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St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote a number of works relating to Christian education. He was himself, of course, a teacher of Rhetoric by profession and it was by means of his expertise in that discipline that he hoped to advance in academia and thus gain the patronage he would need for appointment to some lucrative post in the Imperial administration. On his conversion, he dedicated his talents to Christ rather than to Caesar, and so gave us, *inter alia*, his *De magistro*, On the Teacher (389), *De doctrina christiana*, On Christian Teaching (396/7), and *De catechizandis rudibus*, On Catechizing Simple People (399/400).

Our focus here is on *De magistro*. This short piece is in the form of a dialogue between Augustine and his son Adeodatus. Towards its close, Augustine says this: "... For the present, I have prompted you that we should not attribute more to words than is suitable. As a result, we should know by now not only to believe but to understand how truly it has been written on divine authority that we should not call anyone on earth our teacher, since *there is only one in heaven who is Teacher of all* [See *Matthew 23:9-10*]. Furthermore, He Himself will teach us what 'in heaven' is. – He who prompts us externally through men by means of signs, so that we are instructed to be inwardly turned toward Him. To know and love Him is the happy life which all proclaim they seek, although there are few who may rejoice in having really found it".

This theme recurs in Augustine's sermons in which he again insists that God alone is our Father, our Teacher, our Rabbi. He also insists on the corollary. If there is only one Teacher, everyone apart from that Teacher must be a learner. That is precisely what Augustine preached to his Christian community in Hippo Regius in Roman North Africa (modern Annaba, Algeria). He tells them: "*Condiscipuli sumus*" : "We are co-disciples". Bishop and people are, in effect, class-mates, sitting together at the feet of the Lord, learning together from Christ how best to become Christ.

This line of thought may, by extension, be applied to the Catholic teacher and to her/his pupils. They, too, are "*condiscipuli*", "co-disciples". As long as they journey here below on their pilgrim way to the New Jerusalem, bishop and people, teacher and pupils, are, under grace, in the process of becoming what God made and called them to be. Neither is yet the finished article. Both must be completed by Christ, brought to perfection, to the fullness of love and to humanity at its most authentic. In virtue of their respective states and circumstances, and in the manner, and to the extent, that is appropriate to each of them, bishop and teacher are called to govern, teach and sanctify those committed by Providence to their care. The bishop is given, and must exercise, authority in Christ over his people, the teacher, over her/his pupils. That authority, though, is given, not for power but for service. "I am", says Augustine, "a bishop for you but a disciple with you". The *ecclesia docens*, the teaching Church, must always be the *ecclesia discernens*, the learning Church.

In every truly Catholic school, Christ is *the* Teacher, and is, besides, the syllabus. The task of every Catholic teacher, the task of every Catholic school, is to teach Christ, to point their charges towards him, to encourage and sustain them on the way, but always as a pilgrim with them, leading them, not driving them. Patrons, trustees, principals, teachers, schools, systems, have, and must discharge, their respective functions. They are not, though, what it is all about. They must regularly check that they are not obstacles on the way, not "idols", setting themselves where only Christ should be.