

HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF ST. AUGUSTINE

It is a misconception to think that the Order of St. Augustine was founded by St. Augustine. It was formed in the 13th Century and is part of the Mendicant tradition. Mendicants have a lifestyle of poverty, traveling, and living in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization, and ministry. Their survival was dependent upon the good will and material support of the people. Their name mendicant is derived from the Latin meaning "to beg".

LITTLE UNION

Canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 prohibited the creation of new religious orders. It reads:- *Lest too great a variety of religious orders leads to grave confusion in God's church, we strictly forbid anyone henceforth to found a new religious order. Whoever wants to become a religious should enter one of the already approved orders. Likewise, whoever wishes to found a new religious house should take the rule and institutes from already approved religious orders. We forbid, moreover, anyone to attempt to have a place as a monk in more than one monastery or an abbot to preside over more than one monastery.*

This canon was one of the impetus for the birth of the Augustinians. In 1243 the Tuscan hermits petitioned Pope Innocent IV to unite them all as one group. Pope Innocent IV issued the Bull *Incumbit Nobis* on 16 December 1243, an essentially pastoral letter which urged these hermits to adopt "the Rule and way of life of the St. Augustine," to profess this Augustinian manner of life in a way that they themselves would decide with regards to specific charism and apostolate, and to elect a Prior General. Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi was appointed as their supervisor and legal guide. The importance of this man in the foundation of the order cannot be overstated. The union of these few groups is known as the Little Union of 1244.

GRAND UNION

Pope Alexander IV issued many bulls which commanded a number of religious groupings to gather for the purpose of being amalgamated into the Order of Saint Augustine. The delegates from other small religious communities met in Rome. As there were more groups who joined the smaller group formed in 1244 this union is known as the Grand Union of 1256. In many instances some Augustinians will say that the Order was founded in 1256 not 1244.

Today

The spirituality of the Order of St. Augustine has been influenced by the Rule of St. Augustine and the men who joined it in the beginning. The mendicant spirituality is present even today.