

**“Reflecting on the End of Our Time”**

Donald X. Burt, O.S.A.

In the fifth century in North Africa, Augustine said these words to his people:

“We are our times. Let us live rightly and we shall change the times from bad to good. Let us live well and our times will be good. Such as we are, such are our times.” ( *Sermon 80, 8: Sermon 311, 8.8*)

The constant challenge of human life is to live rationally at all the times of our lives, especially that most important time of our lives...our end-time...the time for letting go of all time...the moment when we shall move into eternity.

The time will be easy or hard depending on what we are holding onto. If we are holding onto Jesus, we will be drawn gently into that future beyond all futures...the endless present of eternity with Jesus. If we are still grasping at the things of this life, the people of this life then our passage will be hard.

We are sometimes silly about this. Like the ancient Jews, we latch onto some Sacred Temple, some institution, some nation, some society and say: My God, will not this grand thing last forever? It seems to be going down hill? Is this the end of the world?

How silly to make our happiness depend on the health of any human institution, and any human creation, any building. All of these things are passing. As Augustine said long ago, “A man is not particularly wise who suddenly comes to realize that human institutions perish.”

All things including life itself is passing. How foolish to put all our hopes, all our dreams, all our happiness in these earthly things. A sensible life is to take each day and live as decently as we can, helping others get through their day, pulling on the oars of the lifeboat taking us into the future, rather than arguing about the deck-chairs on the Titanic.

As Paul once told his friends, “We should not be unruly, we should keep busy...working quietly for the food we eat in this life and the eternity we hope for with Jesus.”