



ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Friends of St. Monica,

I welcome the many new friends and members of the St. Monica Sodality! Petitions continue to pour in to us from all over. Our Wednesday St. Monica Sodality Mass and Novena at St. John's continues to draw ever larger crowds.

I assure you that you are not alone in your anguish and grief at the loss of the faith of your loved ones. The members of the St. Monica Sodality are united in praying for your lost loved ones.

To encourage you, on page two there is an interesting conversion story from a biography of Pope Benedict XV that will illustrate how your efforts may be rewarded even if you do not live long enough to see it. May I suggest that all members say the Prayer for Perseverance on page 26 of the St. Monica Novena Book.

As many of you know, Francis Cardinal George has granted me permission to establish the first community of men religious in the history of the Archdiocese of Chicago, namely the Society of St. John Cantius. A major component of the mission of the new community will be that of furthering the efforts of the St. Monica Sodality in its work of re-evangelization. The young men currently in priestly formation with the Society of St. John Cantius will be continuing this work for decades and generations to come.

In this way, those of you who now pray for a child who may outlive you, can know that these prayer petitions will not end with you, but will live on through the work of the St. Monica Sodality. This is also true of you who now pray for grandchildren who have not been baptized or have left the faith. Once the Sodality receives your requests, our prayers for your loved ones will continue. So please urge your friends in similar situations to send the names of their loved ones in

so that they can be assured that their intentions will be remembered in prayer by the St. Monica Sodality for years to come.

Finally, I thank the members who responded to our request for spiritual bouquets for our May Crowning at St. John Cantius. The picture on the right shows the presentation of these pledges at the altar of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Thank you for the prayers you have pledged on behalf of the priests and brothers of the Society of St. John Cantius. We thank you and ask God to bless you.



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

GRANDPARENTS' PRAYER

Infant Jesus and Mary our Queen and Mother, we come before you to place our grandchildren in your protective arms. Shield them from the evil spirits and the worldliness that is all about them. We plead with you to grant them the graces to know the vocation You have chosen for them, and the graces for them to follow it. Send their guardian angels to protect them always. St. Anne, Grandmother of the Infant Jesus, watch over our grandchildren. Thank you. Amen.

From a member in Ohio

MARIA AND THE MONSIGNOR

by Kevin Haney

Wartime espionage, a Vatican scandal, international diplomacy and a political assassination—not the usual backdrops to a conversion story, but this is no ordinary conversion story. You would also assume, from the title, that the Monsignor was working to convert Maria; but it was the opposite. There is no such thing as an ordinary conversion story.

The drama of Maria and Monsignor Gerlach begins during the Pontificate of Benedict XV (1914-1922) at the time of World War I. Msgr. Gerlach was a youngish priest of German birth. Italy remained neutral until 1915 when it entered the war on the Allied side against Germany and Austria. Benedict was elected to the papacy just as the war broke out. He worked without success for a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Since Monsignor Gerlach was German, he was to be expelled from Italy when the latter entered the war. Instead, the Monsignor received a ceremonial appointment from the Pope. Gerlach then promised to remain on the grounds of the Vatican whenever he was not undertaking a papal mission.

As a member of the Pope's staff, the Italian authorities allowed Gerlach to remain in Italy. They assumed that a member of the Pope's staff would not be a security risk.

In addition to his ceremonial duties, the Monsignor was also given some diplomatic errands. During one such diplomatic mission to Germany, he met with Matthew Ezburger, one of the most prominent Catholic politicians in Germany. The important Vatican prelate made an impression on Maria Ezburger, the 12-year old daughter of the statesman. Young Maria developed

a bit of hero worship. However, it is unlikely that the busy Monsignor took any note of the child.

Young Maria's hero worship was very misplaced in Monsignor Gerlach. As was the trust of the Pope and the Italian authorities.

Following some very bloody sabotage attacks on the Italian Navy, Allied counter intelligence took steps to obtain the names of spies operating in Italy. Such a list was obtained from the Austrian Embassy in Switzerland. One of those named was Monsignor Gerlach. The Monsignor was part of a spy ring operating in Rome. Though not involved in sabotage, Msgr. Gerlach was indeed a spy. He was exiled and tried in absentia by a closed military court. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, a sentence which would begin if he was ever found again on Italian soil.

Monsignor Gerlach's exile for spying was very widely reported in the press. It must have been a very painful episode for the Pope and a source of great scandal. The motivation for his treachery was monetary rather than any sense of loyalty to the German Fatherland.

Some time would pass before Maria heard of her fallen idol. By this time, Gerlach had left the priesthood and was in Holland trying his hand at being a gigolo. Maria was utterly traumatized. She resolved to enter a Carmelite convent and devote herself to prayer and mortification for two men—one was her father and the other, Gerlach. The very austere life of a Carmelite took a heavy toll on Maria. In 1921 came word that her father had been cut down by an assassin. This news, no doubt, added to her suffering. From then until the end of her young life at age 35, she had one focus only: to pray for the Gerlach's salvation.

Maria died just before World War II broke out. Gerlach by that time had changed his name and dropped out of sight. The world had forgotten the spying Monsignor. But Maria never forgot and God did not forget Maria's prayers.

In 1946, Gerlach, then living in England and in the throes of a long and fatal illness, sent for a priest. He revealed his true identity and reconciled with God.

Maria had triumphed.

*Please pray for me,
as I will for thee,
that we may meet in heaven
together,
where we shall be merry
for ever and ever.*

— St. Thomas More

WHAT IF

What if St. Monica had not loved God so much that she prayed 30 years for the eternal salvation of her husband, her sons Augustine and Navigius, and daughter Perpetua?

Without Monica would there have been a St. Augustine? Would there have been a St. Nicholas of Tolentine, a St. Rita of Cascia, a St. Clare Montefalco, and all the other Augustinian saints?

What if Monica had given up when Augustine deceived her and left on the ship for Italy? What if Monica had not begged St. Ambrose to instruct Augustine? What if, what if. . . .

Because of her perseverance, her total commitment to her goal—getting her family to heaven—we have the ripple effect that continues until today in her (spiritual) children. These spiritual descendants are now so numerous as to be “known only to God!” All of the Augustinian priests, brothers, sisters, and lay associates owe a debt of gratitude to God for giving St. Monica the grace of determination, strength, and courage.

One of the most widely known spiritual granddaughters of St. Monica is St. Rita of Cascia, known as the “Saint of the Impossible.” On May 22, 2000, thousands of pilgrims journeyed to Cascia, a small town in the mountains north of Rome, to beg St. Rita on her feast day to intercede for them in their need.

St. Rita is a very popular model of courage because like St. Monica she prayed and sacrificed



for many, many years for her husband and two sons. So much of Rita’s life was a mirror image of St. Monica’s that it was natural that she would eventually join the Augustinian community of nuns in Cascia.

The picture above depicts St. Rita pointing her sons toward the Cross of Christ, and turning them away from hating and taking vengeance for the murder of their father (as seen in the left background of the picture). St. Rita, by forgiving the murderers of her husband and by turning her sons away, helped to eliminate the horror of the “vendetta” in that Italian mountain area. She brought peace through her constant prayers and sacrifices.

PLEADINGS TO ST. MONICA

(EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS)

“I just wanted you to know it means so much to be a part of St. Monica’s Sodality. My daughter and husband have left the Church and are now involved in New Age Religion. . . .”

“For my son, who married a woman who has no religion. She has lead my son away from God—my son needs help and prayers.”

“Please pray most ardently for those dear priests who have left the priesthood.”

“I would like our daughter to be included in your prayers she is involved in a cult that has devastated our family.”

“I am 87 years old . . . my heart is broken . . . my granddaughter was so devout; she had a very good Catholic education; but she married a Jehovah Witness and left the Faith. I am afraid I will die before she returns to the Church.”

“I can’t sleep at night . . . my 13 grandchildren only attend Mass when it is convenient to their parents’ schedule . . . it is not important to them . . . Thank you for joining in my prayers for my dear dear grandchildren.”

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.

ENCOURAGING REPORTS

“I wish to inform you of one great favor received in answer to our prayers. My grandson was baptized and confirmed on March 11 and received his First Holy Communion on March 12. God be praised!”

From North Carolina

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.

JULY 2000

ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

ST. MONICA SODALITY

825 N Carpenter St, Chicago, IL 60622-5499



IN MY DISTRESS
I CRIED
UNTO THE LORD

St. Monica, pray for us.

