**Can I understand St. Augustine’s importance to Christians?**

A stained glass window

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**Who was Saint Augustine?**

Saint Augustine of Hippo was a bishop and theologian who lived during the fourth century. His teachings significantly influenced how biblical texts were interpreted by others.

Augustine was born on 13th November, 354, with the name Aurelius Augustinius, in Northern Africa. His father was a Pagan (someone who did not believe in a widely-led religion, like Christianity or Judaism) and his mother was a devout Christian. His father converted to Christianity on his death bed.

**Augustine’s non-Christian Beginnings**

In 370, Augustine moved away from home at the age of 16 to begin his religious education, under his mother’s orders.

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Description automatically generated]()While living away from home, Augustine was tempted by the vices (evils and lures) of city life; enjoying the theatre and lived a luxurious social life.

While here, Augustine lived with a woman, unmarried. In 372, at the age of 18, Augustine had a son out of wedlock. They lived together for around 15 years, although never married.

**Teachings**

For nine years, Augustine followed a spiritual journey of the Manichaeism (*Man-i-kay-ism)* faith – a basic sense of right and wrong. He rejected the beliefs of the Christian Church and took pleasure in debating with Catholic priests and scholars.

On completion of his studies, Augustine returned to his home town to become a teacher. He initially taught grammar, however then moved on to teach rhetoric – the art of speaking and writing persuasively.

**Converting to Christianity**

By 383, Augustine’s belief in the Manichean faith had diminished and he moved to Italy to further his study of philosophy (understanding knowledge, reality and existence). Augustine was questioning his faith and what he believed. He became a pupil of the local bishop, Saint Ambrose, who helped him to understand who he was.

In 386, Augustine was so overcome with emotion that he cried under a fig tree. While here, he had an epiphany (a moment of sudden realisation) and began his journey to Christianity. At the age of 33, Augustine was baptised.

**![Calendar

Description automatically generated]()Augustine the Priest**

In 391, after the death of his mother, Augustine became a priest and devoted his life to prayer and the study of Christianity. He worked faithfully for many years, completing church duties, tending to and helping the poor and acting as a judge for civil and church cases.

Five years later, in 396, Augustine became the bishop of Hippo, where he ruled until his death in 430. Augustine was 76 years old when he died. A day of celebration of his life, Saint Augustine’s Feast Day, is help on the day of his death, 28th August.

**Why is he important to Christians?**

Saint Augustine is one of the most influential theologians (someone who studies religion) of the church, and is actually the patron saint of theologians. He is also the patron saint of brewers (people who make alcohol) because of his early experiences living a life of sin with excessive partying and alcohol.

His teachings heavily influenced how biblical texts were interpreted by others, writing over 200 books and nearly 1000 sermons and letters.