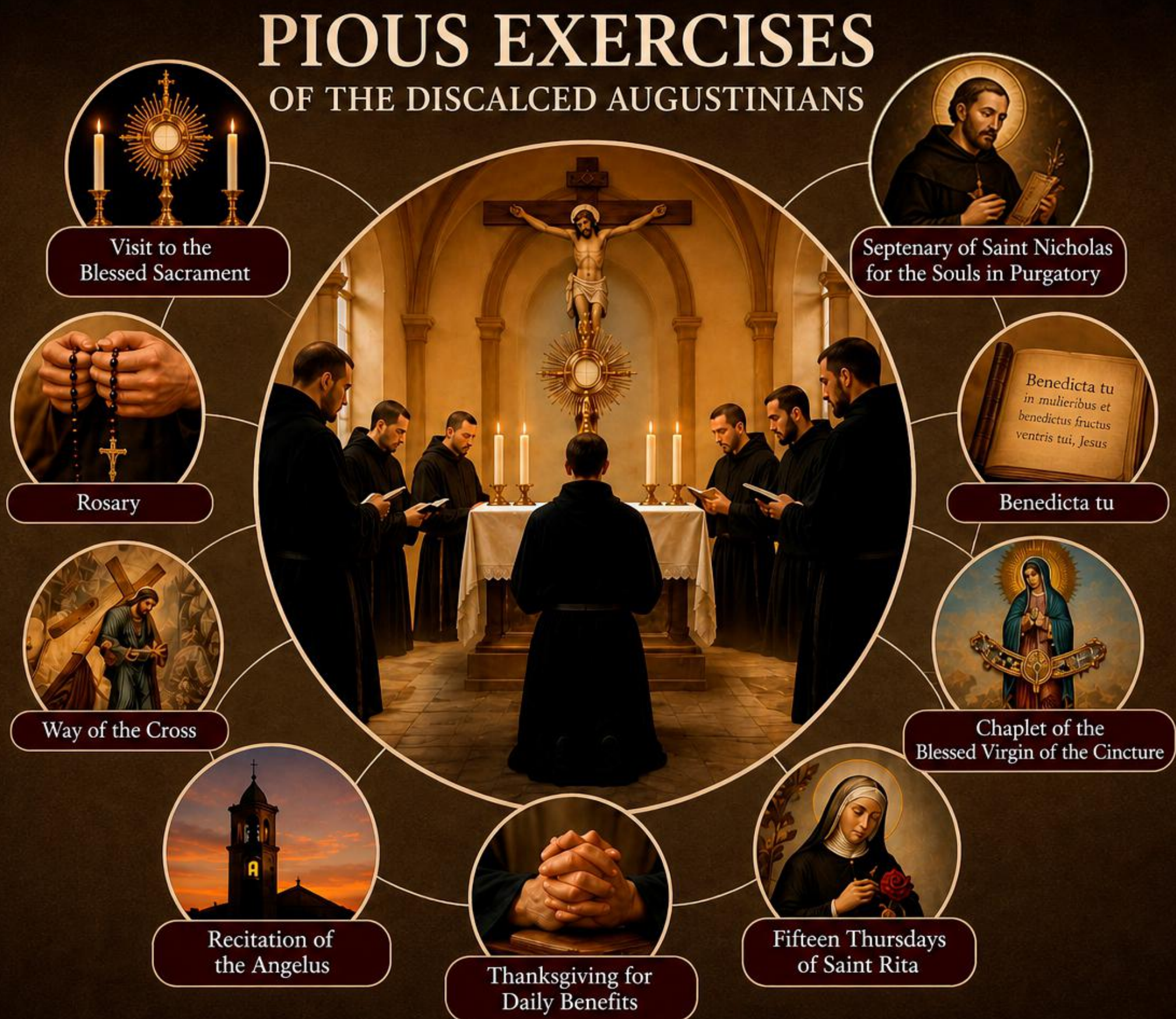
In other words, the pious exercises are celebrative forms that originate from the Liturgy, accompany it, and prolong its fruits in daily life.

As the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* affirms, pious exercises are “public or private manifestations of Christian piety which, although not belonging to the Liturgy, are in harmony with it” (no. 9), and must be ordered in such a way as to “draw inspiration from the Liturgy and lead to it” (no. 13). In this sense, the pious exercises participate, in their own manner, in the liturgical life of the Church, helping the faithful **to interiorize the mystery celebrated**.

Our *Ritual* indicates nine pious exercises, divided into **two groups**:

First group, shared with the whole Christian people: 1. The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, 2. The Rosary, 3. The Way of the Cross and 4. The Recitation of the *Angelus*;

Second group, shared and typically Augustinian: 5. Thanksgiving for Daily Benefits, 6. The Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita, 7. The Septenary of Saint Nicholas for the Souls in Purgatory, 8. The *Benedicta Tu* and 9. The Chaplet of the Blessed Virgin of the Cincture (or of Consolation).



These practices constitute a spiritual patrimony that connects liturgical celebration with the concrete life of the religious and of the faithful who gravitate around our spirituality.

4. Personal Devotion: The Subjective Dimension of Pious Exercises

Personal devotion is an essential element of the spiritual life, since it allows the grace received in the sacraments **to be interiorized**. In this sense, the pious exercises are situated below the sacraments and sacramentals, yet in close relation to them, as a free and personal response to the action of grace.

They express a profoundly subjective dimension, made up of intention, interior attention, and affection of the heart. Through practices such as the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, or the *Way of the Cross*, the believer enters into an intimate dialogue with God, living a personal relationship that arises from grace and develops in the freedom of the Spirit.

Saint Augustine illumines this interior dynamic when he affirms: *“God is more inward to me than my inmost self”* (Confes. III,6,11), and again, *“Return to yourself; in the interior man dwells the truth”* (De vera relig. 39, 72).

The pious exercises precisely foster this return to interiority, where the human person encounters God. Such practices add nothing to sacramental grace, but facilitate its **reception and maturation**, educating the faithful in prayer, contemplation, and continuity in their relationship with God in daily life. Even in their personal dimension, they are never isolated acts, but remain inserted within the life of the Church, as a participation, though distinct, in the ecclesial mystery.

5. Communal Devotion: Discalced Augustinian Religious Life

Our religious life places particular emphasis on the communal dimension of the pious exercises, which do not remain confined to

the individual sphere, but become **shared moments** capable of strengthening fraternal communion and making visible the unity of the community.

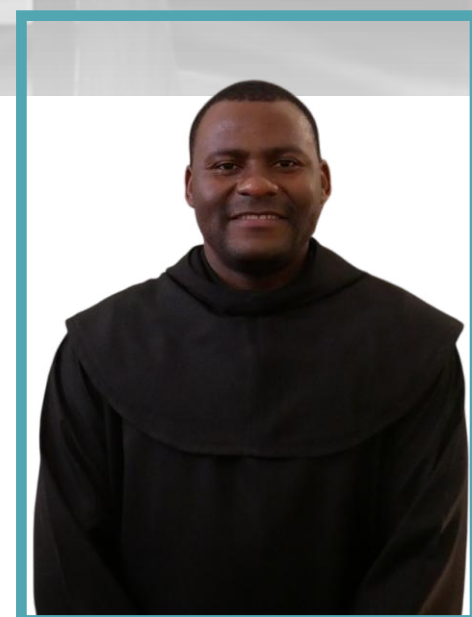
In the Augustinian charism, the common life is an essential element. The expression of the Rule, *“have one mind and one heart intent upon God”* (Reg. I,3), finds in the communal pious exercises a concrete realization. Shared prayer, common devotions, and acts of piety lived together build up the community in charity and manifest the unity of the ecclesial body.

This dimension is also illumined by the word of the Lord: *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Mt 18:20). The Ritual thus recognizes that in pious exercises celebrated in common there is realized a living presence of Christ, who sustains and strengthens the communal journey of faith.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the passage from the Liturgy to the pious exercises does not represent a departure, but an expansion. From the official celebration of the Church one passes to the concrete life of the faithful, where the mystery celebrated is interiorized and lived.

This dynamic prepares and orients the subsequent reflections, in which it will be seen how the pious exercises are inserted into the life of the Christian people and into the specific charism of the Order.



Pious Exercises in Common with the Christian People

Internalizing the Grace of the Sacraments

Fra Etienne Ofon Mendi, oad

The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Liturgy recommends pious exercises to the Christian people, affirming that they must be “so drawn up that they harmonize with the sacred Liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13).

We Discalced Augustinians, in the same spirit, also practice pious exercises as acts of devotion whose subject is the individual person and whose object consists of forms of prayer arising from the free initiative of the faithful (Rit. 3).

The pious exercises that we share with the whole Christian people are:

- [The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament](#)
- [The Rosary](#)
- [The Way of the Cross](#)
- [The Recitation of the *Angelus*](#)

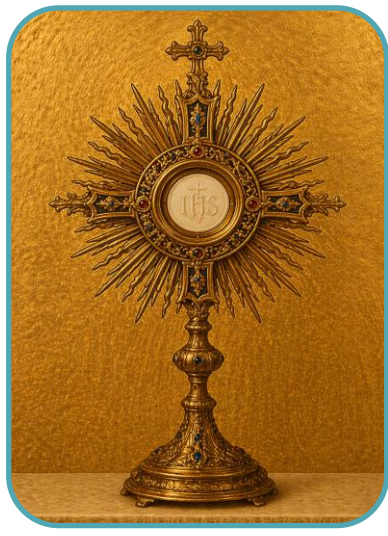
In this article we dwell on the meaning of these practices, seeking to understand them in the light of the **grace** we receive in the sacraments, so that they may be lived not as

mere devotions, but as paths of authentic spiritual life.

Indeed, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that grace is “a participation in the life of God” (CCC 1997). We may therefore say that grace is the **gift** that God offers to the human person in order to make him a participant in his own life, especially through the sacraments, which are defined as “*efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us*” (CCC 1131).

In the celebration of the **seven Sacraments** (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony), we truly encounter Christ and receive the grace that they signify and communicate. It is precisely here that the pious exercises find their foundation: they help to preserve and prolong in daily life the **grace received in the sacraments**.

1. The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament



Our *Directory* recommends “the daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament and, if possible, a monthly hour of adoration” (Dir. 8).

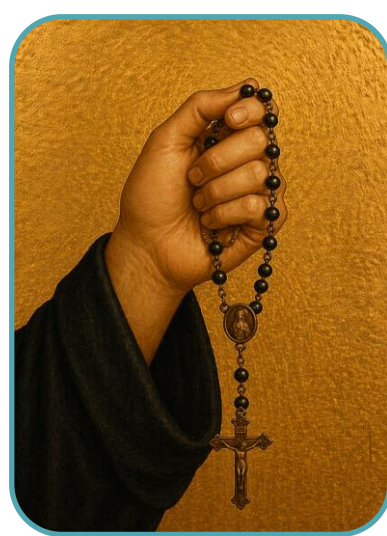
In parish communities, Eucharistic adoration is celebrated together with the Christian people, while in houses of formation it is practiced with greater frequency.

The *Ritual* emphasizes that the faithful, venerating Christ present in the Eucharist, must remember that this presence “derives from the sacrifice and is ordered to Communion,” and that Eucharistic piety “draws them to participate more deeply in the Paschal Mystery” (Rit. 17).

In remaining before the Lord, religious and lay faithful open their hearts and pray for the peace and salvation of the world, receiving an increase of faith, hope, and charity.

One of the principal motives for adoration is precisely the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament: in the silence of prayer we contemplate the Lord who remains among us. Adoration strengthens the spirit of unity and helps to live the grace of the sacraments in communion with the Church.

2. The Rosary



The Rosary is a fundamental prayer for the whole Christian people. In our Order, Marian devotion is so significant that we receive the Rosary at the beginning of the novitiate, wearing it

at the belt as a sign of our consecration to Mary.

The *Ritual* affirms that the Rosary is a “compendium of the whole Gospel,” since it draws from it the mysteries and the principal formulas and, in the succession of the Ave Maria, re-proposes “the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation of the Word” (Rit. 67). This prayer, therefore, is not merely repetition, but contemplation of the

mystery of Christ with the eyes of Mary.

Pope Leo XIII, in the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*, affirms that the prayer of the Rosary obtains “the grace and the joy of seeing the Son of Mary appeased and moved to compassion for our miseries,” and that the Mother of God, invoked by such prayer, “comes to the aid of the Christian people” (§1–2).

We Discalced Augustinians, together with the Christian people, are called to pray the Rosary daily, because it nourishes biblical memory and, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, helps us to live in communion with Christ.

Pope John Paul II defines the Rosary as “a path of proclamation and deepening, in which the mystery of Christ is continuously presented at the various levels of Christian experience” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 17).

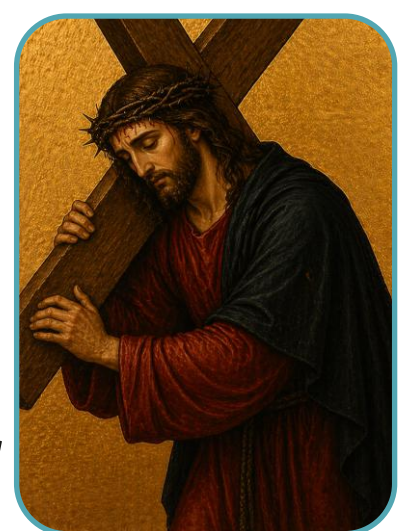
The Rosary is articulated in four sets of mysteries that accompany the faithful in the contemplation of the whole life of Christ: the Joyful Mysteries, which recall the Incarnation and the infancy of Jesus; the Sorrowful Mysteries, which meditate upon his Passion and Death; the Glorious Mysteries, which celebrate the Resurrection and the glory of the Lord; and the Mysteries of Light, later introduced, which illuminate the public life of Christ, from his Baptism in the Jordan to the institution of the Eucharist.

Prayed with faith, the Rosary nourishes biblical memory, strengthens communion with Christ, and sustains the spiritual journey of the People of God.

3. The Way of the Cross

The Way of the Cross is one of the most significant penitential practices, especially during the season of Lent.

The *Ritual* defines it as a “celebration of sorrow and love,” in which the Church commemorates the Passion and Death of the Redeemer (Rit. 143).



It originates from the tradition of pilgrims who traversed the holy places of Jerusalem, retracing the path of Jesus toward Calvary. Over the centuries it developed into its present form of fourteen stations (Rit., 143–144), becoming one of the most widespread devotions among the faithful.

The *Ritual* also recalls that the plenary indulgence is attached to the Way of the Cross under the usual conditions (Rit. 146).

By following the stations, the faithful meditate upon the Passion of the Lord and learn to recognize in the Cross the path of salvation.

This practice helps us to live in communion with the suffering Christ and to understand that the way of the Cross is also the way of life, because it leads to the Resurrection.

4. The Recitation of the Angelus



The Church strongly recommends maintaining the custom of reciting the Angelus Domini in honor of the Mother of the Lord.

The *Ritual* emphasizes that this prayer, “by reason of its simple structure, its biblical character, and its quasi-liturgical rhythm,” preserves over time “its value and freshness intact” (Rit. 48).

The *Angelus* is recited at the principal moments of the day—morning, noon, and evening—as an invitation to a pause in prayer that sanctifies time.

Pope Paul VI affirms that the unchanging nature of the *Angelus Domini* preserves “the value of contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, of the greeting to the Virgin, and of recourse to her merciful intercession” (*Marialis Cultus* 41).

In the tradition of the Order, the earliest *Constitutions* already prescribed the recitation of the Angelus at the beginning of the day, as an act of adoration of the profound mystery of the Incarnation (Rit. 49).

Through this prayer, the community unites itself with the Blessed Virgin Mary in her

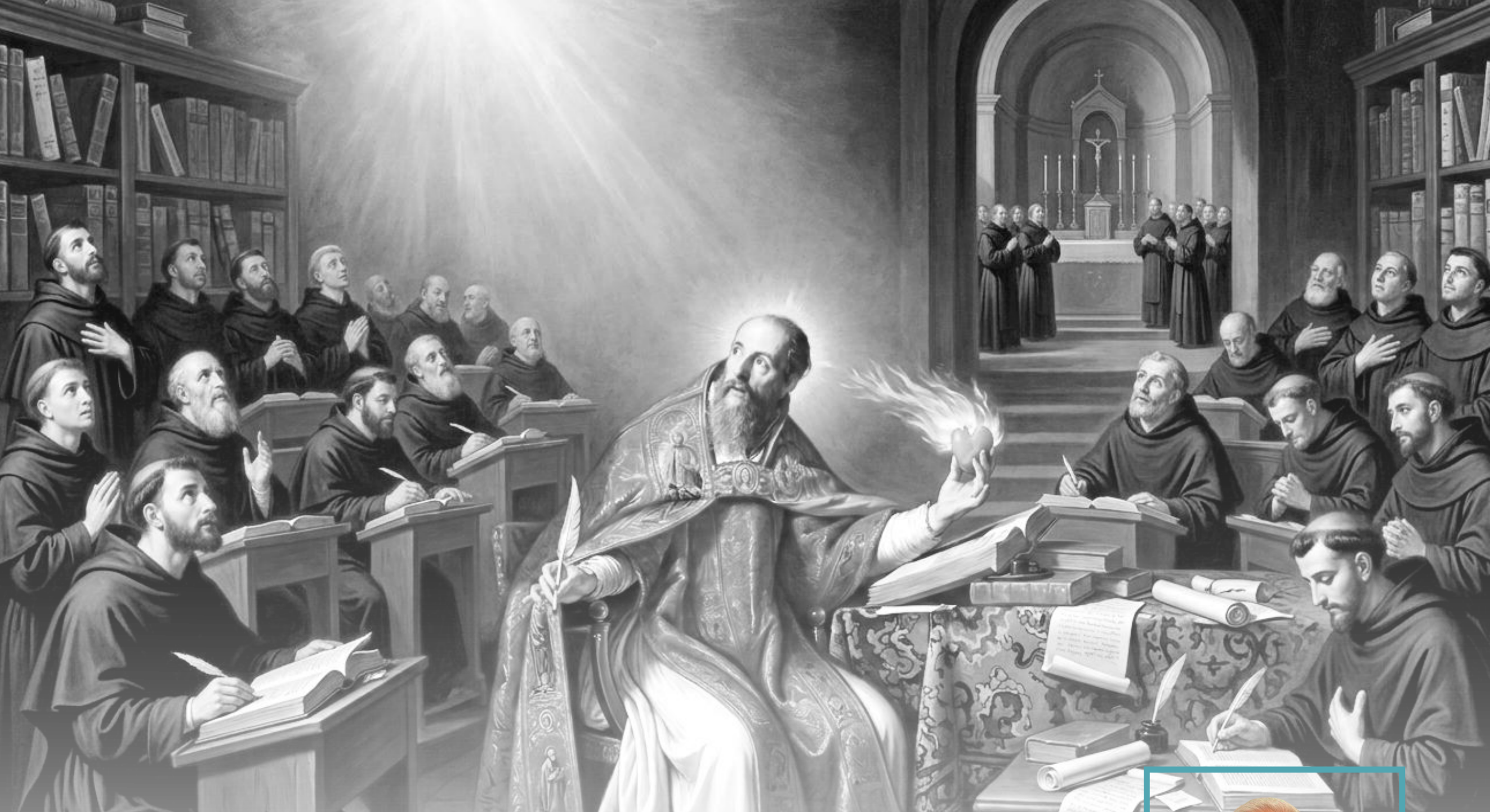
fiat, welcoming the will of God. The *Ritual* further recalls that it helps to live “in the contemplative listening to the Word of God and in a perpetual fiat to the will of the Father” (Rit. 49).

Conclusion

The pious exercises that we practice together with the Christian people are not mere devotional practices, but privileged paths for preserving and deepening the grace received in the sacraments.

Through the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, and the Recitation of the *Angelus*, we learn to contemplate the mystery of Christ, to recognize his presence in daily life, and to walk together in ecclesial communion.

These practices, lived with fidelity and with an open heart, become instruments of unity, of spiritual growth, and of evangelical witness. In them we find the strength to live our vocation and to accompany the Christian people on their journey toward holiness.



Specific Pious Exercises of the Discalced Augustinians



Internalizing the Mystery in Religious Life

Fr. Calogero Carrubba, oad

Our *Constitutions* affirm that religious are called to holiness, following the example of Saint Augustine and of the first community of Tagaste.

For this reason, with the help of divine grace, they strive to attain the perfection of evangelical charity, seeking God and living fraternal communion in joy, in a particular attitude of humility, since God is a common good and not a private one (Const. 3).

In addition to the liturgical practices prescribed by the Church, the Discalced Augustinians, over the centuries, have cultivated other **prayers and devotions** that help them to live the Christian mystery more intimately, interiorizing it in their apostolic activities.

In this regard, the *Constitutions* declare that activity flowing from intimate union with God is an integral part of religious life (Const. 53). Therefore, the action of religious must be inspired by the works of Christ and of the Apostles and be sustained by dialogue with

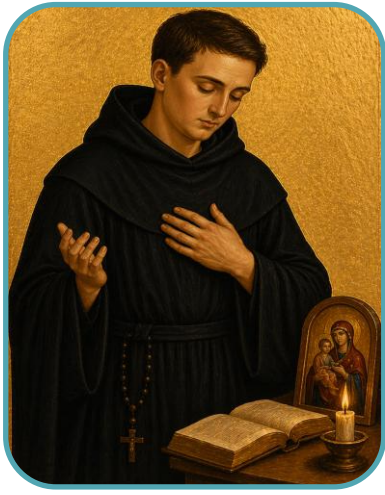
God in the spiritual life and by fraternal collaboration within the community (Const. 54).

In this constant attitude of union with God, religious are called **to interiorize the salvific mystery of Christ** in the religious life, especially the Discalced Augustinian **charism**, and to foster personal devotion, helping the religious to unify his heart in God, according to the teaching of Saint Augustine.

Among these pious exercises specific to our Discalced Augustinian spirituality, which are also in part shared with the Christian people, there are:

- [Thanksgiving for Daily Benefits](#)
- [The Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita](#)
- [The Septenary of Saint Nicholas for the Souls in Purgatory](#)
- [The *Benedicta tu*](#)
- [The Chaplet of the Blessed Virgin of the Cincture \(or of Consolation\)](#)

1. Thanksgiving for Daily Benefits

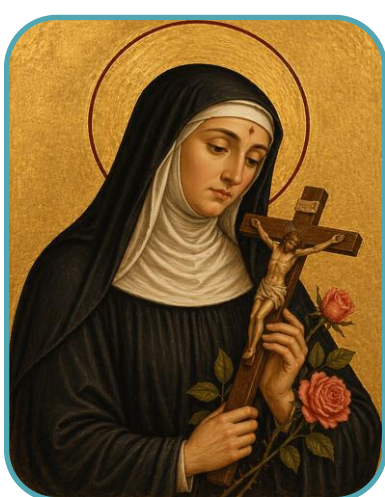


According to the *Ritual*, “at the end of midmorning prayer, before lunch, the Lord is thanked for the benefits received during the day that has passed”; this practice “fosters the spirit of thanksgiving and praise, favoring humility and gratitude to the Lord for the gifts of Providence” (Rit. 56).

The Discalced Augustinians, living in an attitude of constant union with God, every day, after the recitation of Midday Prayer, at the middle of the day, thank the Lord for all the spiritual and material benefits received, knowing that everything they have is not their own merit, but solely the fruit of His goodness.

They thank Him for all the good accomplished, for the works of evangelization carried forward through the sowing of the Word of God in the hearts of the faithful. Together with thanksgiving for the benefits received, the religious ask the Lord’s forgiveness for the inevitable shortcomings, due to human frailty, committed during the day toward God and toward their brothers: **everything is gift.**

This pious exercise well manifests the spirit of Saint Augustine, who recognized in every good received a reflection of the goodness of God. Daily thanksgiving educates the heart of the religious not to attribute to himself the good accomplished, but to recognize that **every grace comes from above.** At the same time, it also disposes him to humility and conversion, because thanksgiving is accompanied by the recognition of one’s own frailties and by the request for forgiveness.



2. The Fifteen Thursdays of Saint Rita

The practice of the Fifteen Thursdays in honor of Saint Rita is one of the most widespread devotions in the Augustinian tradi-

tion. It recalls the fifteen years during which the saint bore on her forehead the sign of the thorn, participating in a singular way in the Passion of the Lord.

This devotion is not limited to recalling an extraordinary fact of her life, but invites one to contemplate in Saint Rita a woman entirely conformed to Christ crucified.

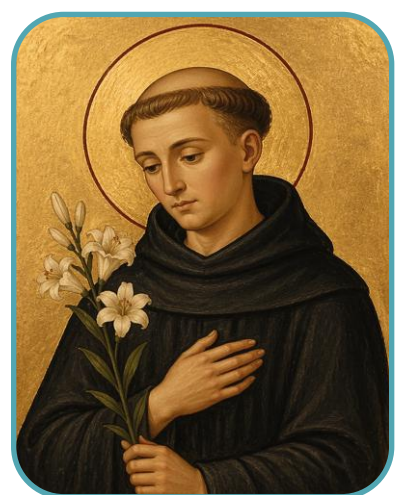
Usually the prayer and the remembrance of certain events in the life of the saint are inserted into the celebration of Mass over fifteen Thursdays, which are presented and celebrated as a journey through the **fundamental stages** of her existence: from childhood to love for Paolo, from the gift of her children to the great and terrible trials, from consecration to the total gift of herself for love, on the Cross with Christ.

This path helps religious and the faithful to read the life of Saint Rita as an **itinerary of sanctification**, in which suffering does not extinguish love, but purifies it and makes it fruitful.

Saint Rita appears as a witness of charity that overcomes evil with good. In her are reflected humility, patience, forgiveness, and the ability to bear the Cross interiorly without despair. Her life shows that the heart, even through trials, can be transformed by grace.

3. The Septenary of Saint Nicholas for the Souls in Purgatory

The Septenary for the souls in purgatory expresses in a very living way the faith of the Church in the communion of saints and in charity toward the deceased. It is linked in a special way to the figure of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, whom tradition presents as a great **intercessor for the souls in purgatory.** Indeed, Pope Eugene IV, canonizing Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in 1446, proclaimed him special Patron of the Church militant and purgative, because of his great charity toward the souls in purgatory.



According to the tradition of the Septenary, on the occasion of the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, **seven successive Masses** are celebrated over the course of a week so that the souls in Purgatory may be freed from their sufferings and may reach the glory of holy Paradise, in imitation of what Saint Nicholas did, who, having celebrated seven Masses in suffrage for them, freed a great multitude.

The invocations of the Septenary present at the beginning the intercession addressed to Saint Nicholas: “*now in Heaven be for me advocate and intercessor before God,*” in order to obtain relief and liberation for the suffering souls. Then follow prayers to **Christ the Lord**, in which the mysteries of his Incarnation, his humility, his charity, his Passion, and his death on the Cross are recalled, applying the fruit of redemption to the souls in purgatory.

This exercise of piety also has a strong consonance with Discalced Augustinian spirituality. Saint Augustine contemplates the Church as one single body, united by love, in which the members support one another mutually. To pray for the deceased means to live this **communion** concretely, knowing that charity is not interrupted by death. Moreover, the Septenary educates the heart to look beyond the visible, to remember the last things, and to live the present time with greater responsibility. For the religious, it also becomes a school of mercy, of prayerful remembrance, and of Paschal hope.

4. The *Benedicta tu*



The *Benedicta tu* is a paralyturgy in honor of **Our Lady of Grace**. The *Ritual* recalls that it was “*already recommended by the General Chapter of the Augustinian Order of 1284*” and that it is recited

on **May 8**, according to the common liturgical calendar of the Augustinian family, and optionally also on Saturday, when the liturgy of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not celebrated (Rit. 174).

The celebration is composed of Psalm 8, a Marian reading, the responsory, and the con-

cluding prayer (Rit., 175). The antiphon introduces the prayer with **Latin words** that express all the veneration of the Church toward the Mother of the Lord: “*Benedicta tu...*”, that is, “*Blessed are you, O Mary, among all women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb*” (Rit. 176).

Particularly significant is the proposal of the Ritual to insert a reading taken from the texts of Saint Augustine on the Blessed Virgin Mary (Rit. 178).

Among these there emerges a spiritual line very dear to the Augustinian tradition: Mary is blessed not only because she conceived Christ in the flesh, but even more because she received Him in faith. In this way, the *Benedicta tu* is not only a Marian devotion, but also a **school of interiority**.

Mary becomes for the religious the model of faith received in the heart, of docility to the Word, and of spiritual motherhood lived in the Church.

5. The Chaplet of the Blessed *Virgin of the Cinture* (or of Consolation)



The *Ritual* recalls that our religious venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary in a particular way under the title of **Our Lady of Consolation or of the Cinture**, and adds that it is traditional to recite this prayer by renewing the profession of faith of the Apostles’ Creed, “*imitating the Apostles, who in the Upper Room persevered united in prayer with some women and with Mary, the Mother of Jesus*” (Rit. 744).

This prayer may be recited on the Solemnity of the Mother of Consolation, **September 4**, or on a Saturday (Rit. 744).

The chaplet unfolds through the **twelve articles of the Apostles’ Creed**. After each article, a reading from Saint Augustine is proposed, followed by a brief silence and the recitation of a Hail Mary. This interweaving of profession of faith, Augustinian meditation, and Marian prayer makes the Chaplet particularly rich.

The Chaplet is not merely an affective devotion, but a true **contemplative journey** that helps one to meditate upon the mysteries of the faith at the school of Mary and with the theology of Saint Augustine, uniting the faith professed, the truth meditated upon, and the love prayed.

Conclusion

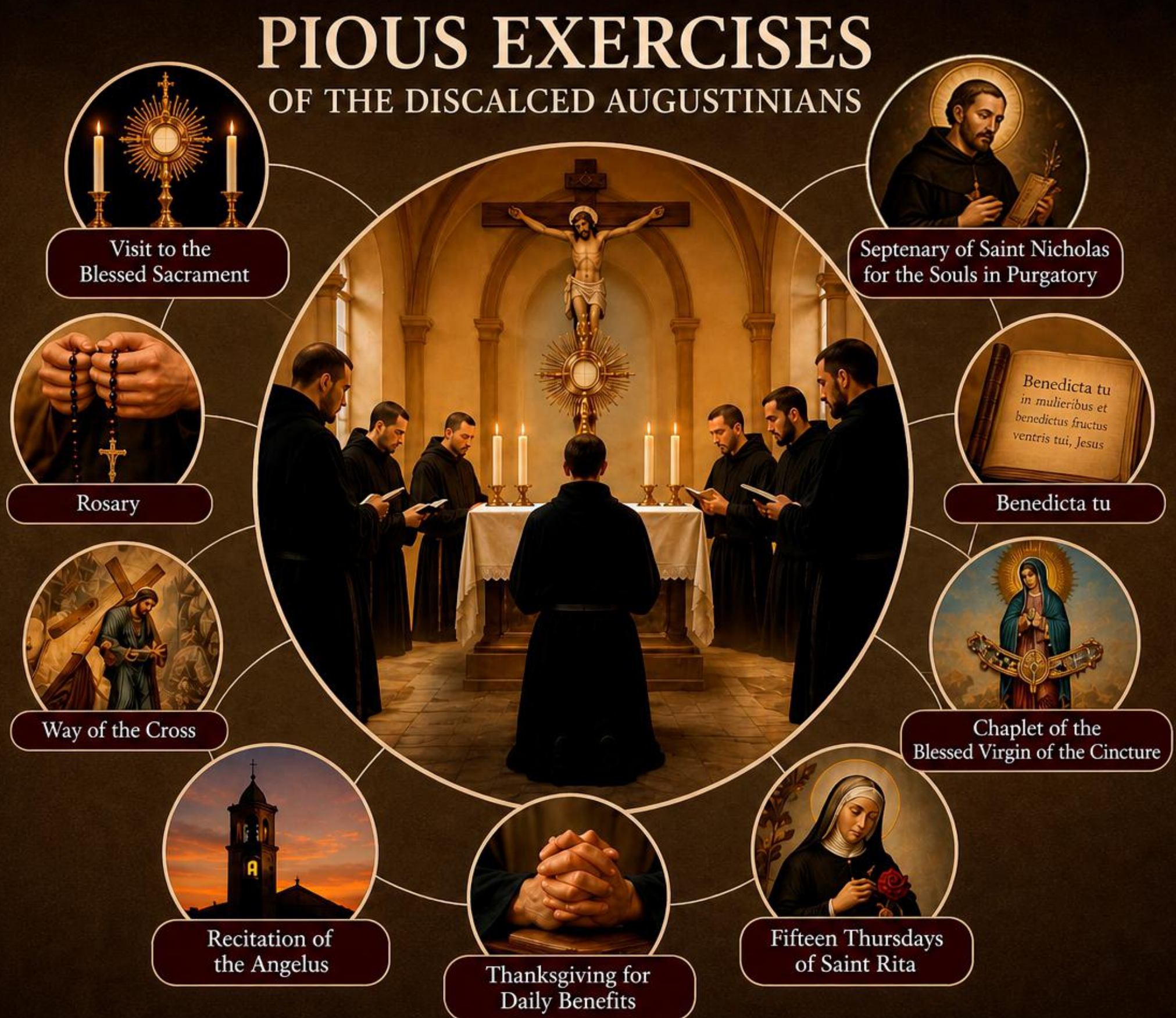
These pious exercises must be harmonized with the liturgical actions of the Church, in particular with the Eucharistic Celebration, the sacrament of Reconciliation, and the other sacraments and sacramentals, so that they may help religious to sanctify their own lives through the divine grace that flows from the Paschal Mystery.

The Discalced Augustinians also express unity of spirit and heart, the foundation of religious life, through communal prayer, especially in the Liturgy of the Hours. In it they follow the teaching of Saint Augustine: *“When you pray to God with psalms and hymns, meditate in your heart on what you utter with your voice”* (Reg. 12). Thus they unite themselves to the Church in the hymn of praise to the Father, introduced on earth by Jesus the High Priest, and cooperate in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ (*Liturgy of the Hours* 24).

The pious exercises proper to our tradition clearly manifest that the spiritual life develops in profound harmony with the Liturgy of the Church: they are not parallel realities, but concrete ways in which the mystery celebrated is received, meditated upon, and prolonged in daily life. In them there constantly emerges the desire to be conformed to Christ, to live fraternal communion, and to tend toward full union with God.

In this perspective, communal prayer, the remembrance of benefits received, Marian devotion, suffrage for the deceased, and the contemplation of the Augustinian saints become authentic paths of interior growth. They help religious to live according to the teaching of Saint Augustine, so that the heart may agree with the voice in prayer.

Rooted in the tradition of the Order and nourished by the Liturgy, these exercises thus contribute to building up a religious life that is more intense, more united, and ever more oriented toward God.

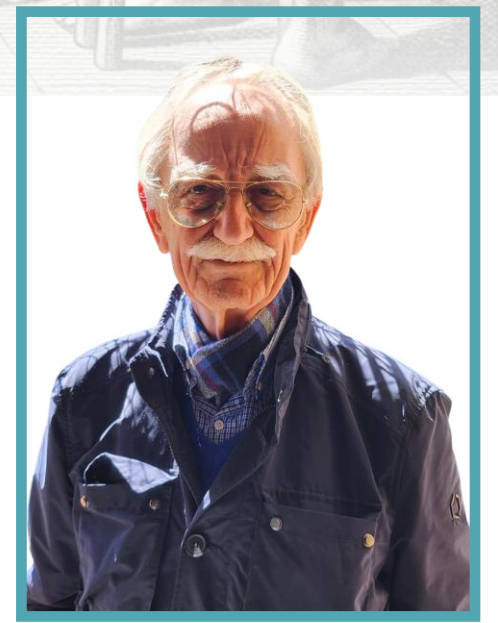




Church of Gesù e Maria in Rome

Some Light on the Painter Cleofe Garofoli

Antonio Rossilli



1. A Place to Be Rediscovered in the Heart of Rome

In Rome, along the historic Via del Corso toward Piazza del Popolo, one may notice on the right, at number 45, the façade (Baroque yet sober) of the church of Gesù e Maria. The Discalced Augustinians decided to build it beginning in 1619, entrusting the design to Carlo Buzio, a young “Milanese” architect, as attested by archival documents and as maintained in his monograph by Ignazio Barbagallo (1), a respected scholar of history and art (2). The attribution to Carlo Maderno appears, on the contrary, scarcely credible.

When, in January 1636, the church was consecrated and opened to the faithful, the building was still incomplete, so much so that externally it appeared with “the aspect of a barn”(3). Only about thirty years later was it decided to complete the construction, entrusting the work to Carlo Rainaldi, who designed a simple and well-balanced façade: a single portal with a curved tympanum,

a framed large window, the articulated cornice of the pediment, and two lateral brick sections.

2. Baroque Harmony between Art and Spirituality

For this reason, it often escapes the attention of the distracted passerby or the hurried tourist drawn instead to the masterpieces of Raffaello Sanzio, Caravaggio, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the nearby Santa Maria del Popolo. Yet, once discovered and entered, one cannot but be surprised by unexpected artistic creations that transform the single nave into an extraordinary casket, enveloping the observer in an immersive space of faith and art.

Stucco statues, marble figures, and polychrome paintings, arranged among pillars, pilasters, and refined columns, combine to evoke wonder, emotion, and devotion, giving rise to a total work of art that engages the viewer. This emotional and spiritual “magic” of the Baroque, which seeks to awaken religious sentiment and



Church of Gesù e Maria, Rome

guide consciences toward the Divine, arises not only from the rich presbytery designed by Rainaldi or from the Assumption of the Virgin on the barrel vault and the Coronation of Mary in the central altarpiece painted by Giacinto Brandi (4), but also from the seraphic angels that adorn the interior, from the counter-façade to the presbyterial arch.

Particularly striking are the extraordinary funerary monuments, sculpted between 1682 and 1685 by Lorenzo Ottoni and Francesco Aprile (5), which, set within theatrical loggias, portray members of the Bolognetti family in vivid dialogue, creating a scenographic context in which the visitor feels involved, almost witnessing an encounter between past and present.

Yet the reference to the so-called “co-presence of times” evokes a scenography already seen in another Roman church, namely the “noble choir boxes” of the Cappella Cornaro in Santa Maria della Vittoria, conceived around 1650 by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. There, members of the Venetian noble family, sculpted in half-length, converse and discourse at the sides of the sculptural group depicting the transverberation and divine ecstasy of Teresa of Avila—“an exceptional creation of Berninian art, without which we would not understand the seventeenth century in the novelty of its expressive values”(6).

3. The Altarpiece of Saint Thomas of Villanova

Returning to the Chiesa di Gesù e Maria, among the altarpieces that adorn the six chapels—three on each side of the richly decorated nave—it is toward the first on the left, decorated in 1678 by Maddalena Ferrini, that curiosity and interest converge.

First of all, because the large canvas (294 × 192 cm) depicts Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valencia, recently mentioned by Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican Consistory Hall, recalling his “love for the poor,” which earned him the title “almoner of God” (7). The painting, in fact, presents the saintly friar in ecstatic ascent, his gaze directed toward heaven (8), who, together with two confreres, distributes bread to the poor.

However, up to the present day, the lack of certain information regarding the author of this altarpiece has weighed heavily; it has at times been attributed to Carlo Garofoli or identified only by an inaccurate surname (9).

4. Cleofe Garofoli: A Painter to Be Rediscovered

This painter (his given name evokes the biblical scene of the Supper at Emmaus) is Cleofe Garofoli, son of Antonio and Rita Romani, born in Rome around 1852.



Cleofe Garofoli, *Saint Thomas of Villanova*

In the academic competition organized by the Accademia di San Luca in 1869, he was counted among the “first considered with praise,” both in the School of the Nude and in the School of Drapery (10); the following year, one finds a “pen drawing” of his, depicting the Assumption, at the Roman Exhibition dedicated to Christian art and Catholic worship in the cloister of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri (11).

This exhibition, desired by Pope Pius IX concurrently with the First Vatican Council, was intended to reaffirm the value of sacred art and to defend, even though its end was by then imminent, that indispensable temporal power, “so that the Holy See, the stronghold and bulwark of the Catholic Faith, may, without impediment, exercise its sacred authority in the interest of Religion,” a principle reiterated in pontifical letters, such as the encyclical *Qui Nuper* (1859).

On 5 September 1879, the Roman daily *L’Opinione* reported that “in the hall of the *Società artistica del Popolo* a painting by Mr. Cleofe Garofoli will be exhibited, representing Saint Thomas of Villanova in the act of giving alms. The painting has been made for the church of *Gesù e Maria* in Rome.” Shortly thereafter, on 5 October 1879, the periodical *Roma: Antologia Illustrata* devoted far greater attention to the artist in an article by Ottavio Pio Conti, an expert in art and consistorial advocate, who, noting that the painting was already on display in the church on Via del Corso, described Garofoli as a “good master painter [...] with his merits and defects,” whose figures “recall something of Titian, of Paolo Veronese, of Domenico Morelli, and of the late Mariano Fortuny.”

It must be acknowledged that, even after nearly a century and a half, the critical and

descriptive observations of Conti, himself the author of a booklet in defense of “Christian art,” remain of considerable interest (12).

Indeed, upon attentive observation of this canvas, which does not evoke sentimentalism but rather devotion, one perceives a certain eclecticism: the brushstroke is “pure,” not fragmented, and the contours of the forms are clearly defined; the woman with bare feet and a child in her arms, though poor, assumes a noble posture, her garments humble yet carefully rendered in detail, while the face of the elderly man displays a realism free from excess. What stands out in the composition, due to a certain stylistic dissonance, is the head of Saint Thomas; yet this observation is somewhat expected, since, as has already been noted, it was entirely retouched in the 1920s.

Moreover, in his article on Garofoli, Conti reports that the painter had for several years been among the most sought-after illustrators of *Antologia Illustrata*. From this it emerges that Cleofe also delighted in translating stories and historical figures into images for periodicals and books. Thus, when Luigi Palomba published the *Life of Giuseppe Garibaldi* (13) in 1882, several illustrations bear his signature, written entirely in capital letters, with the initial “C.” followed by Garofoli.

Unfortunately, after 1882, traces of Garofoli disappear, and he is no longer cited as either

painter or illustrator. Yet, in the *Guida Monaci* of 1915, he still appears among “painters of figure, history, landscape, and genre,” residing at Via della Frezza 50, in the Campo Marzio district (14). Many plausible hypotheses may be advanced: from the erroneous transcription of his name to the emergence of new artistic trends, from various forms of critical dismissal to a possible preference for private commissions. The only certainty is that “Cleofe Garofoli, aged sixty-five, painter and [...] unmarried,” died on 16 February 1917 (Comune di Roma, Atti di morte 1917, vol. 2, p. 2, series B, no. 835).

5. An Artistic Legacy to Be Valued

Today, in the church of Gesù e Maria, the altarpiece of Saint Thomas of Villanova continues to bear witness to the artistic and spiritual sensitivity of Cleofe Garofoli. Although not counted among the universally renowned masterpieces, it significantly contributes to elevating the spirit and nourishing devotion.

For this reason, it would merit greater attention in guides and studies dedicated to the artistic heritage of Rome. Like many lesser-known works, it participates in shaping a place that remains, even today, a living space of faith, art, and welcome in the heart of the city.

(1) Cfr. BARBAGALLO, Ignazio. *La chiesa di Gesù e Maria in Roma*. Roma 1967 (ristampa 2002), pp. 18, 87.

(2) Ignazio Barbagallo (1914-1982) fu autore di numerose pubblicazioni, tra cui *La Madonna di Guadalupe nella chiesa di Sant'Agostino in Frosinone* (1976) e *La chiesa di San Nicola da Tolentino in Palermo* (1979).

(3) Cfr. MARCHIONNE GUNTER, Alfredo. Gesù e Maria, in “Roma Sacra”, anno I, n. 1. Roma 1995, p. 38.

(4) Cfr. SERAFINELLI, Guendalina. *Giacinto Brandi (1621-1691): Catalogo ragionato delle opere*, vol. I. Torino 2015, pp. 157-164.

(5) Cfr. BARBAGALLO, Ignazio. *op.cit.*, pp. 89, 98; MARCHIONNE GUNTER, Alfredo. *op.cit.*, p. 40; FERRARI, Oreste; PAPALDO, Serenita. *Le sculture del Seicento a Roma*. Roma 1999, pp. 108-125.

(6) Cfr. MARIANI, Valerio. *Le chiese di Roma dal XVII al XVIII secolo*. Bologna 1963, p. 86.

(7) osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2025-12-29; 4 febbraio 2026.

(8) Nel 1925 ca., durante un restauro del dipinto, la testa del Santo fu rifatta completamente dal catanese Sebastiano Conti Consoli (1885 ca.-1950 ca.), un pittore che operò soprattutto a Catania e dintorni.

(9) Cfr. CIGLIA, Simone. Scheda n° 480, in *Santo Tomás de Villanueva. Culto, historia y arte, vol. II. Corpus iconográfico*, a cura di ITURBE SAÍZ, Antonio; TOLLO, Roberto. Madrid-Tolentino 2013, pp. 267-268.

(10) Cfr. *Giornale di Roma*, n. 163, 21 luglio 1869, p. 656.

(11) Cfr. *Catalogo degli oggetti ammessi all'Esposizione Romana del 1870*. Roma 1870, p. 80, n. 6.

(12) CONTI, Ottavio Pio. *Cenni critici sopra le belle arti in Italia*. Roma 1874.

(13) Cfr. PALOMBA, Luigi. *La vita di Giuseppe Garibaldi*. Roma 1882.

(14) Cfr. *Guida Monaci*. Roma 1915, p. 1166.



Some Pictures

Sharing a Bit of Our Life

Marsala - Italy

March 3, Lenten Meeting for the Communities of Southern Italy

The confreres of the communities of Valverde, Palermo, and Marsala gathered in Marsala for a day of fraternal encounter and spiritual retreat during the season of Lent. The day began with the celebration of the Mass, followed by a moment of Eucharistic adoration together with the faithful of the local community.

Subsequently, Fr. Michael Tukov led the reflection on the theme *“Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion,”* taking as a reference the message of Pope Leo XIV for Lent, published on February 5, 2026, as well as the Pope’s homily for Ash Wednesday.

The meeting concluded with a fraternal moment at table, an occasion of sharing and communion among the religious of the communities of Sicily.



Accra - Ghana

March 2–6, Triennial Meeting of the Augustinian Federation of Africa (AFA)

The event brought together 36 representatives from 13 religious institutions inspired by the spirituality of Augustine of Hippo, with the aim of strengthening collaboration and formation across the continent. The program addressed crucial pastoral and social challenges, including the fight against poverty, social injustice, and the formation of youth in the light of Augustinian spirituality. Among the speakers were the Archbishop of Accra and several members of the Order, who

reflected on the role of consecrated life in the contemporary African context, making reference to the exhortation *Dilexit nos*. The meeting concluded with the renewal of leadership roles: Fr. Kenneth Eze was confirmed as President, while our confrere Fr. Etienne Atanga (from the community of Bafut) was elected Vice President.

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to act as “one heart and one soul,” promoting a mission of service and fraternity in response to the needs of African communities and of the Church. A moment of profound communion that renews and strengthens the Augustinian witness in Africa.



Fermo - Italy

March 5–9, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The Community of Madonna della Misericordia received the Canonical Visit of the Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, accompanied by the General Secretary, Fr. Diones Rafael Paganotto.

The Visitors entered into the daily life of the local religious through common prayer, personal interviews, and the examination of registers and conventual structures. Beyond the internal dimension, the visitation also engaged important realities of the local territory, including a meeting with the Archbishop of Fermo, Msgr. Rocco Pennacchio, and a visit to the Hospital Augusto Murri. Particular emphasis was placed on the lay and missionary dimension, thanks to moments of dialogue with collaborators of the Shrine and with members of

the Association of Discalced Augustinian Missionaries (AMAS). The stay concluded with a moment of grace for the community: the conferral of the ministry of Acolyte upon Fra Ferdinand Ngong.



Valverde - Italy

March 10, Meeting of the Bishops of Sicily

The Bishops of the eighteen Sicilian dioceses gathered at the Sanctuary of Valverde for an intense vigil of prayer for peace in the world. The event, held within the framework of the spring session of the Sicilian Episcopal Conference, responded to the papal call to fasting and prayer. The celebration alternated meditations inspired by *Pacem in*

Terris, hymns, and Eucharistic adoration. The culminating moment was the *aux flambeaux* procession, which concluded with the entrustment to the Blessed Virgin Mary of the victims of conflicts. The gathering strongly reaffirmed that peace, a divine gift and a human responsibility, remains the response to the violence that marks the present condition of peoples.



Acquaviva Picena - Italy

March 10–13, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The House of San Lorenzo Martire received the Canonical Visit of the Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, together with the General Secretary. The Visit alternated

moments of administrative review, personal meetings with the religious, and encounters with the local ecclesial reality, including the Bishop, Msgr. Gianpiero Palmieri, and various lay associations, as well as a visit to the confrere Fr. Giuliano Del Medico, who is currently residing in a care facility due to a health condition.



Acquaviva Picena - Italy

March 13, Lenten Meeting for the Communities of Central Italy

The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, led a day of spiritual retreat for the religious of Central Italy (Fermo, Naples, and Frosinone), in preparation for Easter, at the community of Acquaviva Picena. At the center of the meditation was number 3 of the

Constitutions: "Joyfully to serve the Most High in spirit of humility." The Prior General deepened the biblical and Augustinian roots of this pillar of the charism, exhorting the confreres to live service and fraternity with authentic simplicity. The day concluded with a fraternal meal, a valuable moment of sharing that strengthened the bonds among the different communities of the Province.



Genova - Italy

March 16, Lenten Meeting for the Communities of Northern Italy

The confreres of the four communities of Northern Italy (Collegno and Genoa) gathered at the Santuario della Madonnetta for a fraternal moment of preparation for Easter.

The meeting was enriched by a reflection on the Resurrection offered by Fr. Eugenio Cavallari, followed by an intense period of Eucharistic adoration. The day concluded with a shared meal, in an atmosphere of communion and fraternity.





Ampére - Brazil

March 14, 50th Anniversary of the Presence of the Discalced Augustinians

The community of Ampére celebrated the 50th anniversary of our presence, marking half a century of evangelization and social service. The solemn celebration, presided over by the diocesan Bishop, Msgr. Edgar Xavier Ertl, at the Santa Teresinha e Santo Agostinho Parish, recalled the arrival of the pioneers in 1976: Fr. Antonio Desideri, Fr. Angelo Carú, and Fr. Rosario Palo.

Over these fifty years, the work of the Order has borne remarkable fruits, including the construction of the parish church and the

Seminario Sant'Agostino (1978), a vital center that has led to the formation of 82 priests. Among the key figures remembered were Msgr. Luigi Vicente Bernetti and the Servant of God Angelo Possidio Carú, a promoter of vocations whose beatification process began in 2022.

Beyond pastoral ministry, the social impact has been profound thanks to housing initiatives and the Projeto Luti for youth. The day, enriched by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque, concluded with a fraternal meal, reaffirming the bond between the Augustinian charism and the local community in a spirit of gratitude and renewed missionary zeal.

Ho Chi Minh City - Vietnam

March 19, Solemn Profession

At the parish where our House is located in Ho Chi Minh City, the Solemn Profession of two Vietnamese confreres took place: Fra Dinh Van Dinh and Fra Nguyen Duc Trong.

With this definitive step, the two religious consecrated their lives forever to God in our Order, confirming their commitment to evangelical discipleship in common life, in prayer, and in service to the Church.

The rite of Profession was presided over by Fr. Luigi Kerschbamer, Prior Provincial of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, in the presence of the local parish priest, confreres, family members, friends, and benefactors.

The solemn profession, lived in an atmosphere of deep participation and recollection, represented a moment of great joy for the entire Order, the Province, and the communities in Vietnam, a sign of hope and of vocational growth in mission territory.



Rome - Italy

March 20–23, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The community of Chiesa di Gesù e Maria, seat of the International College, received the Canonical Visit of the Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, together with the General Secretary, Fr. Diones Rafael Paganotto. The program of the visitation combined institutional and pastoral moments: participation in the Way of the Cross in the historic center, with an encoun-

ter with the Vicegerent of Rome, Msgr. Renato Tarantelli; numerous occasions for individual meetings with the twelve religious and for the examination of the registers, concluding with a meeting addressed to the Professed. During the Visit, the involvement of the faithful and of the laity was also evident, particularly that of the Filipino group and the Legio Mariae. This significant moment concluded with the awareness that the community had been given an important opportunity for evaluation and spiritual growth.



April 6–8, Easter Meeting

In the days following Easter, the confreres of the Province of Saint Rita de Cássia experienced days of fraternity, rest, and celebration during the Easter Octave. The confreres of the southern communities of the Province gathered in Nova Londrina for meaningful moments of fraternity, sharing,

and spiritual renewal. Likewise, the confreres of the communities of Rio de Janeiro and Mato Grosso met within their respective regions, living this Easter season in a spirit of communion, rest, and gratitude.

These were days marked by the joy of encounter, the strength of fraternity, and the beauty of celebrating together the hope of the Resurrection.

**Rome - Italy****April 11, Diaconal Ordination**

At the Church of Gesù e Maria, Msgr. Nunzio Galantino ordained three confreres of the Asian Province to the diaconate: Ta Quang

Trung, Ephafroditus Fau, and Phan Thanh Vu, students of the International College Fra Luigi Chmel. The three new deacons celebrated this milestone in the presence of confreres, friends, and other religious, in a spirit of joy and thanksgiving.



Genoa - Italy

April 14-17, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The Prior General, Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, and the Secretary General, Fr. Diones Rafael Paganotto, carried out the Canonical Visit of the Santuario della Madonnetta. The days were dedicated to discernment and to the

evaluation of religious life through personal meetings, the examination of registers, and the inspection of the convent and sanctuary structures. The Visit also included moments of encounter with the faithful, confirming itself as an important occasion of listening and accompaniment for this historic sanctuary within the ecclesial reality of Genoa. **32**



Genoa - Italy

April 18-22, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The Residence of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino received the Canonical Visit of the Prior General. The days were devoted to sharing community life with the confreres and to

gaining a deeper understanding of the parish reality of San Nicola Parish, where the confreres are directly engaged in pastoral service. Throughout the Visit, meetings were held with the Pastoral Council, the catechists, the Listening Center, and the Rangers Group, all of whom expressed appreciation for our presence and activity.





Cebu City - Philippines

20-24 aprile, Retreat of the Simple Professed

The confreres concluded their annual canonical retreat, held at the community of Tabor Hill. Under the spiritual guidance of Fr.

Vergara, OSA, the confreres experienced moments dedicated to prayer, silence, and deep reflection. This time of recollection enabled them to strengthen their bond with God and to renew with zeal their Augustinian vocation, growing in interior freedom and in fraternity.



Genoa - Italy

23-27 aprile, Canonical Visit of the Prior General

The Prior General and the Secretary General carried out the Canonical Visit of the Community of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, in the district of Sestri Ponente in Genoa. Welcomed by the confreres, the Visitors fol-

lowed an intense schedule that included an ecclesial meeting with the Archbishop of Genoa, Msgr. Marco Tasca, as well as dialogues with the Vincentians, the catechists, and the parishioners. This time of grace proved to be a fundamental opportunity for communion and planning, strengthening the religious commitment and the pastoral service of the local community.



Message from the Prior General

Liturgy in the Life

Fr. Nei Márcio Simon, oad



Dear confreres, affiliates, friends, and family members,

the spiritual journey of the Discalced Augustinians is also recognized in the richness of its pious exercises: a discreet and luminous path that leads us to a more authentic intimacy with God and to a more fraternal communion among us.

At the heart of the Augustinian tradition, sobriety and contemplation safeguard essential devotional practices. In their simplicity, they open to a profound meaning: they teach the peace that springs from entrusting oneself with confidence into the hands of the Father.

Practices of piety are not habits to be preserved out of inertia, but sources from which to draw. They remind us that holiness matures in daily life, in humble and persevering gestures. If we live them with an attentive heart, we learn to recognize God in ordinary actions and to become, through our lives, signs of hope.

It is therefore essential that the Liturgy and the pious exercises maintain a constant relationship of exchange. Both are at the service of divine worship, and it is necessary that the delicate balance between these two realities always be safeguarded. One must never forget that salvific grace flows from the Sacrifice and from the sacraments, which are the summit of the Liturgy.

This certainty must also guide and properly value the freshness and genuineness of devotional practices, which, in fact, enrich the Liturgy itself.

