



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Friends of St. Monica,

I pray that you all had a Merry Christmas, and will have a happy and holy New Year.

During 2004 many new members have been added to our ranks. They join you as “prayer warriors”, battling for the souls of lapsi (those who have left Holy Mother Church and do not practice their Catholic Faith). As we have shown, in past issues of *Encouragement*, their stories are varied, but their prayers and hopes are all the same—that their loved ones return to the Faith before they die. A holy fear of Hell, combined with a sincere desire to give only the best to their loved ones (our Faith), motivates all of us to prayer and petition.

Sadly, two of our founding members, who had faithfully attended the St. Monica Novena at St. John’s since we started in 1995, died this past year. I ask you, in charity, to remember Shirley Cichy and Dorothy Kennedy in your prayers. As stated in the rules of the St. Monica Sodality, members who have died are remembered at each Novena Mass.

We continue to collect stipends for those who wish to have Masses offered at St. Monica’s Tomb in Rome. Generally, a Sodality member from St. John’s goes to Rome twice a year. In addition to taking your petitions to St. Monica’s Tomb, they take Mass stipends. The priests at the shrine have been edified by the continuous requests for Masses on the Tomb of St. Monica. Please remember that Mass stipends are \$12 and can be sent in with your petitions.

As we begin 2005, we vividly see poor people around the world crying out for help—materially and spiritually. I encourage you to be as generous as your means will allow to support the needs of your neighbors in this world of desperation and

loneliness. Your monetary gifts can bring hope for a new life BUT your prayers and sacrifices can bring God’s blessing.

In this issue, St. Thomas of Villanova, another “spiritual son” of St. Monica, is featured. His continuous charity to the poor and the sick gives us a real practical example of Christian charity.

Most issues of *Encouragement* have featured a saint whose virtues mirror St. Monica’s. The reason for highlighting these heroes of the Faith is to introduce them to all our sodality members as real people who worked at following Jesus Christ. Our hope, and the hope of Holy Mother Church, is that the saints will become your friends, and that you will want to imitate them.

Someone said, “*We believe what we pray.*” And so, Holy Mother Church leads us to the most perfect of prayers, the Mass. In the prayers of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, both the English Mass and the Latin Tridentine Mass, we implore the angels and saints for their intercession, their friendship, and their attention to our needs. In the ordinary of the Mass, the Confiteor, the Preface, the prayers before and after Consecration and again before Communion we beg the saints to come to our aid.

Therefore, it is our duty to learn more about the saints, to imitate their virtues, to wisely avoid the pitfalls that faced them. Each and every person who has been proclaimed a saint has a story to tell you; and as a good friend, in the Body of Christ, wants you and your loved ones to someday enjoy the happiness that they now share in Heaven.

Father C. Frank Phillips, C.R.
Pastor, St. John Cantius Church,
International Director, St. Monica Sodality

ST. THOMAS OF VILLANOVA – FATHER OF THE POOR

Thomas Garcia often called "Father of the Poor," received from his parents a rich inheritance—not a large estate or a trust fund—but rather the practice of charity put into action. Every Friday St. Thomas' father, Alonzo, would give the grain he earned at the mill on that day, and his dole of bread for Friday, to the poor. On feastdays he gave wood, wine, and money to the poor; to poor farmers he loaned money and seed. On the death of her husband, Lucia, Thomas' mother, continued this almsgiving, and supplied indigent maidens with clothing and money.

Thomas was born at Fuenllana, Spain, (a village close to the western coast of the Mediterranean) in 1486. His parents were not rich, his father was a grain miller; but by living frugally they were able to contribute liberally to the poor. While still a young boy, Thomas would give away his own lunch, his jacket or shoes.

Thomas grew up in an era of change in Spain; King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had just financed the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the New World, and the final defeat and expulsion from Spain of the Muslims became a reality in 1492 after 700 years of conflict (called the *Reconquista*).

At 16, Thomas was sent to the University of Alcala. There his intellectual prowess and his charity towards the poor were observed and noted. Thomas became a professor in 1514, and in 1516, he joined the Augustinian friars. And at this time in Germany, the infamous Augustinian, Martin Luther, was planting the seeds of the Protestant Revolution.

In 1520, he was ordained and assigned to preach and teach theology. As the years passed, Thomas was elected prior of many monasteries and afterwards provincial over the Andalusia and Castile area. He governed his religious brothers through the example of his holy life. In 1533 he sent the first Augustinian missionaries to the New World. They helped spread the Faith throughout Mexico.

Even though Emperor Charles V was a friend of St. Thomas, and had made him the court's preacher, Thomas, following St. Augustine's ex-

ample, resisted being made a bishop as best he could. In 1544, Charles V issued the decree of appointment, confirmed by Pope Paul III, making Thomas archbishop of Valencia, an area that had not had a bishop in residence in 100 years. The provincial told Thomas that he must accept or incur a censure.

Thomas was consecrated archbishop and took possession of his cathedral on January 1, 1545. Because he was poor, he was given 4,000 crowns to furnish his house. "*How much better to build a house for the poor, and for Christ in them, than to adorn our own houses or acquire a change of clothing!*" said St. Thomas. He immediately sent the money to a hospital, explaining, "*What does a poor friar like myself want with furniture?*"

Thomas, who always kept the humility of a friar, often embarrassed his fellow Augustinians by his threadbare clothes. He even mended his own garments because the small sum he saved would feed a poor man. St. Thomas stated and



lived what he believed: *"Humility is the mother of many virtues because from it obedience, fear, reverence, patience, modesty, meekness and peace are born. He who is humble easily obeys everyone, fears to offend anyone, is at peace with everyone, and is kind with all."*

Valencia, a wealthy city, located on the western edge of the Mediterranean, with a moderately warm temperature, was a refuge for the poor and destitute. The diocese, like the entire Church at that time, was morally bankrupt and overwhelmed by many great scandals.

Archbishop Thomas was not like the other bishops in Europe at that time. Many of the other bishops sought fortunes, power, mistresses and the like, while Thomas quietly went throughout his diocese making visits to his parishioners, and finding out their needs. He established schools; and turned the bishop's palace into a soup kitchen and homeless shelter.

Eighteen thousand ducats a year were allowed the archbishop, but Thomas kept only 4,000 for household and office expenses, giving the remainder to the needy. Several hundred poor people came to his door daily and he personally gave each of them alms. Although many people who received his kindness abused it, he continued to aid them, even though he was criticized for being exploited. St. Thomas said, *"If there are people who refuse to work, that is for the authorities to deal with. My duty is to assist and relieve those who come to my door."* He took destitute orphans into his care, and he regularly nursed the sick, and provided dowries for young girls so that they could marry with dignity.

St. Thomas was able to convince many rich people to give money to help the poor, telling them:

**IF YOU DESIRE THAT GOD
SHOULD HEAR YOUR PRAYERS,
HEAR THE VOICE OF THE POOR.
ESPECIALLY ANTICIPATE
THE WANTS OF THOSE
WHO ARE ASHAMED TO BEG-
TO MAKE THESE ASK FOR ALMS
IS TO MAKE THEM BUY IT.**

PRAYER OF SAINT THOMAS

I will love You, Lord, in every way and without setting limits to my love. You set no limits to what You have done for me, You have not measured out Your gifts. I will not measure out my love. I will love You, Lord, with all my strength, with all my powers, as much as I am able.

Reprinted "Prayer of Saint Thomas" by Augustinian Press © 2003,
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St. Thomas saw the rich as having the mission of helping the poor and thereby obtaining their own redemption: *"He [God] created the rich for the poor and the poor for the rich; he has given riches to the rich for supporting the poor, and often this is why he multiplies and increases their riches; he has given poverty to the poor, injuries and hardships, that he might move the heart of the rich to mercy, and thus save the rich. Therefore, O rich, love the poor, your brothers and sisters, your redeemers and helpers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

The charity of the archbishop of Valencia to the poor was equaled by his charity toward public sinners. Rather than use coercive methods, such as excommunication, he preferred to persuade sinners to repent. Criticized because he refused to be harsh or swift in correcting sinners, he said, *"Let him (the complainer) inquire whether St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom used anathemas and excommunication to stop the drunkenness and blasphemy which were so common among the people under their care."*

Thomas tried to correct the effects of the brutal secular inquisition by way of Christian education. He closed the ecclesiastical jails. He persuaded the emperor to provide funds for priests to work with newly-converted Muslims, and he himself founded a college for them. He also founded colleges for poor scholars.

His tireless efforts as archbishop are seen in the convening of a diocesan synod in 1548, where he tried to do away with a number of abuses, such

as duelling, divorce, concubinage, and many excessive privileges. He encouraged holiness for his clergy and the religious in his diocese by calling them to a deeper spirituality so that they could better serve the people. St. Thomas promoted devotion to the Blessed Mother stating: *“The Holy Spirit did not describe Mary in the Gospels but left it to you to picture her in your heart. In this way, you might comprehend that there is no grace, no perfection, and no glory conceivable in a simple creature that is lacking to her.”* He insisted that the material resources of the Church be shared with those in greatest need. He founded a seminary for the formation of the clergy; and by laws, preaching, and example, he labored to reform the morals of his clergy.

By his sermons and writings St. Thomas instructed his flock in the gospel life. He ordered that Masses should be offered at early hours for the working classes. A true son of St. Monica, St. Thomas states: *“Charity alone, as Saint Augustine writes, is every virtue, that is, as far as the fruit and effect of each virtue is concerned. Thus it is formed faith when we believe; living hope when we trust; fortitude when we are victorious; patience when we endure; kindness when we show mercy; meekness when we hold fast; liberality when we give; justice when we pay what we owe; humility when we are cast down; and, finally, every virtue in all that we do.”*

In 1550, Dragut, an Islamic pirate, sacked the coastal town of Cullera, not far from Valencia. When the St. Thomas heard this, he sent his almoners (an organized group of lay people who raised money to help the poor) to ransom the captives, comfort the widows, and buy oxen and mules for the farmers.

St. Thomas reminded his parishioners many times of the importance of charity: *“Do you think that you will find in heaven the splendidly dressed and wealthy people, the mighty of this world, those who lived comfortable, luxurious lives as they pleased? No, you will not! Whom, then, will you find there? Why, the scorned, the afflicted, the persecuted, the poor, the distressed, those whom the world despises and laughs at; those whose need and hunger made them a laughing-stock, as though they were the world’s beasts*

**THE BIBLE TELLS US
THAT THE POOR,
THE DOWNTRODDEN,
THE OPPRESSED, THE NEEDY,
AND THE HUNGRY
AND THIRSTY
WERE THE LORD'S FAVORITES.
WHY, THEN, SHOULD THEY
NOT BE OUR FAVORITES?**

St Thomas of Villanova

of burden. It is these who are the princes of glory, the inhabitants of heaven; it is these who are the intimates of God; it is these who are preeminent over all and even now rule all things in heaven.”

In August of 1555, Thomas was stricken with angina pectoris, and, after making his spiritual preparation, began to prepare for death. He commanded all the money he possessed to be distributed among the poor of the city, and he ordered all his goods, save for his bed, to be given to the rector of the college. The bed on which he lay was to be given to the jail for the use of prisoners after his death. St. Thomas stated that he did not want to own anything: *“One thing alone I can call my own—the obligation to distribute to my brethren the possessions with which God has entrusted me.”*

On September 8, 1555, Mass was being said in his bedroom when after Communion he breathed his last, with the words: *“Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.”* St. Thomas of Villanova died—rich in virtue and the love of God.

His feast day is celebrated on September 22.

Saint Thomas of Villanova, pray for us.

A full biography of St. Thomas of Villanova, *The Pelican*, by Siegfried Back, O.S.A., is published by the Augustinian Press. Price: \$7.95. Order online through the Augustinian Press Bookstore at www.augustinian.org or call 610-527-3330.



Statute of St. Monica available from Images of Heaven, 135 South Third Street, Reading, PA 19602, 610-374-0237 — imagesofheaven.org.

BOOKS & VIDEOS

“Saint Monica and Her Son Augustine” by Leon Cristiani, published by St. Paul Books and Media, is available at most religious book stores.

Available from Ignatius Press is a wonderful video, “St. Augustine, His Life & Spirituality” as explained by Fr. Benedict Groeschel.

Please help us develop a library of materials about St. Monica. Write and tell us about your favorite book or article.



FROM ST. MONICA SODALITY ST. THOMAS MORE CHAPTER CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Fr. Anthony Brankin recently blessed the St. Thomas More chapter’s new statue of St. Monica at the Wednesday night Mass and devotions.

The statue was made by a Catholic lay group, *Images of Heaven*. The intricate gold and pink veil and cape highlight the statue with a beautiful crucifix, roses, a jar of St. Monica’s tears, a brown belt, signifying the Augustinian habit, and the book of *Confessions*, written by St. Monica’s son, St. Augustine. The statue is also a third class relic, having touched a fragment of the saint’s bone.

The St. Thomas More chapter meets the second Wednesday of the month for Mass at 7:00 pm and on the fourth Wednesday for rosary and novena devotions. Several sodality members have mentioned that they have family members and friends who they have been praying for and who have finally started to attend Mass. One member recently stopped by a friend’s house. The family had been on the petition list for about two years. As she entered the house, two of the members of the family rushed by on their way to Mass!

ST. MONICA GROUPS

If you belong to a St. Monica prayer group please write to the Chicago office and let us know: the location of the group, address of the meeting place, time of the meeting, and any other information or news. We will publish the name and location of your prayer group in a future newsletter—so that members in the area might have the opportunity to meet with your members for mutual encouragement!

DO YOU HAVE A *LAPSI* IN YOUR FAMILY?

Lapsi is a Latin word used to refer to persons who have lapsed from the practice of the Catholic Faith. (*Lapsi* is a collective plural. Singular is *lapsus* for a male and *lapsa* for a female.) If you do, here is what we suggest: Send their names to: St. Monica Sodality, 825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622-5499.

From Pennsylvania

PRAY WHILE YOU DRIVE – USING ST. MONICA TAPES

A 50-minute professional audio tape of the St. Monica Novena Prayers and music is available for \$10.00 each, plus \$2.00 for postage. The “Seraphim Vocal Ensemble” provides the inspirational hymns. Order a tape to play in your car when you’re stuck in traffic—increase your prayer life—decrease tension. Order from St Monica Sodality, 825 N. Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622-5499.

SODALITY MEMBERSHIP

Saint Monica Sodality members meet every Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm at St. John Cantius Church. Novena prayers and Rosary are followed by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

On the feast of St. Monica, May 4th, (in the Traditional calendar), please renew your membership by sending \$20.00 U.S. funds (outside U.S.—\$30.00) along with any change of address information, or letters of gratitude to St. Monica. New members are accepted at any time and prayer booklets, petition forms, medals, and rule booklets are available from: Saint Monica Sodality, 825 North Carpenter Street, Chicago, IL 60622-5499. Phone: 312-243-7373 - Fax 312-243-4545. E-mail: stmonicasodality@yahoo.com Website: www.cantius.org.

PAST ISSUES of *Encouragement* and more information about the St. Monica Sodality are available on the website, www.cantius.org under Parish Life Activities, St. Monica Sodality.

JANUARY 2005

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FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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**IN MY DISTRESS
I CRIED UNTO
THE LORD**

St. Monica, pray for us.