

## **You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You** (Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.)

Jeremiah, the Old Testament priest and prophet declares, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). If we are honest, we know that we can all suffer at times from self-delusions and these can be destructive. However, there can also be occasions when the heart is exposed – when we come to moments of self-realisation, and these can be moments of conversion.

A powerful story of such a revelation occurred to the English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge. Muggeridge was well known in the latter part of the twentieth century as a media figure—he worked for the Daily Telegraph, he was the editor for the famous satirical magazine *Punch* and the host for television interview shows. He was known for his wit and writings, but he was also a vociferous unbeliever.

Muggeridge was working as a journalist in India and one evening, he left his residence to go to a nearby river for a swim. As he entered the water, across the river he saw an Indian woman from the nearby village who had come to have her bath. Muggeridge was married to Kitty, but he was a notorious womaniser and known for his many infidelities. On seeing the woman, he decided after a momentary struggle with his conscience to swim across the river. He swam toward the woman with a mind full of the anticipation of the encounter. When he was just a few feet from the woman he emerged from the water startling her, but this poor woman was not as he had fantasised. Her face and body had been ravaged by leprosy. The shock left Muggeridge trembling and he realised the depravity of his own lecherous heart.

This was a moment of illumination—an epiphany—and a pivotal event of Muggeridge’s conversion. Another stage on the conversion of his heart was his encounter with Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta). Muggeridge helped bring to public attention Mother Teresa and her work with the poor and dying with his book *Something Beautiful for God*. Muggeridge also wrote *A Third Testament* a book in which he described himself as a modern pilgrim and he identified those who have influenced his journey including Saint Augustine. Muggeridge eventually became, not only a Christian but also a defender of the Faith at a time when some Church Leaders were questioning the fundamentals of Christian belief.

Muggeridge’s story provides three important lessons. We all need to recognise the delusions and potential depravity of our hearts and our need for a genuine conversion. Secondly, we all need guides and encouragement, whether historical, like St Augustine or for Muggeridge his contemporary Mother Teresa. Finally, we all need to come home.

In his book *Conversion*, Muggeridge writes that from his earliest years he felt that he was ‘a stranger among strangers in a strange land, whose true habitat was elsewhere’ and that he had another destiny. Muggeridge was received into the Catholic Church in November 1982, an event he described as a homecoming and of picking up the threads of a lost life.

I began this newsletter with the famous quote from Augustine’s confessions. In his *Soliloquies*, Augustine’s imaginary conversation between himself and God, he imagines that God asks him what he wants to know. Augustine says that he wishes to know who he is and who God is. Augustine’s *Confessions* as with Muggeridge’s *Conversion* is the story of a search for identity but also a search for God who is our home.

We can all provide guidance and encouragement to those searching and this is one of the tasks that Radio Maria undertakes. Radio Maria, through its broadcasts, reaches into the houses and lives of people with the message of God’s love and welcome and we can all participate in this work of God. Please do volunteer and pray for us that hearts will find healing and that many more will find their way home.

*Fr Sam*