



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Members:

For our new readers, let me welcome you to *Encouragement*. In this issue we have letters from sodality members who have good news to share. I am both sad and happy to report that we continue to be flooded with prayer petitions. We get many tragic stories of loved ones who have left the Church, are living in sin, are involved in new age paganism, and of grandchildren unbaptized. This is the sad news. The good news is that you are not alone. We, the members of the St. Monica Sodality, are working and praying for each other. So, as Padre Pio used to say, **PRAY, HOPE AND DON'T WORRY.**

I would like you to reflect for a moment on Augustine—not the great St. Augustine, but the Augustine as Monica knew him for most of his life. That Augustine was no saint. He did everything wrong. He was in a constant state of moral, spiritual and intellectual turmoil. He was ravaged by an energetically sinful disposition. He was torn by the spiritual and intellectual debates at that time—a time when the pagan past was violently warring with a Christian future. It took years, but by the grace of God, and through the prayers and sacrifices of his mother, St. Monica, Augustine grew into Augustine the saint.

As a pastor, I see people with moral, spiritual, and intellectual problems. Everyone has some kind of a problem. Everyone needs the grace of God, just as Augustine needed the grace of God.

For those of you who are elderly, don't worry, the Sodality will keep praying for you and your loved ones. St. Monica isn't going anywhere, either. She is where she wants to be and where she wants you and your loved ones to be: Heaven.

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

ENCOURAGING REPORTS

“My eldest daughter left home in hostile rebellion after high school. She stayed nearby so it was impossible to avoid the sordid stories. Then God began a marvelous chain of events, which seemed a response to my daily novena to St. Monica. She asked me to be there when her child was due. I agreed, and in a tender moment, I asked her if she would consider returning to the Church. The dam broke! She cried tears of remorse and said she felt she had been so bad, God couldn't forgive her. I assured her she was one confession away from communion with Him.

By Easter she had made her first confession in years. Shortly after, her marriage was blessed in the Church and the whole family came for the baby's baptism. Her husband surprised us all by entering the Church the following Easter. They are now the loving parents of two boys and two girls, expecting their fifth and diligently teaching and living the Faith with such joy.

I thank St. Monica daily for her intercession, but continue the Novena because I still have a son who is away from “Home.”

“This year my sister was married in the Catholic Church and was converted. I have been praying for her since joining the St. Monica Sodality. When I converted to the Catholic church, I was surprised to find out that there was a St. Monica (my middle name is Monica) and I started a deep devotion to her. My husband, a lapsed Catholic for 35 years, has returned . . . and my son after graduating from college and without telling me enrolled in RCIA and is now a member of the Church. Praise God, and thank you St. Monica.”

“A wonderful thing has happened in answer to my prayers—my son has returned to the Church after 20 years absence. Thank you.”



PRAY FOR THE DYING

In 1988, Pope John Paul II declared Mary Potter, founder of the Little Company of Mary, to be “venerable” which is the first step on the road toward sainthood. This is not unusual, because founders of religious communities are solid candidates—the Church already decided that they were acting in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit when founding their community. The Little Company of Mary is a community that focuses on the spiritual and physical care of the sick and dying.

Mary Potter was born in England in 1847. Her mother had only just converted to the Catholic Church at the time of her birth. Mary Potter was part of a great Catholic revival in 19th century England following the repeal of the last anti-Catholic statues in 1829. The persecution of Catholics in England, which started with Henry VIII three hundred years before, had been one of the longest and most systematically barbaric in history. And so from the blood of those martyrs sprang a great Catholic revival.

Young Mary Potter was convinced that God wanted her to care for the sick and the dying. She decided to devote her life to prayer and good works. Despite illness, and many other obstacles, Mary’s persistent faith and prayers eventually enabled her and four companions to settle into a warehouse in a very poor district of Nottingham. Atop the roof of the remodeled building,⁰ Mary Potter erected a cross painted red to symbolize the blood of her Savior. Fittingly it was on July 2, 1877, the feast of the Most Precious Blood that the Little Company of Mary Sisters were founded.

Mary Potter was the contemporary of such great churchmen as John Cardinal Neuman and

the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manly Hopkins. Among such illustrious and brilliant churchmen the simple nun and her humble message of devotion to the dying was easily overshadowed.

St. Monica also was, in her own time, overshadowed by St. Augustine and his brilliant mentor and fellow Doctor of the Church, St. Ambrose. But today it is St. Monica who is seen by an ever growing number of the faithful as a role model and patron.

Like St. Monica, Mary Potter has a message that is desperately needed today. Because Mary Potter endured painful and chronic illnesses throughout her life, she intimately understood the emotional and spiritual distress of the sick and dying. She could empathize with their suffering. Serving the sick and poor of the community through compassion, home care and prayerful presence, she and her companions were pioneers in what we now call hospice care.

Mary Potter reminds us that those souls on the verge of death are at the threshold of eternity. For those who languish in pain, the pleasures of this world, pride, lust, greed, vanity and all the other vices lose their appeal. Despair now remains the great weapon in the devil’s arsenal. It is into this battle that Mary Potter was called and called others to follow her with constant prayer and sacrifice. To quote from her landmark work *Devotion for the Dying: Mary’s Call to Her Loving Children*:

Should not supernatural feeling prompt heroic supernatural acts for immortal souls in danger of eternal death? And yet, take it to heart and ask yourselves, you who read this, how many times in your lives have you heard it said, “So and So has met with a bad accident and is not expected to live.” You know the person to be thoroughly worldly, utterly unprepared to appear before God, and you, what do you do? Did you besiege Heaven with your prayers that that soul might be saved even at the eleventh hour? Did you lovingly complain to your Lord: “O Jesus, You died for that soul: will you not save it?” Did you cry to Our Lady: “Mary, never was it known that anyone appealed to you and was not heard.”? (page 46-47)

Mother Mary Potter wrote 30 books about Mary, the Mother of God, and about devotion to

the dying, in addition to founding a community of women religious. Mary Potter went to her eternal reward on April 9, 1913.

A look at the state of medical ethics in the years since Mary Potter's death may explain the growing interest by the Church in her particular focus and its ever increasing need today. Simply compare the view of Mary Potter with this analysis of certain medical attitudes in the following article written for the *New England Journal of Medicine* by Dr. Leo Alexander.

Physicians have come dangerously close to being mere technicians of rehabilitation. This attitude has led them to make certain distinctions in the handling of acute and chronic diseases. The patient with the latter carries an obvious stigma as the one less likely to be able to be fully rehabilitated for social usefulness. In an increasingly utilitarian society, these patients are being looked down upon with increasing definiteness as unwanted ballast. A certain amount of rather open contempt for the people who cannot be rehabilitated with present knowledge has developed. This is probably due to a good deal of unconscious hostility, because these people for whom there seem to be no effective remedies have become a threat to newly acquired delusions of omnipotence.

Hospitals like to limit themselves to the care of patients who can be fully rehabilitated, and the patient whose full rehabilitation is unlikely finds himself, . . . as a second-class patient, faced with a reluctance on the part of . . . staff to apply therapeutic procedures. . . . From the attitude of easing patients with chronic diseases away from the doors of the best types of treatment facilities available to the actual dispatching of such patients to killing centers is a long but, nevertheless, logical step.

The author, Dr. Alexander, served in post-war Germany as a U.S. Army investigator of the Nazi Euthanasia program. His article was published in 1949.

So we can see that the race is on between the message and methods of the simple nun from England and the strange gods of medical euthanasia.

Mary Potter though left a legacy, her Little

*If you would do an act
that would endear you to your Lord,
PRAY FOR THE DYING.
Today they need your prayer
Tomorrow may be too late.*

Extract from the writings of Venerable Mary Potter

Company of Mary sisters, who even today follow her instructions to:

. . . do what good we can to those around us—instruct, convert, admonish—there are still so many we cannot reach except by prayer; let us then pray, and let us pray for those who have the greatest need, the dying of today, those for whom tomorrow will be too late. . . . Let us but throw ourselves heart and soul into this work of saving souls. (page 66 - 67)

Devotion for the dying is not a pious practice newly discovered by Mary Potter; but the central work of our Catholic Faith.

Mother Mary Potter's book *Devotion for the Dying: Mary's Call to Her Loving Children* can be purchased for \$9.00 from Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., PO Box 424, Rockford, Illinois 61105. It is a book to be incorporated into your daily devotions and to be made a part of your life.

by Kevin Haney

DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE DYING

O Most Merciful Jesus, lover of souls, I pray Thee by the agony of Thy Most Sacred Heart, and by the sorrows of Thy Immaculate Mother, wash in Thy blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their agony, and are to die this day. Amen.

Heart of Jesus, once in agony, pity the dying.

St. Joseph, patron saint of the dying, intercede for those who will die this day.

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all those who are dying from the lion's mouth and from the bottomless pit. Give them the grace to cling to You and let not hell swallow them up that they may not fall into darkness. Send your holy standard-bearer, St. Michael, to them that they may see the holy light which Thou didst promise to Abraham and his seed. Amen.

O Jesus, be not my Judge, but my Saviour!

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.

SODALITY MEMBERSHIP

The St. 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 \$10.00 (U.S. funds) 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. 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 will soon be available on the website, www.cantius.org. under Parish Life Activities.

JUNE 2001

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IN MY DISTRESS
I CRIED
UNTO THE LORD

St. Monica, pray for us.