



# ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Members of the St. Monica Sodality,

Recently, I reviewed all the correspondence which I have received over the past year, and the list is unbelievable. We received prayer requests from all over the country, with a heavy concentration of membership from the Texas and New York areas. All your letters touch the heart, and the story is always the same—parents try to provide the best in Catholic education both at home and in the schools they chose, only to have their children turn away from the practice of the Faith. Each of you sees only a small portion of the problem. I am now able to see the larger picture, and let me tell you, we must constantly storm heaven with not only prayers but sacrifice as well. Please accept these following recommendations:

1. **Be committed to daily recitation of the prayers of the St. Monica Novena**—not only for your own intentions but for those nationally and worldwide. It may be your prayer that may assist another in bringing a loved one back to the Faith.

2. **Begin to offer some type of daily mortification or penance for those who have lost the Faith.** We do not hear of mortification or penance today and that is half of the problem. Can you “give up” that drink of water, that soda, that special entertainment which you so like, that cigarette? Can you make additional sacrifices for those who, as St. Monica said of her own son, Augustine, are “dead” spiritually? The tendency of so many of us is to complain. **STOP COMPLAINING AND GET TO WORK.** Let each of us strengthen ourselves by becoming more fervent in our prayers and sacrifices.

3. **Spend some time in the Presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament.** Even though

many churches are locked most of the time, make it a point to get to church early on Sunday in order to spend special time in His Presence. You may have to spend time after Mass to accomplish this, but again, how much are you willing to sacrifice?

4. **Get into the habit of regular Confession.** Do not let even slight venial sin clutter your life. Seek admission to the tribunal of the Confessional with regularity so that the coldness of heart, or the discouragement of loneliness may not keep you in the darkness of sin.

May I encourage all our members again—do not lose heart. There are now so many praying our same prayers of St. Monica that I have no doubt our prayers will be answered. My special encouragement goes to all those who have started their own chapters in their parishes. You will all be rewarded one-hundred-fold for your efforts. Keep us posted as to any and all conversions, for it is in hearing about them that we will be fortified and encouraged.

**Important for all members of the St. Monica Sodality:** One of our members, Kevin Haney, and a few others from St. John Cantius parish, are going on pilgrimage to Rome in the near future. Kevin plans to bring all the St. Monica petitions with him to Rome, and to place them on the tomb of St. Monica which is located in the church of St. Augustine. Included with this newsletter is a special prayer request form. Mail it back as soon as possible so that your special intentions and prayers may be included in this important pilgrimage.

Be assured of my special prayers for all our members throughout Lent.

In Christ,

Rev. C. Frank Phillips, C.R.  
International Director

## NOT BELIEVING IN NOTHING

by Kevin Haney

Modern man no longer believes in himself, his country or his God. While some believe in nothing, most are searching for some meaning in life. What they are finding in the Western World is the greatest pagan revival in centuries; perhaps, ever. Enter—The New Age Movement!!! It is everywhere. Television has psychic hot-lines; book stores are jammed with large sections on New Age and Eastern Religions; many Catholic clerics have turned to pseudo-pagan and wiccan practices. It is the age not of unbelief but of the new evangelization. But it is evangelization to a pagan religious revival. The industrial West is being won for the religions of old. There is magic in the air and on the airways.

What is the importance and relevance today of St. Monica and St. Augustine, and the Saint Monica Sodality? Augustine did not merely not believe, he believed in paganism. The 4th Century Church and the Roman World in which they lived were torn by heresy within the Church and pagan beliefs outside the Church, not unlike the Christians of today. The old pagan religions, like the secularists of today, were a beaten shell before the onslaught of the new Faith.

St. Monica was far removed in era, though not in years, from the Church of the catacombs. St. Monica, born in 322 AD, was an infant when St. Helena, mother of the first Christian Emperor of Rome, leveled to the ground the pagan temple of Aphrodite, which had been erected over the site of the Savior's tomb, and replaced it with a convent.

Monica's son Augustine was a very earnest pagan and as an adult was living a life of debauchery. Monica's never-ceasing tears, prayers, sacrifices and supplications to God for her son were rewarded. St. Augustine converted, was ordained a priest, consecrated a bishop, and became one of the great Doctors of our Church.

The world in which we live today is a landscape devastated by a worn out attempt to create a society devoid of belief in supernatural reality. Upon this landscape the New Age proponents of the old pagan faiths are trying, with great energy and technical expertise, to raise again in the West a new and high-tech, on-line, user-friendly version of the pagan temple of Aphrodite, which St. Helena leveled when

Monica was just a child. The St. Monica Sodality is not looking backward, for we are in a race. When the final smoke of the secular folly has cleared from the field, whose temple will stand highest on the new landscape of history in the 21st Century? Here's a hint—it isn't going to be Aphrodite's. Please God, it will be the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Saint Monica Sodality was established at St. John Cantius Parish in Chicago less than two years ago and has attracted much national interest. Other chapters have since formed in several other parishes in the United States and around the world. The St. Monica Sodality is committed to praying fallen-away Catholics back into the Church.

The Sodality takes its name and inspiration from the story of St. Monica and her years of persistent prayer to bring her son, the future St. Augustine, back to the church. St. Augustine would finally turn from pagan philosophy and moral debauchery and would devote his genius and energies to the Church. He would go on to become a bishop, founder of the Augustinian order and one of the best defenders of doctrine in history. His writings are still widely read today, 1500 years after his death, and the story of his conversion in his most famous work, *Confessions*, is still found topical by contemporary readers.

As a person, St. Monica is an ideal model for our situation today. She had no way of knowing what her son would accomplish. She lived to see his conversion but, in an earthly sense, was not present for his stunning achievements as a priest. She is really a living example of what can be done through simple, unwavering persistence in the face of overwhelming odds.

St. Monica does not fall into any of the common categories we see in the early saints. She was not a cleric, a virgin, a martyr, or a scholar. She was a wife and mother, probably held in no great esteem by her fellow Catholics; after all, she married a pagan and her son was a loose-living professional student who left the Faith. But it is St. Monica that the Church remembers and that her fellow Catholics look to fifteen hundred years later for an example of persistent prayer.

St. Monica's tomb is in the church of St. Augustine in Campo Marzio in Rome. The par-

*St. Monica, pray for us.*

ish is administered by the priests of the Augustinian Order and is not often visited by locals or pilgrims. There is no particular devotion to St. Monica in Rome itself. The Church of St. Augustine is very impressive with fine artwork and side chapels including the Chapel of St. Monica where the saint has been entombed since being moved from Ostia Antica in 1430.

On Tuesday, July 20th 1996, Fr. Frank Phillips, spiritual director of the St. Monica Sodality, offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the tomb of St. Monica in Rome. The Mass was offered for all of the many petitions that have come to Fr. Phillips, from members of the St. John Cantius Chapter in Chicago, and from the hundreds of petitioners from around the country.

“I have read the many hundreds of personal stories of families in grief for a loved one who has drifted away from the faith and it was a privilege for me as a priest to offer Mass for these wonderful people and their intentions on the very tomb of the great St. Monica in the Eternal City,” said Fr. Phillip’s after his return.

The Augustinian fathers very graciously permitted Fr. Phillips to offer a private Mass on the tomb in the morning. Father Phillips did encounter one elderly local woman who has a private vigil before the tomb of St. Monica every morning. That morning she would find her vigil less lonely. At the lady’s request the Mass was offered in Latin. The timeless language of the Mass echoed from the tomb through the beautiful but empty chapel. Like all Masses it was heard throughout the Church, militant, suffering and triumphant.

After Mass the local lady promised to remember in her prayers the people from far away whose petitions had been joined with hers. She was happy to hear from Fr. Phillips of other people like her who keep their vigils to St. Monica.

## 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.



## Mother of Consolation

God our Father, You sent Your only Son, born of the Virgin Mary, as the consolation of your people. Through the prayers of His Mother, may we find in Him the fullness of Your compassion, and bring Its blessing to all around us.

Mary, Mother of Consolation, you brought comfort and strength to Monica with the conversion of her son, Augustine, pray for all those in need and bring consolation to them. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

St. Monica pray for us.

Saint Augustine pray for us.

A venerable tradition of the Augustinians tells the story of the origin of the cincture in this way. Saint Monica, prostrate in grief and worry over her son, brought her trouble to the understanding heart of the Mother of God. Our Lady appeared to her wearing a cincture. As a pledge of her continual love and for the consolation and solace of Monica, Our Lady removed the cincture and presented it to the holy widow. She directed her to wear it herself, to encourage others to do so, and to spread devotion to it far and wide. Naturally, Monica gave it to her son who transmitted it in turn to his spiritual sons and daughters.

## THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF ST. MONICA

(EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS)

"I joined the Sodality a few years ago to pray for my daughter, who at the time was living with her boyfriend. The couple are both Catholics. I started praying and within 6 months my daughter moved out and away from her boyfriend. Both of them have returned to the practice of their faith and her boyfriend even started going to daily Mass. I am sure this all took place through the prayers of all the members of the Sodality and through the intercession of St. Monica."

". . . please pray for my son . . . to end the sinful life he is living and to turn to God. He sometimes goes to Mass now, but he needs to go every Sunday."

"Include my brothers (lost in the materialism of the world, having no time for God, only for making money) in your prayers as I will include your intentions in my prayers."

## ST. MONICA SODALITY NEWS

The St. Monica Sodality now meets EVERY Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm at St. John Cantius Church. Novena prayers and Rosary are following by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

### MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR THE SODALITY

In order to simplify the organizational workings of the St. Monica Sodality, it is requested that ALL members renew their yearly membership on the feast of St. Monica, May 4th of every year.

Please send in your \$10.00 annual membership renewal on or before May 4th, along with any change of address information, or letters of gratitude to St. Monica, etc. This will help to eliminate much of the confusion about the membership roles and help to defray the cost of postage and mailing for these newsletters.

FEBRUARY 1999

# ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622



*St. Monica, pray for us.*