



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622 312-243-7373 - Fax 312-666-4653

Dear Members:

Requests for prayers continue to pour in. I will go to Rome at the end of November, and will visit the Tomb of St. Monica. I will lay the new petitions before her as did Kevin Haney in April. I plan to say Mass on the Tomb of St. Monica for all of your intentions. Included will be any petitions that arrive before I depart November 15, 1999.

I look forward to meeting with the Augustinians who staff the church of St. Augustino, the site of St. Monica's Tomb. We hope to arrange for Masses to be said daily at Monica's tomb for those who request that their loved ones be "remembered at the altar of God".

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have completed production of an audio recording of the St. Monica Novena Prayers. The 50-minute tape will sell for \$10.00 each, plus postage of \$2.00.

There are a growing number of Catholic radio stations around the country and indeed around the world, thanks to Mother Angelica and Fr. Fessio. We will offer these tapes to them and soon you may be hearing the St. Monica Novena Prayers on a Catholic radio station near you. If you have a favorite radio station, contact them and ask if they would include these prayers in their programming.

This recording is specially produced for the St. Monica Sodality. A sodality member who is a talented professional actor, Tony Mockus, reads the prayers. Several inspirational hymns make the recording more meditative. The "Seraphim Vocal Ensemble" provides the beautiful hymns. Some of the hymns are in Latin and some in English.

Another wonderful development is that Cardinal George has granted jubilee indulgence status to St. John's. This means that the faithful who attend the St. Monica Novena, as well as other liturgical and devotional activities during the jubilee, will be able to gain a plenary indulgence for doing so. These can only be gained once a day and may be applied to the holy souls in purgatory if desired. I encourage those who regularly attend the St. Monica Novena to plead for the souls in purgatory as a means of gaining their prayers for a return to the faith by their loved ones.

Many members have written asking for Masses to be offered. As St. Monica said when dying, "remember me at the altar of God", so you should be committed to praying at Mass for your loved ones, both living and dead. November, the month of the Holy Souls, is the perfect time to begin having Masses said for all your deceased loved ones, especially those ancestors who have passed the Catholic Faith on to you, or for the person who brought you to the Faith. No gift of thanks to God or to your loved one could be more powerful, beautiful, or effective.

Fr. C. Frank Phillips, C.R.

ICON OF ST. MONICA

A new, beautiful, inspiring St. Monica Icon is available from Monastery Icons, at Light of Christ Monastery, 1482 Rango Way, Borrego Springs, CA 92004, (order number 800-729-4952; fax 760-767-0049). Various sizes available (3x4-\$8.95; 8x10, \$20.95; 11x14, \$36.95) Call for a catalog.

St. Monica, pray for us.

ST. MONICA WELCOMES LYDIA HOME

by Kevin M. Haney

In April of 1995, a few short months after its re-activation, the St. Monica Sodality achieved its first victory, the return of a lapsed Catholic to the Faith. This was no light-pouring-from-the-sky sort of conversion. Lydia was converted by her own openness to returning to the church when she did, a thing she could not have done at earlier stages in her life.

For over 60 years there had always been at least one family member praying for her return, making real efforts to meet her objections and to remove the obstacles that stood in Lydia's road home. In the end, the St. Monica Sodality was in the right place and there at the right time to help Lydia. She was aided by prayers, a support network of sympathetic ears, and knowledgeable priests to assist her in her journey back to the church.

Lydia had left the church in 1934 when she chose a civil marriage to a strongly anti-Catholic Protestant. Unlike the situation of Monica and Augustine, where the mother persevered on behalf of the wayward child, it was Lydia's daughter, Barbara, who stormed heaven for Lydia. After Barbara's death in 1986, her son Steve prayed constantly for his grandmother. As in the story of Monica and Augustine, this conversion and its circumstances were far removed in time and place from the beginning.

When I spoke with her grandson Steve, it was very interesting to hear what insights were gained and what objections had to be overcome in the case of Lydia. Even though Lydia left the church in 1934, she made a point of sending her daughter to Catholic school at a time when Catholic education was a more secure harbor than has perhaps been the case in some places more recently. As a result, the daughter was a very active Catholic who, of course, did what she could to work on her mother. But times and circumstances did not come together. Lydia's first husband, for whom she left the church, divorced her after 10 years. She remarried, this time choosing a fellow lapsed-Catholic. The old saying about "birds of a feather" comes to mind.

In 1986, Lydia's daughter Barbara suddenly died of a heart attack. Barbara had become very active in the pro-life movement and her tragic heart attack occurred at a pro-life fundraising dinner that she had organized. (Coincidentally, this author was in attendance at that dinner and saw her collapse.)

The death of her daughter caused a change in Lydia. She started attending Mass again, but she sat in the back of church and did not make any apparent effort to come back into the church fully.

By the early 1990's her grandson Steve, who had become more active in church programs and organizations after his mother's death, was working hard to bring Lydia back while there was still time. He would bring her to Mass and try to get her to see a priest and rejoin the sacramental life of the church. He was not meeting with much success. Lydia had been away from the church for years between her marriage in 1934 and her daughter's death in 1986. During those years, starting in the 1960's, the church as she had known it to be had all but disappeared. The Latin Mass, the devotions, priests in cassocks and nuns in full habit had seemingly vanished in her absence. To her mind, the unchangeable had changed and she was not sure how to handle that. It must have seemed that she could never return to the church she had left. Judging by external appearances it was gone.

Steve received a flier from St. John Cantius Parish telling of a 1st Saturday holy hour which included recitation of the Rosary. Steve took Lydia and was amazed to discover that Lydia carried a Rosary with her. He is not sure but it is very possible that she had saved it since her youth when she prayed it during Mass. This was a common practice in the 1930s. In addition to the traditional holy hour St. John's had been asked by the late Cardinal Bernardin to make available again the Traditional Latin Mass. Lydia found herself once more in the presence of the church she could recognize from her youth. This cleared a large emotional obstacle that had stood in the way of Lydia's return.

Soon after Steve began taking Lydia to St. John's, Fr. Phillips began the St. Monica

Novena at the parish. After the first few monthly novenas, following the years of individual prayer and effort, Lydia agreed to return to the sacraments. Lydia was getting very advanced in years and she was running out of time. Soon after her return to the Church Lydia's health deteriorated to the point where she required nursing home care. In June of this year Lydia died a peaceful death. The Requiem Funeral Mass was offered for her at St. John's. Now St. Monica could truly welcome Lydia home.

Lydia's story illustrates some of the stumbling-blocks faced by other lapsed Catholics. An irregular marriage played a part. Even after she no longer went to church she made a point of sending her daughter to Catholic school. She held on to something from her time of faith. In her case it was a Rosary, but others probably keep similar mementoes. All along Lydia seemed to want to undo her decision to leave the church. If she had not sent her daughter to Catholic school perhaps her own end would have been different. It was the persistence of Lydia's loved ones, and the shock of loss, that moved her back to the faith.

As it turned out, Lydia's first husband married again, also to a Catholic. In the second marriage his wife stayed in the church. When she developed a fatal form of cancer she pleaded with her anti-Catholic husband to convert, which he did. Her cancer cleared up and he went on to become very involved in the local parish. This extraordinary story is yet another example of the old saying "God writes straight with crooked lines." Indeed he does!

OTHER TAPES

"The Confessions of Saint Augustine" (75 minute audio tape) Leonardo Defilippis recounts the story of Monica's son. This incredibly moving performance is available from Saint Luke Productions, PO Box 761, Beaverton, OR 97075, or call 800-683-2998. Cost: \$8.95 each plus \$2.00 shipping and handling.



*Cardinal Francis George
with two members of the St. Monica Sodality*

PLEADINGS TO ST. MONICA

(EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS)

"My physician has helped me so much that I beg St. Monica to pray that he returns to the Faith that he left 50 years ago. He is old now and I want him to die in Our Lord's good graces."

"I am so happy to think that others will be praying for my children as my husband and I have been praying for 43 years. All our children have strayed from the Faith."

"There is a DESPERATE need for such a Sodality for all those mothers like myself, who are heartsick over the abandonment of our precious Catholic Faith by our children."

"I am 86 . . . I have 9 grandchildren. The only time they attend Mass is when they take me. I have 15 great grandchildren and only 6 are baptized."

"Please pray for the conversion of President and Mrs. Clinton."

"You'll never know the joy I felt when I received the information about the St. Monica Sodality assuring me of the prayers of the members for my son's return to the faith"

"My daughter had 12 years of Catholic education. She has left the church and taken my 4 grandchildren into another church."

"My son has given up the practice of his Catholic Faith and I am so afraid that he will die without returning to God and his Faith — my heart cries for him — the thought of him losing Heaven overwhelms me."

PRAYER TO SAINT MONICA

Saint Monica you know the struggle of those who seek to live by faith. By your example and prayers you led your husband and your son into the way of faith. The difficulties of life did not diminish your confidence in God or your prayers. Pray for me and for all whose faith is tested, that we may trust in God and not be overwhelmed or discouraged by life's bruises, but may live in faith and proclaim God's generous love in word and deed. Amen. Saint Monica pray for me.

FROM MONICA'S SON —

Translated by John K. Ryan

Costly funerals and expensive displays may afford the living some consolation, but are of no benefit to the departed. . . . Let care be bestowed upon funerals and the erection of monuments; for Holy Writ reckons these among good works. Let all perform these last services for the departed, and thereby relieve their own sorrow; but let them show greater zeal, care, and generosity in succoring the souls of the departed by Masses, prayers, and alms, and thus give evidence not only of the temporal, but also the spiritual love for those who are departed in body only, but not in spirit."

THE ST. MONICA SODALITY

The St. Monica Sodality meets 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.

To simplify organizational work, please renew yearly membership on the feast of St. Monica, May 4th of every year. Please send in your \$10.00 annual membership renewal 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, or rule booklets are available by writing to The Saint Monica Sodality, at 825 North Carpenter, Chicago, IL 60622.

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IN MY DISTRESS
I CRIED
UNTO THE LORD

St. Monica, pray for us.

