



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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

Dear Members of the St. Monica Sodality,

The Roman delegation from St. John Cantius returned safely, and the pilgrimage was a tremendous success. Kevin Haney's first-hand account is on page 2.

It is important for me to give you my overall impressions about all the correspondence that I read before sending the petitions to Rome.

First: we all have a lot to pray for and we can not let our guard down. Each one of us must continue to pray daily for all the intentions of the members throughout the world.

Second: You are not alone. Many of your stories about family members and friends are so similar. There are the parents who provided solid upbringing for their children, Catholic education, and spiritual formation, only to have their children drawn away from family and the Church by their peers. There are many individuals whose children are in marriages that need healing. Many have children involved in cults or illicit relationships. There are parents who feel the loneliness of being abandoned because of their belief in the Church's teaching.

Third: Practically everyone expressed some type of thankfulness for the St. Monica Sodality. Even in your darkest moments, so many of you are gracious enough to thank us just for being here to pray for the lost sheep. Our thanks flow back to you for supporting this form of evangelization. It is bringing back those who have lost the Faith.

There are many prayers of thanks when anyone does return to the Faith. When we receive these letters, it is a sign of great hope for us all that our heavenly patroness is listening not only to the prayers but often the tears of those involved in the Sodality.

May Our Blessed Lord give each of you the necessary strength to continue to fight the

battle against those who are indifferent to living the Faith and the strength not to waiver in your prayers.

Before our delegation left for Rome, we were pleased to present all the petitions to Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I. and Archbishop Kondrusiewicz of Russia for their blessing, which they most enthusiastically gave. (See the insert.)

Archbishop Chaput of Denver would like to make the St. Monica Sodality a part of every parish in his Diocese. We had printed and sent prayer cards and rule booklets to be distributed to all the parishes in Denver so that each parish can begin to conduct the St. Monica Novena. As you can see, the devotion to St. Monica is growing rapidly.

Please inform us of any growth of devotions to St. Monica or of any lost sheep returning to the Faith. God bless you and may He keep all of you close to His Sacred Heart.

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

Sent to us from Pennsylvania a Church Bulletin

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 you do: Send their names to St. Monica Sodality, c/o St. John Cantius Parish, 825 N. Carpenter Street, Chicago, IL 60622-5499. They will include your *Lapsi* in their prayers and sacrifices.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

I am pleased to report that I carried all your petitions to Rome. On Wednesday, April 27, I laid them before the tomb of St. Monica in the Church of St. Augustine. I can assure you that she has a lot of reading to do! When all the petitions were stacked up before the tomb, the pile stood at least half a foot high. The petitions had come by hand, by mail, and by fax from around the country. It was impossible to determine the exact number of people on whose behalf Monica was asked to pray. Some petitions listed as many as a hundred individual names. Some listed entire families or even many families. Several listed whole groups of people numbering in the millions. I will touch on this again as I review with you in detail the events that led to the tomb of St. Monica.

Early this year my friend Susan Tassone, founder of the Holy Souls Mass Apostolate, asked me if I would join her and a few others on a trip to Rome. Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, had arranged for her a private audience with the Holy Father, in gratitude for her years of work on behalf of the missions and the Holy Souls in purgatory. The trip was planned for the end of April to correspond with the beatification of Padre Pio. The St. Monica Sodality, and I personally, owe the great success of our pilgrimage-within-a-pilgrimage to Susan.

After I agreed to go Rome, it occurred to me that I should make a trip to the tomb of St. Monica on behalf of the Sodality. I spoke with Fr. Phillips, and it was decided that we should take all the existing petitions as well as advertise for new petitions. A notice was sent to all Sodality members along with a petition form for the names of those to be remembered. A press release was also sent out. Names came pouring in immediately. News of the pilgrimage appeared nationally in *The Wanderer*, as well as in *The New World* of the Archdiocese of Chicago. It was also broadcast on Tom Roeser's interview program on Catholic Family Radio. We would appreciate the names of any other publications in which notices were run that our readers are aware of.

The weeks that followed Fr. Phillips' decision to ask for prayer petitions were very active with distributing and collecting petitions, initially those from the parish itself. Soon we were getting petitions from all around the Chicago area. Then we were inundated with petitions from

around the country and beyond. Every Sunday I checked in with Fr. Phillips to get the new petitions. The weekly piles kept getting bigger and bigger. Many people sent stories of their pain and sense of loss. Many people offered prayers for our success. All seemed to be profoundly grateful for our offer of aid to their friends and loved ones.

It became very clear to those few who handled the final collecting of these tearful letters to St. Monica that we are no longer living in the happy and triumphant American Catholicism of the 1950's. For whatever reason, we are moving through a period of darkness and abandonment in the life of the Church.

Some years ago at St. John Cantius Parish here in Chicago, Fr. Phillips re-introduced a Holy Week ceremony known as *Tenebrae*, the name derived from the Latin word for darkness. During the evening *Tenebrae* service, lighted candles representing the Apostles are extinguished one by one, symbolizing their abandonment of Christ before the Passion. Finally the last candle, which represents Christ, is carried behind the high altar and the church is left in darkness. During this darkness the faithful pound on the pews with their hands to symbolize the confusion in the darkness. In the end, the light of Christ, in the form of the lighted candle, reappears; the darkness is defeated and the pounding stops. In the end, our present great human *tenebrae*, or era of darkness, will be dispelled by the light of Christ, just as the *tenebrae* ceremony of Holy Week ends with the return of the light of the candle.

I am certain that Fr. Phillips has gained profound insight into the spiritual anguish and tearful grief expressed in your many letters of petition. Speaking for myself, the impact of reading these letters was moving. As I looked at name after name, I was struck by the magnitude of individual loss. The names impart a sense of the human toll behind the often-quoted statistics of drastic decline in church attendance in recent decades. I felt as I used to when walking along the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. Name after name, each of them with their own story, and each representing a profound loss to friends and loved ones who knew them. But for the names on our list there is still time.

*Archbishop Kondrusiewicz
blesses the petitions while Fr. Phillips and
Fr. Marcel the Archbishop's aide look on.*

On the April Saturday before I left for Rome, Fr. Phillips attended a luncheon honoring Archbishop Tadeuz Kondrusiewicz the Apostolic Administrator of European Russia. Also in attendance was Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago.

The luncheon was hosted by the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, which takes its name from the late Cardinal Mindszenty former primate of Hungary imprisoned by the Communists. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz is quite literally the man whom Pope John Paul II has chosen to undertake the conversion of Russia promised at Fatima in 1917, the year of the Soviet takeover.

Fr. Phillips had the opportunity to speak privately with both of these prelates and to explain briefly the upcoming pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Monica. We had brought the petitions to the conference in hopes of getting them blessed for the trip. The Archbishop and the Cardinal were pleased with the endeavor, and both took the time to impart a private blessing on the names that would be laid before the tomb. It did not occur to me until later, but as I mentioned at the start of my report, the pilgrimage to the tomb grew out of Cardinal George's recognition of Susan Tossone and her work. So the Cardinal not only blessed the names but played an important part in the entire process of bringing the pilgrimage into being.

The fact that our journey was taking place in a time of war and renewed tensions among the

*Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago
blessing the petitions
presented to him by Fr. Phillips.*

Great Powers was underscored by the appearance at the luncheon of a crew from the local ABC affiliate. They were there to interview Archbishop Kondrusiewicz about the Russian view of the crisis in Kosovo. The Archbishop pleaded for peace. Throughout our time in Rome, more men were flying combat missions in the skies over Europe than at anytime since 1945.

The following day I served as part of the small delegation that took Archbishop Kondrusiewicz and his aide, Fr. Marcel, to the Airport. On the way, the topic of the St. Monica pilgrimage came up. Someone asked if we could take any prayer requests to the tomb for the Archbishop. I passed a blank petition form forward. Fr. Marcel passed it back with the Archbishop's request for St. Monica to help in the conversion of Russia. I put this petition with all others.

The following Saturday I was back at the O'Hare Airport. This weekend I was the one who was boarding the plane. I had bought a backpack to hold all the petitions, and it was very heavy. I decided to keep the petitions with me rather than putting them with my checked luggage. I was taking no chances with Monica's mail. I would not rest easy until the mail was delivered to the tomb. As our plane took off, behind us lay months of working gathering intentions; ahead lay the last vital step. We would stop over briefly in Milan, the site of St. Augustine's conversion, and then on to Rome.

by Kevin M. Haney

FROM MONICA'S SON —

St. Augustine, Confessions Book IX 13,37 Book X, 27,38

Let her be in peace with her man, before and after whom she was not the wife of any other; whom she served offering You the fruits of her patience in order to win him for You too.

Inspire Your servants, Lord, my brothers, Your children, my masters, whom I serve with my heart and voice and writings, so that those who will read these words will remember before Your altar Monica, Your servant, and Patrizio, her husband, through whose flesh You introduced me into this life, I do not know how

In this way the extreme invocation which my mother made to me will be satisfied through the prayers of many, more abundantly than my confessions, than by my prayers.

I loved you late, such ancient and such new beauty, I loved you late.

ST. MONICA SODALITY NEWS

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 Traditional Latin Mass. Visitors are always welcome.

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR THE SODALITY

To simplify the organizational work 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 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.

JUNE 1999

ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

St. John Cantius Church
825 N Carpenter St., Chicago, IL 60622

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



St. Monica, pray for us.

MAIL FOR MONICA

As our plane took off for Italy that Saturday evening near the end of April, many thoughts were passing through my mind. I thought back to St. Monica, all those centuries ago, just a simple homemaker, and her concern for her wayward son.

I had never traveled out of the country before, so everything was new to me. Padre Pio was to be beatified during my visit to Rome. The air war in Serbia was in full swing. The tragic killing in Littleton had just happened and news of the horror preceded us to Italy.

I brought the backpack with me on the plane as carry-on luggage, I did not want to take any chances with the petitions. I was on a mission, and to put it mildly, it was taking place against an incredible backdrop of history making events.

If you have some knowledge of the story of St. Monica, you may remember that when Monica finally tracked Augustine to Milan, she would get a front row seat for an intense power struggle between St. Ambrose and the Emperor of Rome. The Emperor supported the Arian heretics, and was ordering Ambrose to turn his Cathedral over to the Arian bishop. Ambrose refused to do so, and he refused to leave the Cathedral. Soon hundreds of Catholics followed his example and joined him in a prolonged vigil at the church. In following her specific mission to convert her son, Monica would become witness, and most likely minor participant, in an early and important struggle to subdue an errant Emperor.

Very symbolically, our plane landed first in Milan, and we caught the short connecting flight to Rome. It seemed significant to start this leg of the journey in the city that was the end of St. Monica's own mission, and where she finally met with success. It was a very brief stop over and then on to Rome.

In Rome I first safely stowed the petitions at the convent where we were lodging. Then on we went to St. Peter's Basilica. It was wonderful – mere words cannot describe it!

On Monday morning, my friend Susan Tassone was going to the Vatican for morning papal Mass and a private audience with John Paul

II. Another gentleman and myself escorted Susan to the Vatican and saw her safely into the door. The sun was just rising over the Vatican, St. Peter's Square was empty, and the city was still asleep. It gave us an incredible feeling.

In the afternoon we proceeded to the Church of St. Augustine, led by fellow parishioners from St. John Cantius Church. Bob and his wife are the parents of adult children and have a strong devotion to St. Monica.

There it was, tucked away and off any of the main streets. Bob led us there with little difficulty. I had not been sure what to expect. It was over two years since Fr. Phillips had been there, and at that time the church was not in very good repair. To my surprise, the church was being restored for the coming Jubilee Year, like many of the churches of Rome. It is now very beautiful inside.

I asked an usher for the location of the tomb, and his assistant was kind enough to walk us over there. The tomb is set into an altar in a small side chapel off the main altar.

At last the tomb of St. Monica was before



Church of St. Augustine in Rome, Italy

me. Bob's wife, herself a mother, was deeply moved as she prayed before the tomb. As I knelt there and reached out to touch the tomb I felt a great sense of relief. My job was nearly at an end.

I did not bring the petitions with me on Monday. I would return that Wednesday, which is the day of the St. Monica Sodality Novena back at St. John Cantius. I thought it would be appropriate to place our petitions in Rome on the same day they were praying the St. Monica Novena back home in Chicago.

Before leaving the church I spoke briefly to an Augustinian priest who was walking through the church. I explained as best as I could through an usher who translated that I had come from America with thousands of names to put before St. Monica's Tomb. The priest seemed a bit surprised and I left him an article about the Sodality.

On Wednesday afternoon Susan and I returned with all of the petitions in hand. They had been divided into 6 large envelopes, in no particular order. We entered the church, and without speaking to anyone, went to the tomb. I pulled the petitions from the envelopes. Susan readied a camera.

To my surprise, the petition of Archbishop Kondrusiewicz for the conversion of Russia was on top of the pile. To say the least, I found this coincidence quite striking.

We snapped some pictures, and the next thing I knew the Augustinian with whom I had spoken on Monday, a translator, and two other priests came up to us to see the petitions. They were really impressed. They had put in a call

Augustinian priests examining the St. Monica Novena Booklet and Sodality materials.

to the Augustinian Provincial of Rome to let him know about the whole matter. They produced a large basket for the petitions and asked if they could keep them there at the Church of St. Augustine in Rome. I was delighted, and of course I agreed. After arranging for some Masses to be said at the tomb for the intentions that I was turning over to priests, and taking a few more photos, we left.

Perhaps the best way to summarize our pilgrimage is with the thought that all those centuries ago, a simple homemaker in a distant corner of the Roman Empire decided to get her wayward son into the church. She could not have imagined what an impact she would, and does, and will have on the lives of families and perhaps nations. As I walked from the church I felt that I had just finished playing a small role as mailman, in the drama that St. Monica began long ago.

by Kevin Haney

Kevin Haney praying the St. Monica Novena prayers after placing the petitions at the the tomb.

An Augustinian priest placing the petitions before the tomb of St. Monica.