

"God gave each of us different talents, and no two people are alike," reflects Brother Dominic Smith, O.S.A. "The Augustinians tend to encourage and nurture each person's God-given talents."

As a case in point, Br. Dominic continues to advance daily in his own talents, as a communications major at John Paul the Great Catholic University in Escondido.

"I was interested in going to John Paul University because of their communications program," says Br. Dominic. "I believe there's an opportunity to use media to further the work of God. Media are a way to reach people and to target specific audiences. Every priest who preaches from the pulpit uses the pulpit as his medium. Using social media apps such as those on the Web is like having a pulpit on the stage of the world."

Br. Dominic very much enjoys the school, with its strong academic program, small student body and highly qualified faculty. His main focus is on production, pre-production and post-production. He hopes his learning in those areas will be directly applicable to whatever his future ministries will be. He is due to graduate with a degree in communications next year.

### Freedom to be one's self

Br. Dominic's grandfather had a special devotion to St. Augustine, naming his eldest son Augustine. When Dominic was discerning a call to the religious life, he did a web search based on religious devotions his family has had. He contacted Fr. Tom Whelan, O.S.A., Province Vocations Director, and before long, was discerning with the Augustinians, beginning his year-long pre-novitiate at the St. Rita Cole Street House in San Francisco.

Br. Dominic says he chose the Augustinians because he was comfortable around them, and they allowed him to be himself, not trying to force him into something he isn't. He enjoyed watching them interact together as a community.

"Community life is very important because we support one another in all aspects of life," he says. "We help each other get through the difficult times and we celebrate with one another in times of joy."

### A challenging, rewarding ministry

Br. Dominic is in class most days at John Paul University and when he is not, is studying. He nevertheless finds time for special projects. He is working on a re-make of the Augustinians' Western Province website, and recently completed a short film on Br. Barney Johns, O.S.A., a religion teacher at Villanova Preparatory School, Ojai, a marathon runner, musician, tennis coach and graduate student in educational leadership.

"I made this short film because I wanted inquirers to learn about our Augustinian way of life," says Br. Dominic. "There are often misconceptions about what it means to be a religious, and the purpose of the film is to demonstrate just how the Augustinian way of life may look. I would like to do more short films, because they can be a great testament to the Christian life."

Br. Dominic is looking forward to eventual



Br. Dominic shown at Three Sisters Falls, Cleveland National Forest near San Diego, while on an outing with fellow John Paul University students.

ordination to the priesthood.

"God has been part of my life through every phase," he reflects. "He is the one person who remains consistent. I don't really like to speculate on what the future may hold. I know that God will be with me and He will guide me in the directions I should take."



got his early education in a school run by the Dominican fathers. It was in this strong Catholic environment that Manny got the first glimmers of a vocation to the religious life.

After high school graduation, he joined the Order of St. Camillus. He finished his philosophical studies in the Philippines, but in 2008, he left the seminary to help with some family challenges.

From 2008 to 2016, Manny worked as a teacher in his village. Because of his seminary experience, he chose to teach liturgy and church history as well as Urdu language. For Manny, the experience was uplifting. "Teaching is a process of learning, touching hearts and transforming lives," he reflects.

Manny's pre-novice year was busy and productive. He volunteered at St. Vincent de Paul Village and Catholic Charities, visited with refugee families, attended twice-a-week Spanish language classes and worked closely with the Province Formation Director, Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A.

Manny sees himself as an Augustinian priest in the future. "I am interested in parish ministry and in teaching. I hope and pray for God's blessing for perseverance in my vocation journey."



Emmanuel Isaac

reflects. "I appreciate the Augustinian life. I feel it's 100 percent right for me."

Manny hails from Khushpur (a Catholic village) in Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. He

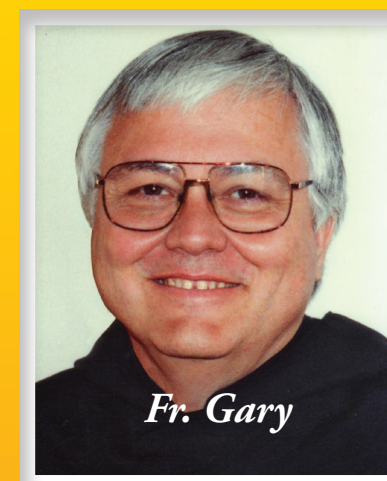


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## Embarked on a life-changing journey

### Letter From the Editor

Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A.  
Spiritu Editor



In the third book of his master-work, *The Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo speaks to God of our intimate relationship with him: "you love each one of us as if there were only one of us." The authentic life of an Augustinian friar is compatible neither with self-promotion nor isolation. We are one community consisting of many members who share one mind and heart intent upon God.

This oneness does not stifle the uniqueness of each friar rather, it magnifies it. In this edition of *Spiritu* we focus upon the reality that God calls us each one of us by name and that our individual talents amplify God's giftedness to the order, the church and the world.

A priest mellowed by cradling a crying child does not convey – and does not need to convey – the same image as a person who aspires to raise church media to a higher level in the second decade of this century. A person from halfway around the world – who follows his call to this country – is not that much different from a person from this country, who travels around the globe to feed the poorest of the poor. In addition to their desire to live as Augustinians, they share and celebrate the fact that God loves each one of them *as if there were only one of them*.

Fr. Gary

(See "One size fits one" inside)

"Find out how much God has given you, and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others"

— St. Augustine

Prior to joining the Augustinians as a pre-novice, Brother Robert Baiocco, O.S.A. was a world traveler. He had lived, worked and studied across the U.S. and in such far-flung locales as Europe, Jamaica, Central and South America, Southeast Asia, Morocco, the Philippines and India.

But his journey of Augustinian spiritual formation in the last five years has been as exciting, and even more life-changing and fulfilling, he says.

"I can describe my experiences during my Novitiate year as privileged, destructive and reconstructive," he reflects. "I feel as though God broke me into pieces, in order to put me back together in a way that would enable me to become the Christian man that I was created to be; the type of man who could help continue the mission of Jesus and the Church. God used numerous and diverse people to perform this process in my life."

### Mutual support in community

For Br. Robert, known as Bobby to his brother friars, the Augustinian emphasis on (continued inside)



Br. Robert Baiocco, O.S.A. gained a wide variety of experiences serving the poor across the globe when he was a lay missionary. Here he is shown with residents of a children's home in Bodh Gaya, India in 2012. At this home, he taught English and religious education, led prayer groups, conducted fundraising and directly provided for the kids' needs. He spent eight weeks there at the time and continues as a benefactor of the home.

## Forty Years of Caring for the Most Vulnerable



Gaby Preciado, then a senior at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego, and a young Hogar resident appear to be having a great time. Catholic high school students have been very supportive of Hogar Infantil and the children over the years — fundraising, visiting and volunteering.

Photo courtesy of Tricia Garland

The Augustinians of the West this year are marking a significant anniversary in their care for the most vulnerable among us.

Over the last 40 years under Augustinian sponsorship, Hogar Infantil La Gloria has been a safe haven for hundreds of abused, abandoned and neglected children of Tijuana, Mexico. Not just an orphanage, Hogar has been their home, a place where they receive quality care, love and a sense of security and belonging.

Not surprisingly, Hogar has had saving impacts on these at-risk kids' lives. And they're not the only ones who have benefited.

Augustinians and laypersons involved in the Hogar ministry say it has indelibly touched their hearts. For them, the endeavors on behalf of the children have been life-changing and life-giving.

An example is Fr. Kirk Davis, O.S.A., now Chaplain at St. Augustine High School, San Diego, and CFO of Hogar Infantil, Inc., the nonprofit corporation which funds orphanage operations.

Fr. Kirk recalls his very first homily after ordination to the priesthood. He told the story of a previous visit to Hogar. During a Mass and re-enactment of the Juan Diego story, one small boy was running around screaming while the rest of the assembly was trying to focus on the program. Kirk found

(continued inside)



# Augustinian spiritual formation: One size fits one

When Fr. Gary Sanders, O.S.A. entered the Augustinians in the late 1960s, he and his classmates were 17-year-old boys just graduated from high school. Young men in their 20s entering formation were considered late vocations.

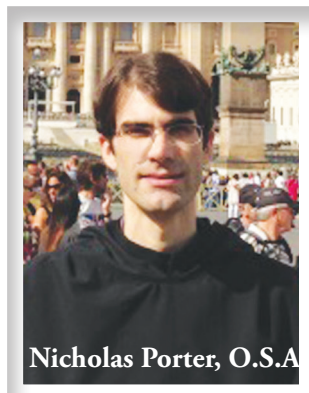
That might have been an era of one-size-fits-all. But today, it's more like one size fits one, says Fr. Gary.

Today, most men are discerning entrance to the Augustinians at a later age. Many have had significant work experience. At the prospect of entering the Order, they must consider the need to leave gainful employment, dispose

of property, pay off student loans and other issues. Some discerning with the Augustinians have college degrees; others do not. Those who have been accepted in recent years include introverts and extroverts, American citizens and those from other countries on religious worker visas, native speakers and men for whom English is their second language. Few have

studied philosophy, which is necessary for those considering ordained ministry.

"I think our Province has determined that each person who applies is going to come to us with a personal history unique to him," says Fr. Gary. "What we help them discern is whether they have a vocation to at least try our way of life. 'One size fits one' does not mean we accept everyone who applies. Quite the opposite.



Nicholas Porter, O.S.A.

"What has changed is our understanding that God calls us when he calls us — not when a minimum age or college degree dictate it."

## A tradition of honoring differences

Regardless of age trends in vocations, individual characteristics and interests have always been taken into consideration by the Augustinians, observes Fr. Tom Whelan, O.S.A. Western Province Vocations Director.

"Honoring differences is a principle enshrined in the Rule of Life, which St. Augustine wrote for the community he founded," says Fr. Tom.

In one chapter of The Rule, Augustine provides for differences

in physical health and family background — with special needs for food and clothing taken into consideration.

Fr. Tom recalls that in his own seminary formation, he had a sense that he was responsible for his own education. So he hunted for opportunities to develop in ways for which there were no courses in the seminary. Because the seminary offered no course in spirituality, he invited a classmate to a course being

offered to the public. "Now whenever I see my classmate — even after 55 years — he thanks me for inviting him to take the course, because it changed his life." Fr. Tom also recalls going outside the seminary for another course.

"The non-negotiables of our Augustinian life are spelled



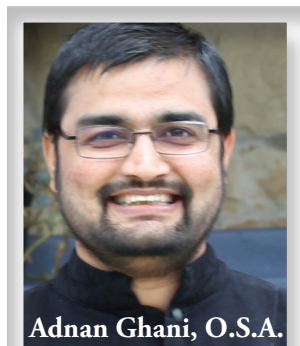
Max Villeneuve, O.S.A.

out in our Constitutions: Daily presence at morning and evening prayer and at meals and community recreation," says Fr. Tom. "Without these community activities, there would be no real community life."

## A diverse group

There is no better illustration of "one size fits one" than this roster of seminarians currently in spiritual formation with the Augustinians' Western Province. They are diverse in their personalities, backgrounds, gifts, interests and activities. They are being given specific educational opportunities to help them grow in their individual talents and follow their dreams for future ministry:

• **Nicholas Porter, O.S.A.**, 33, hails from Pasadena, CA. He is enrolled at Boston College, where he is pursuing a doctorate in philosophy. Br. Nick recently professed solemn vows.



Adnan Ghani, O.S.A.

• **Philip Yang, O.S.A.**, 37, was born in Los Angeles. He recently returned to the St. Augustine San Diego community,

where he is ministering to the Korean Catholic community at St. Columba's parish, in addition to assisting part-time in the Provincial offices. Br. Phil also professed solemn vows in August.

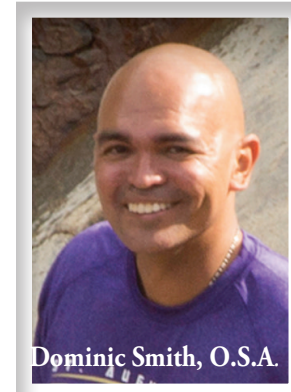
• **Max Villeneuve, O.S.A.**, 30, of Houston, TX,



Sarfraz Alam, O.S.A.

recently attended the Augustinian Educational Congress at Villanova University. Br. Max has returned to the Augustinian Friary in Chicago to complete his third year of theology at Catholic Theological Union.

• **Robert Baiocco, O.S.A.**, 45, hails from Batavia, New York. Br. Robert is currently spending his pastoral year as a missionary in Peru. (See story page one.)



Dominic Smith, O.S.A.

• **Sarfraz Alam, O.S.A.**, 33, was born in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan. Br. Sarfraz recently began his pastoral year as a member of the St. Augustine San Diego community. Currently he is dividing his time between St. Augustine High School and Catholic Charities. In the second semester, he will begin a Clinical Pastoral Education program (CPE) in San Diego.

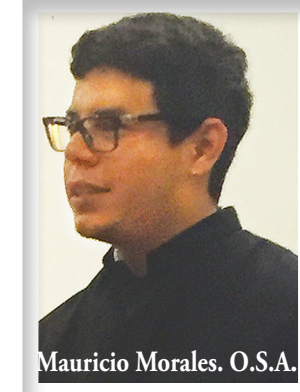
• **Adnan Ghani, O.S.A.**, 32, is a native of Lalamusa, Pakistan. Br. Adnan spent the summer with the San Diego Augustinian community, volunteering at the St. Vincent DePaul Center and at Catholic Charities. He recently returned to Chicago for one semester at Catholic Theological Union. Next semester, he will join Br. Sarfraz in the CPE program in San Diego.



Arturo Renteria, O.S.A.

• **Dominic Smith, O.S.A.**, 40, hails from San Diego. As a second-year member of the San Diego Augustinian community, Br. Dominic is continuing as a student at St. John Paul the Great University in Escondido. Majoring in philosophy and media, he is due to graduate next year. (See story back cover.)

• **Arturo Renteria, O.S.A.**, 40, a native of Durango, Mexico, is a member of the San Diego Augustinian community. He recently professed solemn vows. He is currently enrolled in intensive language instruction at the Converse Language School in San Diego. Br. Arturo is expected to begin initiation and introduction in the second



Mauricio Morales, O.S.A.

semester with the new permanent deacon class of 2022.

• **Mauricio Morales, O.S.A.**, 27, is from Managua, Nicaragua. Br. Mauricio professed vows recently and is a student at the University of San Diego, where he is majoring in philosophy.

• **Emmanuel Isaac, 32**, was born in Faisalabad (Khushpur), Pakistan. He recently left the

San Diego Augustinian community for the Augustinian Novitiate in Racine, WI. (See story back cover.)

• **Danish George, 31**, is from Lahore, Pakistan. Although the Department of Homeland Security has approved his entry into the U.S., the Passport Bureau in Islamabad, Pakistan has been slow to grant him a visa. The process is currently under way with the assistance of an immigration attorney.



Danish George

## LIFE-CHANGING JOURNEY (continued from front cover)

living in community has been pivotal in his spiritual growth. He recalls that before entering religious life and Augustinian formation, his interior life had stagnated to a degree. "But now living in community with my brothers, our prayer life, celebration of the Eucharist and communal experiences have helped me return to a place where the events of my life and God's creation are once again special and surprising," he reflects. "Augustinian interiority has introduced me to parts of myself that I never knew existed."

After his Novitiate year, Br. Robert enrolled as an undergraduate at DePaul University, where he was able to create a personalized curriculum in missionary studies, philosophy and pre-theology. For his Advanced Research Project, he created an adoption program that is intended to work in coordination with the new, emerging style of orphanage such as SOS Children's Villages. He calls it "The New Branch: Helping Families to Flourish and Children to Find a Home".

He graduated from DePaul with honors earning a

Liberal Arts/Missionary Studies Bachelor's degree, and was recipient of the Student Excellence Award.

## A burgeoning option for the poor

As a layman several years ago, Br. Robert was a manager in the hospitality industry working in hotels across the globe. "I was drawn to this field because I enjoy taking care of others, but I came to realize I was taking care of people who didn't necessarily need me to do so," he recalls.

The dawning continued as his world travels introduced him to people who really did need his help. As a lay missionary, he began to realize he had a passion and gift for serving the poor that seemed to transcend all else in his life. For two years, he had the amazing opportunity to work with Mother Teresa's congregation, the Missionaries of Charity.

"When I live, work, eat, sleep, play, laugh and cry with the poor, they know that I am not poor," he says. "But they also know that I am truly there — with them. And that knowledge helps alleviate the painful part of their poverty

that has left them feeling disconnected from humanity."

## Putting his education and passion into practice

For his pastoral year, a standard part of the curriculum for all seminarians, Br. Robert chose to serve with the Augustinians in Peru. Prior to his departure this September, he spent two months during the summer studying at a Spanish immersion school. When he arrived in Peru, he began a three-month TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) online certification course among other ministerial activities. Then he will teach English classes at the Augustinian school in Trujillo and other locations.

Before he departed for his pastoral year, he was joyful and enthusiastic about going to Peru. "After spending the past five years in formation in the U.S., I am especially excited to have the opportunity to return to a third world country. I first recognized my call to serve God, the Church, and our brothers and sisters in a similar environment. I get nourishment and comfort living and serving in undeveloped or underdeveloped areas."

## What the future holds

Br. Robert, now a simply professed Augustinian brother for the past three years, has completed his first year of theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He is on the educational and formation track to be ordained to the priesthood. However, he and his spiritual and formation directors have identified the benefit of keeping open the brotherhood as a viable option.

"For the remainder of my life," he says, "whether I become a priest or remain a brother, I think and hope that my future ministerial assignments will be aligned with serving our brothers and sisters living on the margins of U.S. or foreign societies."

## HOGAR INFANTIL (continued from front cover)

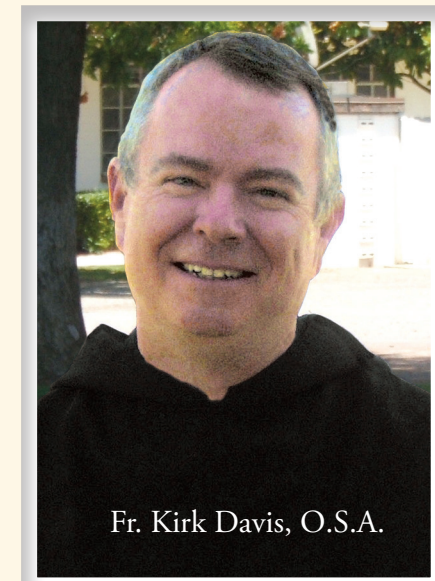
himself getting annoyed first at the child and then at the staff, who should have prevented such behavior. He finally went over, picked up the screaming boy and retreated to the back of the room. (The two-year-old was named Danny, born to an HIV-infected mother who passed the virus on to him.) Danny initially kicked and squirmed but within two minutes, fell asleep in Kirk's arms.

"This encounter taught me a lot," recalls Fr. Kirk today. "It taught me that all of us need someone to pay special attention to us sometimes, whether we're two years old or 82. I also learned first-hand about a concept I had studied as part of my priestly formation — ministry in reverse. You see, sitting at the back of the chapel at Hogar Infantil that day, holding a sleeping child in my arms, it was as much I who was being ministered to as it was little Danny being ministered to by me. Ministry is not a one-way street, but a grace shared."

As CFO of Hogar Infantil, Inc., Fr. Kirk sits on the nonprofit's board, which works closely with the Mexican nonprofit headed by Guillermo MacFarland, and with the administration and staff of Hogar Infantil. Fr. Kirk is also the face of the Augustinians to the staff and the kids. He visits frequently either with a group or on his own. "I've developed personal relationships with staff and the older children," he says. "I find all of this to be very satisfying."

That spirit holds true throughout the Augustinians' Western Province, where support for Hogar Infantil has been strong over the years and continues today. Augustinian friars and parishes do fundraising, seek in-kind donations and supply volunteer labor for projects at Hogar. At Villanova Preparatory School, Ojai, and at St. Augustine High School, San Diego, active Hogar Infantil student clubs conduct fundraisers among the student bodies, and students visit Hogar to help with projects, lead activities and socialize with the kids. The high school students are enthusiastic about their involvement and say they feel personally enriched by the experience.

When Guillermo and Lupita MacFarland took over management of the orphanage in the early 1970s, they initially discovered a place where the children were neglected and the buildings were in disrepair. With zeal and energy, they took care of immediate needs but found they needed help and support, and Augustinian friends joined the effort. Since that time, Hogar Infantil has been a high priority for the Augustinians of the West. Guillermo MacFarland is still active in the ministry as President of Casa Hogar La Gloria, A.C., the Mexican nonprofit.



Fr. Kirk Davis, O.S.A.

## Yes! I would like to learn more about the Augustinians.

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