



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM
ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Friends of St. Monica,

Welcome to the new members of the St. Monica Sodality. Your prayers are now joined with other members around the world. The names of you and your loved ones have been added to our prayer lists. When you send in your petitions, we place them on the altar and pray for those listed during the Wednesday night Mass. (All the petitions are saved, and then taken to the tomb of St. Monica in Rome and placed on her altar.)

St. Monica knew that in love, there is pain—in great love, there is great pain. She knew the joy and pain of childbirth; the pain of watching her beloved little son struggle with a near fatal illness; the joy of his recovery; the pain of watching his sinful and wasted youth; the joy of his spiritual rebirth. St. Monica was a woman with little formal education in the Faith—she could not explain her Faith to Augustine or his father. She could only show them by her examples of *prayer, sacrifice, patience, charity, determination, and perseverance* that nothing mattered except the salvation of her family's souls.

St. Monica followed Augustine across the Mediterranean Sea (an extremely long, difficult, and dangerous trip in the fourth century) and then without fear or embarrassment, but praying all the time, went to the most famous Bishop in the Church, St. Ambrose, and tearfully begged him to talk to Augustine. St. Ambrose answered and said, "*It is not possible that a son of so many tears should be lost.*" With this encouragement ringing in her ears, St. Monica continued praying and became a member of St. Ambrose's parish church in Milan. She went to Mass every day and heard St. Ambrose teach the truths of our Faith. Soon St. Augustine joined her because he wanted to hear the great teacher Ambrose who had such a powerful presence! Augustine wisely

recognized the truth that Ambrose presented and later was baptized by Ambrose.

St. Ambrose wrote many prayers in the form of hymns. In these poetic prayers, St. Ambrose very wisely stated all the theological truths necessary for a Catholic to believe. The following prayer is an example of an Ambrosian hymn:

O God of truth, O Lord of might,
Who orderest time and change aright,
and sendest the early morning ray,
and lightest the glow of perfect day.

Extinguish Thou each sinful fire,
and banish every ill desire:
and while Thou keepest the body whole
shed forth Thy peace upon the soul.

Almighty Father, hear our cry
through Jesus Christ, Our Lord most High
Who, with the Holy Ghost and Thee,
doth live and reign eternally. Amen.

It is the life and times of St. Ambrose that we feature this month. Because he had such a profound influence on St. Monica and St. Augustine, he can truly be called their spiritual father, teacher, and mentor.

Potential leaders will benefit enormously by reading about Ambrose. Those with a religious, political or civic leadership role might want to reflect and study this exceptional saint and leader. When you want to lead others and demonstrate transforming leadership, Ambrose is a masterful model.

Remember that the members continue to pray for all of you and your loved ones at the St. Monica Novena every Wednesday night at St. John Cantius Church, here in Chicago.

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

St. Monica, pray for us.

ST. AMBROSE – TEACHER AND MENTOR

“It is not possible that a son of so many tears should be lost.” These words were spoken by St. Ambrose to St. Monica at their first meeting. It is surprising that the great St. Ambrose should be remembered by such a simple statement to a poor distraught mother from a small town near Tunisia, Africa.

Just imagine: you are walking next to Pope John Paul II and his aides as they tour Mexico City and some distraught mother comes up to the Pope asking him to do something about her perennial-student son who is living with his girlfriend and has blown off the Church. Pope John Paul looks at the lady kindly, says something and moves on. That scenario you can believe, you have seen it on television during many papal visits. **Now just imagine:** 1,600 years from now, those words the Pope spoke to that lady are the most remembered words of John Paul II!

A person living 1600 years ago would have felt the same way about the remark to St. Monica by St. Ambrose—the whole idea would have been unimaginable. Historically speaking, Ambrose was one of those men who was so central to the ebb and flow of the social and political fabric of the age that he impacted that era and the future of the entire Catholic Church.

St. Ambrose was born to greatness and became greater still. Ambrose was bright, well educated, a poet and a famous speaker. He was very familiar with the philosophers and thinkers of his day. Ambrose saw suffering and sorrow, and dealt with both the Roman Emperor Theodosius and that sad little woman from North Africa (St. Monica) with the same ease and gentle concern. St. Ambrose handled questions about rights of the church with a cool and highly trained legal and diplomatic mind. He helped all the faithful, whether it be the Emperor or a poor member of the congregation like a good and devoted shepherd. It was this ability to balance the pastoral, spiritual and temporal problems of the church that St. Augustine learned from St. Ambrose—a forgotten art-form in our time.

Ambrose lived from 340-397 A.D. This means that he was born about ten years after St. Monica and survived her by ten years. St. Augustine would

survive Ambrose by over 30 years. St. Augustine began his book, *The Confessions*, the year of his great teacher's death. St. Ambrose was providentially situated for the role he played in the lives of St. Monica and St. Augustine. St. Monica died just after Augustine's conversion in 387, and Ambrose died just as Augustine was beginning his period of greatness as an apologist.



Ambrose was born into the highest level of the Roman ruling class. At that time, Rome ruled all of western and central Europe as well as northern Africa and the Middle East, and had ruled this territory for centuries. A world without the Roman Empire was a world beyond human comprehension. This was the world of young Ambrose. Fr. Christopher Rengers, O.F.M., in his book *The 33 Doctors of the Church*, gives a clear idea of St. Ambrose's family status:

St. Ambrose came from one of the outstanding families of the Empire, a family which had been Christian for several generations. It was characteristic of his cast of mind that he thought more highly of having a martyr, St. Soteris, in the family history than of its long line of consuls and prefects. At the time of his birth in the Roman city of Trier in Germany, about 340 A.D., his father, Aurelius Ambrose, was Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, a territory approximating modern France, Spain, Portugal, Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica, and parts of Britain and Germany.

A glance at the current map of Europe gives a sense of the power and influence which young Ambrose's family possessed. Therefore, Ambrose naturally went into law and government service. By the age of thirty, he was the Governor of northern Italy. During this period the Roman Emperor ruled from the city of Milan not Rome. This meant that Ambrose was the civil ruler for the

political heart of the Empire. He was a very popular civil administrator and well respected. He was also single, and though his family was Christian and he was well educated in the faith, he was still a catechumen (not baptized).

That a successful Christian man would put off baptism and marriage sounds strange even today. In fact these two seeming oddities were the products of the dysfunctional aspects within Roman society and the early Church. Family life and sexual conduct had come to such a stage that many in Roman society simply opted out of marriage—a trend that is becoming very noticeable in our own time. It was also common to put off baptism until death. There was a theological debate in church circles as to whether serious sin could be forgiven after baptism. While the Popes and the orthodox clergy supported the sacrament of Penance, many did not. These debates on sin and grace would consume the whole career of St. Augustine.

So Ambrose, as a product of a Roman society, and a Christian, was torn between the erroneous teachings on the sacraments within the Church, a pagan understanding of human sexuality and family life in society, and was faced with a strong pagan lobby in politics. *Note:* how 1,600 years can sometimes have the sound and feel of the present.

Ambrose, the governor of Milan, found himself thrown into the middle of many religious feuds, which he handled with diplomacy and charity. The bishop of Milan, Auxentius, was an Arian, and died just as Ambrose was beginning his career as governor. At that time the Church was violently arguing about the nature of Christ's divinity. A large Arian faction had developed which saw Christ as sort of divine and for sure a nice guy. (That position would get you a passing grade at some Catholic schools today, more than we really want to think about!) One point to keep in mind, is that so long as the Bishop of Milan was Arian, the Emperor was Arian. The Pope was not Arian, but the Pope, who then as now was in Rome, was not at the center of power. Living under a bishop, whose views differ from the views of the Pope, can be a problem for Catholics (both then and now). But when one of the heretics is the emperor of the whole Christian world, it is a great problem for the whole Church.

Ambrose decided that part of his responsibility, as governor, was to prevent any riot from breaking out. The Roman government's method of dealing with disorder was direct and bloody. Ambrose was looking to save lives, not to change careers. As Father Rengers points out, things took a very unusual turn.



In 373 or 374, the Arian Bishop of Milan died. This was the same Auxentius that St. Hilary had tried in vain to oust. There was much discussion about a successor. Arians and Catholics each wanted a bishop after their own manner of thinking. There was, in fact, danger of a tumult. As governor, Ambrose went to the Basilica to maintain order. He arose and addressed the people. Somewhere in the crowd a voice was heard—according to Paulinus it was the voice of a child: “Ambrose –bishop!” Soon there was a swelling chorus echoing this suggestion. Both sides respected St. Ambrose and liked him. He was a firm but kind administrator; his personal life was upright and moral.

Ambrose went into hiding to avoid the duties of bishop. Like St. Augustine years later, he tried to avoid the duty that was being thrust upon him. In the end, he was forced to accept the post because the emperor would not allow anyone to hide the unwilling-bishop-to-be. The emperor was pleased that one of his appointees should be deemed worthy of such a high church office.

Ambrose took his new office very seriously. He sent for an orthodox Catholic priest from Rome to instruct and assist him. He was baptized, ordained and consecrated a bishop within months. There was no doubt about his dedication or qualifications. He gave all of his property to the Church and his personal belongings to the poor.

Soon after his consecration as bishop, he found himself in a dangerous and potentially deadly war of nerves with the Empress Justina, who was ruling the Empire in the name of the child emperor Valentinian II. Justina demanded that Bishop Ambrose turn over control of the Basilica

to the Arians. Ambrose refused. To prevent the forceful seizure, he refused to leave the Basilica. Many loyal Catholics joined the bishop and sat with him for days on end in the Basilica. No one knew if the Empress would use force to evict the bishop and his flock at any time during this drawn-out war of nerves.

It was just at this time that Augustine came to Milan with his mother Monica in pursuit. Keeping in mind the political unrest and turmoil, it is obvious that Ambrose had many things on his mind when he first meet Monica. St. Monica and St. Augustine took part in this sit-in at the Basilica. St. Augustine wrote about it years later in his *Confessiones*:

The pious people kept watch in the church, ready to die with their bishop. Then it was that the custom arose of singing hymns and psalms, after the use of the Eastern parts, (of the Church) lest the people should wax faint through the tediousness of sorrow; and from that day to this, the custom has been retained—many, nay, almost all—of the Christian congregations throughout the rest of the world following herein.

Although St. Ambrose was not the first to compose hymns for liturgical use, he is traditionally regarded as the “father of Christian hymnody.”

Decades later, when the African section of the Empire where Augustine served as Bishop of Hippo, was being overrun by the dreaded Vandals, Augustine choose to stand fast and die with his

St. Ambrose’s hymn on the birth of Christ, *Veni, Redemptor Gentium*, is often considered his best hymn. It is a strong statement of Ambrose’s orthodoxy against the Arianism of his day: Here’s part of it:

**From God the Father He proceeds,
To God the Father back He speeds:
Proceeds — as far as very hell:
Speeds back — to light ineffable.**

**O equal to the Father, Thou!
Gird on Thy fleshly mantle now
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.**

people rather than flee to the safety of Rome. It was surely this experience with Ambrose that molded him.

St. Ambrose won his contest with the Empress and withstood this Arian threat. There were, however, many others in power who longed for a restoration of the old gods of pagan Rome. St. Ambrose did not hesitate to move into this fray as well. By 384, Rome was in the hands of several emperors who ruled jointly, and the Imperial Senate voted to restore the altar of Victory, the pagan god of victory, to the Senate Chamber from which it had been banished. Professor Michael Grant describes the debate between Ambrose and the pagan proponent Symmachus in his book, *The Roman Emperors*:

The argument was conducted with responsible dignity. ‘Everyone’ declared Symmachus, ‘has his own custom, his own religion. The love of habit is great. We ask for the restoration of the cult in its former condition, which has been beneficial to the Roman state for so long. One cannot reach so great a secret by one way alone.’ However this denial of the Christian claim to universality was repudiated by Ambrose, who insisted that the emperor should ‘*do what he knew would be profitable to his salvation in the sight of God*’.

This was the last important pagan opposition, and the influence of Ambrose finished it. St. Ambrose had withstood the last serious attempt to restore paganism to pride of place within the Imperial Senate. It was a significant, but largely forgotten, triumph for the Christian Faith. The old pagan deities were now put out of sight.

St. Ambrose was a strong bishop, never doubting, never wavering and telling it straight with no ifs, buts, or maybes. He was a fighter and was controversial. He was loved and hated. Ambrose would call your bluff if you challenged him. He was a no-nonsense man and he didn’t back down. He would dare people to “mess” with the Church. Ambrose positively separated church from state at a time when it was most needed and necessary.

Late in the summer of 390, a large and lethal mob took to the streets in the city of Thessalonica, in northern Greece. A popular local athlete had been put under arrest for sexual assault. The mob was angry that their sports hero

was out of action, so in retaliation they took to the streets and murdered a number of officials responsible for the arrest. In his initial rage, Theodosius issued an order for the massacre of thousands in retaliation for the mob murder. It is estimated, that the Roman legion killed 7,000 people in retaliation before Theodosius countermanded the order.

St. Ambrose immediately wrote to Emperor Theodosius, telling him that he was not allowed to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass until he had repented this sin. The Emperor responded by doing public penance on his knees in the Basilica. Theodosius put aside the robes of office, confessed his sins of murder, and implored his people to pray for him to God. By Christmas, St. Ambrose offered Mass and allowed the Emperor to attend.

As bishop, by holding the emperor responsible for his sins like anyone else, Ambrose graphically illustrated that the powerful and famous are not above wrongdoing and are in need of confession and repentance. This showed that power itself did not absolve the mighty of personal responsibility. St. Ambrose also showed, with his restoring of Theodosius to the sacraments, that those were wrong who believed that serious sin could only be absolved through baptism alone. If God could forgive such great sins in great men through the sacraments of the Church, the Church could also forgive the lesser sins of lesser men.

In 395, St. Ambrose referred to this incident in his loving eulogy of the dead Emperor Theodosius, when he said before all the people and officials assembled:

I have loved a man who esteemed a reprover more than a flatterer. He threw on the ground all the royal attire that he was wearing. He wept publicly in church for his sin, which had stolen upon him through the deceit of others. He prayed for pardon with groans and tears. What private citizens are ashamed to do, the emperor was not ashamed to do, namely, to perform penance publicly; not did a day pass thereafter on which he did not bemoan that fault of his.

The greatness of St. Ambrose was highlighted by his ability to appreciate and understand the sorrow of Emperor Theodosius, and deal with it lovingly, honestly, and diplomatically, just as he

dealt with that unknown woman from North Africa, Monica. The incident in the matter of Emperor Theodosius was far more important to the Church's understanding of its place in the world than the meeting with St. Monica. But the question is: which had a greater impact on history? It was this man, St. Ambrose, who became the teacher and mentor of St. Augustine.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, St. Augustine is sighted 85 times. St. Thomas Aquinas is quoted about 60 times. St. Ambrose about 20 times. St. Ambrose was a great teacher and his greatness shines through time and eternity in his own deeds and those of his pupil, St. Augustine.

St. Ambrose was named the first Doctor of the Church and called the Pastoral Doctor. He placed the Church first with each member as his highest priority. Service to each member and defending that honor was his aim throughout his life.

St. Ambrose is also called the Patron of the Veneration of Mary. It is quite fitting that his feast day, which is celebrated on December 7th, immediately precedes the feast of the Immaculate Conception. St. Ambrose made it patently clear and claimed, from the very outset, Mary's innocence, purity and life-long virginity. The Council of Milan and the Church made official in the year 340, the doctrine: "Mary, Ever Virgin". St. Ambrose taught Mary as a symbol for the Church and St. Augustine reiterated this idea. Both of these saints were instrumental in initiating Marian thinking in the Western Church.

by Kevin Haney

A verse of an evening hymn written by St. Ambrose is quoted in the *Confessions of St. Augustine* as coming to his mind in bed the night after his mother's funeral.

O Blest Creator, God Most High,
Great Ruler of the starry sky,
Who robing day with beauteous light
Hast clothed in soft repose the night,
That sleep may wearied limbs restore,
And fit for toil and use once more;
May gently soothe the careworn breast,
And lull our anxious griefs to rest.

HYMNS BY ST. AMBROSE

LORD, teach me to seek You,
And reveal Yourself to me
When I seek You.

For I cannot seek You
Unless You first teach me,
Nor find You, unless
You first reveal Yourself to me.

Let me seek You in longing,
And long for You in seeking.
Let me find You in love,
And love You in finding. Amen.

NOW that the star of light has risen,
Let us to God most humbly pray,
To save us from all hurtful things
In all our actions of the day.

To bridle and restrain our tongue,
That wordy war may not resound.
To cover and protect our sight,
From dangerous follies all around.

To drive iniquity away,
And purify our inmost soul,
And by spare use of meat and drink
Our rebel passions to control.

That, when the day has sped away
And He again the night shall bring,
We may, through holy abstinence,
With purity His glory sing.

To God the Father, glory be,
And also to His only Son,
With the Great Spirit Paraclete,
Now and while endless ages run. Amen.

O TRINITY of blessed Light,
O Unity of sovereign might,
As now the fiery sun departs,
Shed Thou Thy beams within our hearts.

To Thee our morning song of praise,
To Thee our evening prayer we raise;
Thee may our glory evermore
In lowly reverence adore.

All laud to God the Father be;
All praise, Eternal Son, to Thee;
All glory, as is ever meet,
To God the Holy Paraclete.

NOW that the daylight dies away
By all Thy grace and love,
Thee Maker of the world, we pray
To watch our bed from above.

Let dreams depart and phantoms fly,
The offspring of the night
Keep us like shrines beneath Thine eye,
Pure in our foes' despite.

This grace on Thy redeemed confer,
Father, co-equal Son,
And Holy Ghost, the Comforter,
Eternal Three in One. Amen.

O SPLENDOR of God's glory bright,
O Thou that bringest light from light,
O Light of Light, light's Living Spring,
O Day, all days illumining.

O Thou true Sun, on us Thy glance
Let fall in royal radiance,
The Spirit's sanctifying beam
Upon our earthly senses stream.

The Father too our prayers implore,
Father of glory evermore,
The Father of all grace and might,
To banish sin from our delight:

To guide whate'er we nobly do,
With love all envy to subdue,
To make ill-fortune turn to fair,
And give us grace our wrongs to bear.

Our mind be in His keeping placed,
Our body true to Him and chaste,
Where only faith her fire shall feed
To burn the tares of Satan's seed.

And Christ to us for food shall be,
From Him our drink that wellethe free,
The Spirit's wine, that maketh whole,
And mocking not, exalts the soul.

Rejoicing may this day go hence,
Like virgin dawn our innocence,
Like fiery noon our faith appear,
Nor know the gloom of twilight drear.

Morn in her rosy car is borne:
Let Him come forth our Perfect Morn,
The Word in God the Father One,
The Father perfect in the Son. Amen.

PRAYERS OF ST. AMBROSE

FOR PROTECTION

Be gracious to our prayers, O Merciful God, and guard Thy people with loving protection; that they who confess Thine only begotten Son as God, born in our bodily flesh, may never be corrupted by the deceits of the devil; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR TRUST AND FULLER KNOWLEDGE

Merciful Lord, the Comforter and Teacher of Thy faithful people, increase in Thy Church the desires of which Thou hast given, and confirm the hearts of those who hope in Thee by enabling them to understand the depth of Thy promises, that all Thine adopted sons may even now behold, with the eyes of faith, and patiently wait for, the light of which as yet Thou dost not openly manifest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR FREEDOM FROM SIN

O Lord, my Saviour, in whose power it is to remit sins, I beseech Thee say unto me, 'Loose thee from thy chains, come out of the bonds of thy sins' and when Thou sayest it, loose those cords of my errors wherewith I am entangled and bound; for, though I am the most wicked of all men, and to be abhorred by reason of my continuance in sins, yet when thou commandest, I shall be free from them. Amen.

COME, Holy Ghost, who ever One
Art with the Father and the Son,
It is the hour, our souls possess
With Thy full flood of holiness.

Let flesh, and heart, and lips, and mind,
Sound forth our witness to mankind;
And love light up our mortal frame,
Till others catch the living flame.

Grant this, O Father, ever One
With Christ, Thy sole-begotten Son,
And Holy Ghost, whom all adore,
Reigning and blest forevermore.

PRAYER OF ST. AMBROSE BEFORE COMMUNION

O loving Lord Jesus Christ, I a sinner, presuming not on my own merits, but trusting in Thy mercy and goodness, with fear and trembling approach the table of Thy most sacred banquet. For I have defiled both my heart and body with many sins, and have not kept a strict guard over my mind and my tongue. Wherefore, O gracious God, O awful Majesty, I, a wretched creature, entangled in difficulties, have recourse to Thee, the font of mercy; to Thee do I fly that I may be healed, and take refuge under Thy protection. And I ardently desire to have Him as my Savior, Whom I am unable to withstand as my Judge.

To Thee, O Lord, I show my wounds, to Thee I lay bare my shame. I know that my sins are many and great, on account of which I am filled with fear. But I trust in Thy mercy, of which there is no end. Look down upon me, therefore, with the eyes of Thy mercy on me, who am full of misery and sin, Thou Who wilt never cease to let flow the fountain of mercy.

Hail, Victim of salvation, offered for me and for all mankind on the tree of the Cross. Hail, noble and precious Blood, flowing from the wounds of my crucified Lord Jesus Christ and washing away the sins of the whole world. Remember, O Lord, Thy creature, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Blood. I am grieved because I have sinned, I desire to make amends for what I have done.

Take away from me, therefore, O most merciful Father, all my iniquities and sins, that, being purified both in soul, and body, I may worthily partake of the Holy of Holies. And grant that this holy oblation of Thy Body and Blood, of which, though unworthy, I purpose to partake, may be to me the remission of my sins, the perfect cleansing of my offenses, the means of driving away all evil thoughts and of renewing all holy desires, the accomplishment of works pleasing to Thee, as well as the strongest defense for soul and body against the snares of my enemies. Amen.

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 of every year (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.

OCTOBER 2003

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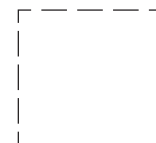
FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622-5499

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

St. Monica, pray for us.