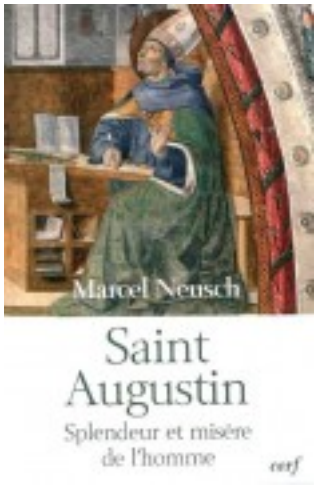


Fr. Marcel Neusch, philosopher and theologian, has read St. Augustine a lot. He has studied him a lot, reflected on him a lot, and also taught about him a lot. He has done so as a professor in theological schools and seminaries, as a retreat master, and as a conference speaker --- before the most varied audiences and at every level. He has also written a lot on the bishop of Hippo, in erudite tomes as well as humble magazines. Without being a 'specialist' of St. Augustine in the strict sense of the word, let us say that Marcel Neusch knows his subject. And he knows how to make him known and loved thanks to his recognized ability as teacher and as one who knows how to make complex information accessible.

Clarity, simplicity, competence, pedagogy ---- these are words that describe this latest book of his which is made up of eighteen essays written or delivered in recent years. He has regrouped them around the main preoccupation of Augustine, "Noverim me, Noverim Te"("To know myself; To know You"). "His sole desire," writes Fr. Neusch, "can be summed up in his knowledge of God and the soul, without ignoring the social dimension of existence." The first nine chapters are united under the sign of the face of God, the other nine focus on a consideration of man in his temporal condition.

It is well known that Augustine never wanted to write a theological summa or to elaborate a theological system, but that he took advantage of circumstances, liturgical feasts, day to day events and controversies of his day to meditate on the word of God and to grasp every more deeply the meaning of human existence. Sometimes his thought may appear scattered or fragmented. But the aim of his activity remains the same. Untiringly he pursues the search for the truth, "Give me the strength to seek you; for you help me to find you and you have more and more given me the hope of finding you."

From chapter to chapter one (re-)discovers one or another aspect of Augustine's thought--- at

first, reading about God's greatness, there is personal conversion, the Eucharist, mercy, the cross, Resurrection; then, focusing on human misery, there is sin, the Church, baptism, the Virgin Mary. Each chapter forms a whole and can be read independently of the others.

Exposed clearly, illustrated with numerous quotations and occasional charts, Augustine's thought and development become more and more familiar. In spite of the somewhat disparate nature of the whole, Fr. Neusch is able to bring out what holds Augustine's thought together, its coherence and relevance. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Augustine never ceases to meditate on this mystery of God made man and to draw out the consequences. "It is for you that Word became flesh," Augustine assures his readers in one of his sermons. "It is for you that the Son of God was made the son of Man, so that you, the sons of men, could become sons of God."

This book presents so many beautiful pages that (re-)insert us into the world of Augustine's thought.

By Br. Bernard Jouanno, AA



Marcel Neusch [1935-] is an Assumptionist priest and longtime professor at the Catholic Institute in Paris where he was the director of l'Institut de science et de théologie des religions (ISTR). He continues to give courses both in France and Madagascar.

He has spent many years working for the Assumptionist-run daily newspaper *La Croix*. He is still active in organizing study sessions and retreats, especially on St. Augustine. He is also the

director of a biannual review entitled
Itinéraires augustiniens
[Augustinian Journeys].

