



# ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

## ST. MONICA SODALITY

825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622 312-243-7373 - Fax 312-243-4545  
E-mail: stmonicasodality@yahoo.com Website: www.cantius.org

Dear Friends of Saint Monica,

The Saint Monica Sodality is alive and well and continues to grow. This January will mark our sixth anniversary. What began as a small parish activity has spread round the world.

During the great Jubilee Year of grace, hundreds of Sodality attendees gained untold graces through their thousands of prayers, Rosaries, and Masses. The benefits of these graces will not end with the year 2000. The spiritual healing will continue to be reaped in the years to come.

Just as St. Monica labored for her son's conversion for over 30 years before she saw the fruits of her efforts, we should remember that we have seen only a small part of the fruits of our efforts. We know that all prayers are answered, perhaps not as quickly as we would like. I have read your petitions and intentions, even though I have not been able to acknowledge them all. Remember the words of St. Ambrose to St. Monica, on hearing of her long and lonely crusade for her wayward son, "It is not possible for a child of so many tears to be lost."

In this issue we feature a profile of a sinner turned saint, Margaret of Cortona. Though she lived in the 1200s, St. Margaret's story has a modern ring to it.

All the best for a Blessed New Year from all of us here at the St. Monica Sodality. May God bless you abundantly in this new Third millennium of our Savior.

Father C. Frank Phillips, C.R., Director

P.S. Due to increased postage costs, we would appreciate any additional donations you could make at this time. This will enable us to keep membership dues as low as possible for those on fixed income. May God bless you for your kindness.

## OUT OF AFRICA

Dear Leader of the Sodality of St. Monica,

We would like to introduce to you our Sodality of St. Anne and Monica of our Diocese of Moshi. We visualize that it would be wonderful if both sodalities could work hand-in-hand for the greater good of their members. The Sodality of St. Anne and Monica was started in our Diocese around the year 1920 for the married Catholic women of our Diocese by the then Vicariate of Kilimanjaro. The Catholic women pledged to put together their spiritual and material goods to work for their salvation, and that of their husbands and their children. They meet every Tuesday and the last Sunday of the month to pray together and give one another advice and spiritual encouragements.

Since then they have proved themselves to be of very great help for one another and for other people. We saw your advertisement in Homiletic and Pastoral Review and we thought that it would be beneficial to contact you and find out what could be of good use for the two sodalities. The women here chose St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, to help them to advance the sanctification of their children and husbands.

We hope to hear more from you about the Sodality of St. Monica.

Rev. Father Henry Zawadi  
Tanzania, East Africa

St. Francis de Sales stated in a letter to St. Jane de Chantal: "Ladies, if you desire to be truly Christian mothers, fix your gaze on St. Monica. . . . Read St. Monica's Life. You will see her care for her Augustine, and find much to console you."

## ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA—PLAYGIRL TO SAINT

St. Margaret of Cortona was born in Northern Italy in 1247. At the time St. Thomas Aquinas was what we would today call college age about 20. The Dominicans and the Franciscans were fairly new reforming orders trying to upgrade the quality of preaching and discipline, which had grown lax among the older orders and secular clergy. The bishops often busied themselves with politics and finances. A doomsday cult called the Flagellants was wandering around Europe flogging themselves and espousing strange notions of extreme and masochistic public penance and erroneous religious ideas. Routine sin and violent revenge killings were common as well. It was an age inhabited by saints and sinners; by strange cultists and wise as well as corrupt churchmen. It was a time of scholarship and of superstition; of real and phony piety. It was an age which believed in miracles and mystics. Margaret was a child of her age and would be influenced by these events of her time.

Margaret was born of average middle-class parents. Her mother saw to Margaret's basic religious training. Unfortunately, her mother died when she was very young and her father remarried. The stepmother took no interest in Margaret and her relationship with her father appears not to have been very close. Thus Margaret went into her teenage years with little guidance.

Margaret grew into a young woman who enjoyed the finer things—high living, parties and male attention. She was very attractive and grew very adept at getting what she desired from her male admirers and playing them one against the other for her benefit and amusement.

At twenty, she moved in with a wealthy young lover. Margaret made no attempt at all to cover-up her lifestyle or her pleasures. She made no attempt to marry her live-in lover with whom she had one child. This arrangement was the source of scandal and gossip which concerned Margaret not at all.

At the age of 27, Margaret found herself violently shaken from her sinful lifestyle. One day

her lover rode off on a short trip. When his dog returned without him Margaret followed the dog back to his master. She found her lover dead, obviously murdered, and the body covered over with sticks. The worms had been doing their work on the corpse for sometime and the sight of her lover's dead and rotting body was overwhelming. It forced her to confront her life and indeed the consequences of her actions. To quote from a profile of St. Margaret by Archbishop Albania Goodier:

“The body of the man she had loved and served was lying there before her, but what had become of his soul? If it had been condemned, was now it in hell? Who was, in great part at least, responsible for its condemnation? Others might have murdered his body, but she had done infinitely worse. Moreover, there was herself to consider. In the past, she had known how to stir the rivalry and mutual hatred of men on her account and had gloried in it; who knew but that this deed had been done by some rival because of her? Or again, her body might have been lying there where his now lay, her fatal beauty being eaten by worms, and in that case where would her soul then have been? Her whole life came up before her, crying out now against her as she had never permitted it to cry.”

Margaret decided to reform her life and turn away from her sinful ways. This resolution was merely the beginning of a long journey. What was she to do, and how was she to live and support her child. She may have decided to change but her world, her age remained unchanged.

All the desires and all the allurements of the past were still very much with her and around her. To these old enemies was now added new ones, a crushing sense of guilt and shame for all she had done and a dread of her own capacity to do moral damage to herself and others.

Margaret decided, like the prodigal son, to return to the house of her father. Her reception was far less lavish than in the bible story; however, the family jealousy aspect of the bible story was very



real in her life. Her father received her back with little fanfare. But, the stepmother was not interested in additions to the family. She waited until she could convince her husband to cast out the prodigal Margaret.

Margaret decided to follow the example of the Flagellants and opted for strange and public acts of humiliation and penance. She knelt in the church door with great regularity, making very public confessions of her past sins. She hired a woman to lead her about with a rope around her neck and she even cut her own face to mar her beauty, so as not to be a temptation and to avoid further temptation herself. This behavior was too much for her father and he cast her out on her own. As she had fallen victim to the pleasures and violence of the age, she now had fallen victim to its morbid sense of piety and guilt. In a sense, she had also fallen victim to the lax and corrupt church authorities, who took a live and let live attitude to the Flagellants until their formal condemnation by the Pope in the 1300s.

After being thrown out by her father, she decided to go Cortona where the new Franciscans had erected a monastery which had a good reputation for working with reformed sinners. At last, Margaret's new and powerful zeal to change found the sensible direction it required. The Franciscans turned her drive from public humiliation to prayer and public good works.

As the years passed, Margaret was transformed into a powerful force for good. Her tireless prayers and good works produced fruit and gained her wide respect. In 1286, she received permission from the bishop to form a community of women to care for the sick. She founded a hospital and the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy to fund it. She was given mystical visions and so grew in public esteem that she could now admonish worldly prelates with success. The ill and the repentant alike came to Cortona to seek her healing in body or soul.

When she died in 1297, she was popularly regarded by many as a saint. In 1728 the Church concurred and Margaret was canonized. She had lived in age of great saints and great sinners, an age that believed in mystics and miracles, and she was truly a child of her age and also an example to ours.

Her feast day is February 22nd.

*by Kevin Haney*

## THE PRAYER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA

O Saint Margaret of Cortona, I too come today as a pilgrim and I pause to pray with you at the feet of the image of Christ Crucified and Risen, Whom, as a penitent, you contemplated at length.

Lord Jesus, crucified for us, in offering Yourself on Calvary for all humanity, You have revealed to us the wellsprings of everlasting life. May the mystery of Your Passion enlighten our life making us ready to follow You on the way of holiness and love.

Rekindle our faith; teach us to recognize and welcome in our everyday life the plans of Your mysterious Providence. Give us the courage to confess our sins and open our hearts to sorrow, in order to receive the gift of Your mercy.

Empower us to forgive our brethren following the example of Your love that knows no bounds. Help us to be humbly disposed to repair the harm we have done, by actively and generously serving the poor, the sick, and all who are marginalized and without hope. Give everyone the joy of persevering faithfully, in full harmony with the Church, along the way of our particular calling.

Above all others, show the young the splendid plan of love that You intend to bring about for them and with them at the threshold of the new millennium. Enable us to be peacemakers, tenacious weavers of daily relationships of fraternal solidarity, artisans of reconciliation, witnesses and apostles of the civilization of love.

O glorious Saint Margaret of Cortona, present this request to your Crucified Lord and ours. Guide us with the strength of your example, support us with your constant protection, be our companion we beg you, till we reach our Father's house. Amen.

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*In 1728, Pope Benedict XIII made St. Margaret of Cortona patron against temptations, of falsely accused people, hoboes, homeless people, insanity, loss of parents, mental illness, mentally ill people, midwives, penitent women, people ridiculed for their piety, reformed prostitutes, sexual temptation, single laywomen, tertiaries, tramps.*

## DO YOU HAVE ANY 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

The 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 use 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.

## RECOMMENDED READING

“History of St. Monica” by Mgr. Bougaud is available from the The Hope of Saint Monica Catholic Restoration Shop, 1149 Vera Cruz Pike, (State Rt. 131), Suite D, Milford, Ohio 45150-2717 for \$9.95 plus shipping and handling.

## SODALITY MEMBERSHIP

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.

On the feast of St. Monica, May 4th of every year, please renew your membership by sending \$10.00 (annual membership renewal fee) 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, or rule booklets are available from: The Saint Monica Sodality, 825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622-5499.

DECEMBER 2000

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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.*