

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE: *'With You I Am a Christian!'* – St Augustine

10 / 11 July 2010

Dear Friends

As we conclude our series of reflections on the Priesthood, we share some excerpts from St Augustine himself, preaching on the Anniversary of his Ordination as Bishop (Sermon 340).

'From the moment this burden, about which such a difficult account has to be rendered, was placed on my shoulders, anxiety about the honour shown me has always indeed been haunting me. But this sort of consideration troubles me much more when the anniversary brings back afresh the old memory of that day, and sets it before my very eyes in such a way, that I feel as though I were coming up today to receive what I have already received all that time ago.'

'What, though, is to be dreaded in this office, if not that I may take more pleasure which is so dangerous, in the honour shown me, than in what bears fruit in your salvation? Let me therefore have the assistance of your prayers, that the one who did not disdain to bear with me may also deign to bear my burden with me. When you pray like that, you are also praying for yourselves. This burden of mine, you see, about which I am now speaking, what else is it, after all but you? Pray for strength for me, just as I pray that you may not be too heavy ...'

'Where I am terrified by what I am for you, I am given comfort by what I am with you. For you I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian. The first is the name of an office undertaken, the second a name of grace; that one means danger, this one salvation. Finally, as if in the open sea, I am being tossed about by the stormy activity involved in that one; but as I recall by whose blood I have been redeemed, I enter a safe harbour in the tranquil recollection of this one; and thus while toiling away at my own proper office, I take my rest in the marvellous benefit conferred on all of us in common ...'

'So I hope the fact that I have been bought together with you gives me more pleasure than my having been placed at your head; then, as the Lord has commanded, I will be more effectively your servant, and be preserved from ingratitude for the price by which I was bought to be, not too unworthy, your fellow servant ...'

'In all the vast and varied activity involved in fulfilling such manifold responsibilities, please give me your help by both your prayers and your obedience. In this way I will find pleasure not so much in being in charge of you as in being of use to you ...'

'So let us pray together, dearly beloved, that my tenure as bishop may be of profit both to me and to you. It will profit me, if I tell you what has to be done; and you, if you do what you hear. You see, if we all pray tirelessly, I for you and you for me, with the perfect love of charity, we shall all happily attain, with the Lord's help, to eternal bliss. May he be graciously pleased to grant us this, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.'

Let us pray often for Pope Benedict and the Bishops of the Church,

Fr Dave