

(January 6, 1919 - September 13, 1987)

Florent Aldeo Pinard entered our Marist Brotherhood from Hevey School in Manchester, New Hampshire. He was invested into the Institute at St. Ann's in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1936, completed his Scholasticate in 1939, and made his vow of stability in 1957. Brother Augustine served as principal of Our Lady of Lourdes High School in Poughkeepsie, New York and Central Catholic High School in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He was also Dean of Discipline at Mount Saint Michael Academy in Bronx, New York and a teacher for many years. "Pop" died in Lawrence, Massachusetts after a long battle with cancer.

Brother Thomas Petite delivered the eulogy at St. Anne Church, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

During the past several years the Marist Brothers, family members, and friends of the Brothers have often gathered here in St. Anne's Church to celebrate the rebirth of one of our Brothers into eternal life and to support one another in the natural human grief that accompanies the pain of earthly separation and the reality of death. Sometimes death comes suddenly and surprisingly as a thief in the night. Sometimes it has lingered and seemed to be a natural companion to the final years of old age. Then at other times it has been viewed as a tardy friend, whose coming is hoped for in order to release one from a life that has become overly burdensome for a frail, pain-wracked body. No matter what our Brother's stage of life or age when death visits him, those who are left gather in the community room or stand talking in the hallways about the experience of heaven that the deceased Brother must now be enjoying.

Often, as we attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible, we Christians arrive at some strange ideas and even stranger analogies. Throughout the centuries some of the greatest religious thinkers have struggled with and attempted to explain the issue of death and heaven. St. Augustine, when writing of our journey back to our heavenly homeland, gave the analogy of two horses carrying their masters to a banquet at the king's table. On the journey, these horses discussed what they thought would be a marvelous menu at the king's banquet... They finally agreed that the most perfect meal for their masters would be chopped hay and toasted oats! Their horse appetites could not imagine anything better.

Like St. Augustine's talking horses, our earthly values, the things we consider important, find their expression in our ideas of heaven. For many of us our worldly values, mostly centered upon ourselves and our sense-satisfaction, determine what so often are distorted views of heaven. If we like to golf as Brother Augustine did, then heaven will mean never waiting to tee off, but unending matches with exciting shots and holes-in-one. If we like classical music as Brother Augustine did, then Beethoven and friends will be there to perform for us. And, of course, there will never be any lines in which to wait, appointments to keep, or meetings to attend, all of which Brother Augustine disliked. He used to say meetings are places where you keep minutes and waste hours.

Our often sugary, self-centered ideas of heaven do not match God's revealed word in scripture. The essence of heaven, as Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, is among "the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Although we cannot imagine what awaits us, just as a child in the mother's womb cannot imagine the life that awaits it outside its confinement, yet from scripture and the sublime moments of joy we have experienced on earth we can gather some ideas of our life with God that we call the Kingdom of Heaven.

When we strip away all our earthly imagination about heaven as an objective place where we will be eternally happy without any more suffering, and turn to scripture, we find heaven as relationship. We relate to God in joy, peace, and complete fulfillment. We think of heaven and see God as the goal of all our earthly striving. He alone is the complete reason for our existence. The idea of heaven therefore stresses the fullness of our awareness that God is not only the beginning and end of all reality, but that He is in fact our God! We were created out of God's Trinitarian community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to share intimately in the very life of God. He who is love wants us to enter into that ongoing life of the Trinity's love. This awareness of a personal, loving God guided the life of Brother

Augustine. He seemed to be driven by an inner force, a burning passionate desire to know and lovingly serve God in the deepest intimacy possible. A gentleness and caring about this man permeated his life and touched all of us who knew him. He was not only content to be unseen and out of the limelight, but often spent much of his time trying to be unobtrusive and lost in the crowd. Whenever a community or provincial election approached, the Brothers would threaten to vote for him and Brother Augustine, unsure of whether we were serious or not, would become flustered and begin to list the reasons why he was not the right man for the job. He never sought positions of leadership but was always willing to do any job for the community or school, even if that meant being the moderator of the girl cheerleaders.

This spirit of humility, dedication, and service endeared him to the Brothers and to a tremendous number of students. We often joked with him about being a "smart man" and a "saint" With a smile that said he knew better, Brother Augustine would tell of his early childhood when as- according to him, "I was always in trouble." He told us of being a youngster in Manchester and belonging to a very close-knit and religious French- Canadian family. He often got in trouble for throwing stones at St. Patrick's Irish Church. Since the parishioners didn't speak French, he

knew they couldn't be Catholics. He had a specially mischievous twinkle in his eye when he told how his mother sent him to St. Joseph's Juniorate in Tyngsboro so "the Brothers could straighten me out.~' From those early days that seemed so wild came a respected, much loved educator, friend, and Religious Brother whom many of us fondly called "Pop."

As an educator and administrator, Brother Augustine brought an unsurpassed sense of professionalism and dedication. His love of mathematics was exceeded only by his love for his students and for young people in general. Those young men who were fortunate to have been in his class always spoke of how clearly he presented his material, the interest he had in each student, and the extraordinarily loud snap of his fingers that would inevitably sound the call to prepare for prayer. His concern for his students went beyond academics and reached the very core of their being. Upper- most in his mind was their spiritual welfare and so, regardless of what prayer was said over the public address system at the end of the school day, Brother Augustine's class would always stand and say the Act of Contrition before leaving for the day.

Brother Augustine knew the difference between being a friend and just an acquaintance. His close friendship with Dr. Gene Connelly and his family was one of his most valued possessions; he treasured his visits when they opened their hearts and home to welcome him as one of the family. A man who intellectually could be at home with college presidents, professionals, and researchers went out of his way to gather poor children from the neighborhood surrounding Central Catholic to teach them string art and how to paint peach stones for play jewelry. It was not unusual for a Brother to answer the door bell and have a small child ask if Brother Gus could come out and play. Once again Brother Gus saw the beauty in simple things and used them to present spiritual values. All the children in the neighborhood gathered daily in October and May to pray the rosary with their beloved Brother Gus. Our Lady was his dearest and most valuable friend.

To many of us here he was both friend and Religious Brother. I arrived in Lawrence as a young administrator sixteen years ago with absolutely no experience in administration. Brother Augustine, along with Brother Marcel and Brother Vincent, was a source of advice and encouragement to me. His support during many trying times helped to make a difficult job bearable. His sensitivity to the needs of the poor and suffering was intense and sincere. He could not watch the reports of suffering children in Ethiopia on television nor read of the increasing problem of homeless families in America without tears in his eyes and an unsettling heaviness in his heart. For years he supported an orphan child in India and bought Thanksgiving turkeys for local poor families from his own small monthly stipend.

I will miss Brother's concern, his kindness, his laughter at my French-Canadian jokes, the sight of him walking in the driveway fingering his worn rosary beads, or with computer manuals under his arm, a crushed blue cloth hat on his head, struggling to go to the school's computer room in spite of his weakened condition.

During one of his many visits to Pop in the hospital, Gene Connelly gave him a collection of quotes that he thought Pop would enjoy reading. Pop was touched deeply by the words of a Negro spiritual and put them to music. On Gene's next visit, Pop sang the following for him:

Goin' home, goin' home,
I'm a-goin' home,

Quiet like, some still day
I'm just goin' home.

Mother's there 'spectin' me,
Father's there waitin' too,

Lots of folks gather there,
All the friends I knew.

Pop, this evening may our Mother Mary and her loving Son welcome you home.