



# ENCOURAGEMENT

FROM

## ST. MONICA SODALITY

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Dear Members:

For those of us with a special devotion to St. Monica, it is perhaps easy to overlook the life of Augustine after the death of his mother. We have focused on his wayward and sinful youth, and on St. Monica's total dedication to her mission of bringing him back to the Church. But, Augustine was 33 when Monica died at the age of 56, in the year 387. He had just come back to the Church. Monica's mission was accomplished but his was only beginning.

In his recent book, *Doctors of the Church*, Fr. Christopher Rengers, OFM Cap. gives us a spiritual and historical background of the life of St. Augustine. Following his return to the Church, Augustine returned to his native North Africa where he took up the life of a hermit, devoting himself to prayer and study. He was not looking to gain high office in the Church; but God had other plans for Augustine.

The North Africa of Augustine's era was one we would not recognize. Today, it is almost totally Muslim, with barely a trace of its Christian past. In the time of St. Augustine, Fr. Rengers tells us, there were as many as 500 bishops serving the Christian population. The region was part of the Roman Empire and had been for centuries.

Augustine stayed away from cities because he did not think he was worthy to be a priest. Finally, he was called to the city of Hippo by a man seeking spiritual advice. The bishop of Hippo lost no time in persuading the people to implore so great a scholar to become a priest. When the bishop died, the faithful of Hippo petitioned to have Augustine as their bishop. St. Augustine agreed not for love of comfort but for love of God. The city of Hippo, which he served until his dying day, was what we would today consider a blue-collar town. It was more akin to Youngstown than Hollywood or Manhattan.

For 40 years he wrote and spoke to the point of exhaustion against the heresies of the age. He

fought for the truth without regard for celebrity status. St. Augustine, who in his youth had gone so astray, could see the danger of false teaching and its threat to the faith of the people he served. Augustine was no timid shepherd of the flock. He did not stop at merely watching his flock—he devoured potential predators—he attacked the heresies before they could hurt his people.

Augustine's ability to reach the faithful while preaching, was due to his saintly mother, Monica. He remembered her simple faith and imitated it. He often spoke directly to his people noticing if his congregation seemed tired or if they seemed to be understanding and particularly approving of a sermon or a point he made. He could read the crowd, and was constantly aware that he was speaking to them for their spiritual benefit. Augustine was a teacher who worked for the benefit of all the students in the class, not just the quick learners. Fr. Rengers gives an example of what Augustine was like as a preacher:

"Many of you know what I am going to say. But those who do know must put up with the delay; for when two are walking on the road and one goes fast while the other is slower, it is up to the fast walker to make sure that they both keep together; for he can wait for the slower man. The person, then, who knows what I am going to say is like the fast walker and must wait for his slower companion."

In 430 AD, the crumbling Roman Empire was being invaded by barbarian tribes. Augustine died during the siege of Hippo. He refused to leave his flock. Few bishops have ever surpassed his courage, fortitude and compassion. Bravo Monica.

Let us pray for the Church our true mother on earth in this our age of distress.

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



## SEX AND SANITY

### ST. DYMPHNA AND ST. GEREBERN

This story takes place in the seventh century but its topics of insanity, disordered sexual desire and violence make it all too relevant for our own age. This era was known as the “dark ages” because the Roman Empire was dissolved and Europe was controlled by minor kings and tribal chiefs. It was a time of great turbulence and lawlessness. The Roman Catholic Church was the only civilizing influence.

St. Dymphna was born in 650 AD to a minor king in Ireland. It had been two centuries since St. Patrick had preached in Ireland, and the island was still part pagan. Dymphna’s mother was a solid Christian, and maintained a priest as spiritual advisor at court, Fr. Gerebern. Her father, the king, was a pagan. Her mother died when Dymphna was 15. The King was desolate at the death of his wife.

As Dymphna grew, her uncanny resemblance to her dead mother aroused an incestuous passion in her father. Unable to find a new bride that reminded him of his wife, the king, obviously mentally disturbed, and encouraged by elements at court, demanded his daughter marry him. Horrified and frightened by her father’s proposal and behavior, Dymphna asked Fr. Gerebern for help. The priest’s concern was for Dymphna’s spiritual welfare rather than his own safety or position at court.

When the king could not be reasoned with, Dymphna, Fr. Gerebern, the court jester and his wife fled Ireland for what is now Gheel, Belgium, to a shrine dedicated to St. Martin of Tours. The group settled there to live as hermits. During the several months before they were found, Dymphna gained a reputation for holiness because of her devotion to the poor and suffering.

But the king was not to be put off. He and an armed band tracked down the girl and her priest protector. The king tried to persuade her to return, but when she refused, he ordered she and Gerebern be killed. The king’s men killed the priest, but hesitated to kill Dymphna. Young Dymphna, in spite of the violence done to her protector, still refused the king’s obscene proposal of marriage. In his rage, the king killed her with his own sword. The bodies of Fr. Gerebern and young Dymphna were buried on the site they were murdered.

The whole story gripped the imagination of the entire countryside especially because, according to tradition, lunatics were cured at her grave.

Under her patronage, the inhabitants of Gheel have become known for the care they have given to the mentally ill. The town now possesses a sanatorium, one of the largest and most efficient in the world. It was one of the first to initiate a program through which patients live normal and useful lives in the homes of farmers or local residents, whom they assist in their labor and whose family life they share.

St. Dymphna is recognized by the Church as the patron saint of mental and emotional disorders and victims of sexual assault. Perhaps in our own time it would be well to remember also the example of the priest, St. Gerebern, who put his duty towards the young girl entrusted to him above his own life.

## PRAYERS TO ST. DYMPHNA

Lord God, You chose St. Dymphna as patroness of those afflicted with mental and nervous disorders. She is an inspiration and a symbol of charity to the thousands who ask her intercession. Please grant, Lord, through the prayers of this pure martyr, relief and consolation in all sufferings, and trials; and especially those for whom we pray. *(Here mention those for whom you wish to pray).*

We beg Thee, Lord, to hear the prayers of St. Dymphna on our behalf. Grant all those for whom we pray patience and resignation to Thy divine will. Please fill them with hope, and grant them the relief and/or cure they desire. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### FOR TEMPERANCE

Generous St. Dymphna, like all Christ's martyrs you gained this grace because you prepared for it by a life of self denial. By faithfulness in small things you were ready for your final trial. Please teach us by your example and help us to rightly use things of life so that we may not miss our chance for life eternal. Help us, too, to watch and pray for ourselves and others. Amen.

### FOR FORTITUDE

Courageous St. Dymphna, your strength was from God. His grace enabled you to resist evil, and to prefer exile to a life of sinful luxury. Christ's own power kept you faithful to Him in life and in death. In your kindness help us to imitate your example in little things, and gain for us fortitude to bear with the misfortunes we meet, and strength to overcome our weakness. Amen.

### FOR CHASTITY

Most pure virgin, St. Dymphna, we live at a time when many are intent on satisfying every carnal appetite. Your single-minded dedication to Christ alone is inspiring. Please help us by your power with God to see life as you did. With your aid, we propose to perform all our actions for a pure motive, and promptly to resist all our evil inclinations. Amen.

### FOR PERSEVERANCE

Most faithful St. Dymphna, you remained true to your baptismal promises to the very end. You are, therefore, honored, known, and loved after 1,400 years by people you have aided all over the world. We do not know how long or short a time is left to us of this life here, but help us to be faithful to God to the end. Please gain for us the grace to live one day at a time as if each day were our last. Amen.

## AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

by Pope John Paul II

*Excerpts from the Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the 16th centenary of the conversion of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor, 28 August 1986.*

. . . . I too have added my voice to those of my predecessors, when I expressed my strong desire "that his philosophical, theological and spiritual doctrine be studied and spread, so that he may continue . . . his teaching in the Church, a humble but at the same time enlightened teaching which speaks above all of Christ and love." On another occasion, I urged in particular the spiritual sons of this great saint "to keep the fascination of St. Augustine alive and attractive even in modern society." This is an excellent ideal that must fire us with enthusiasm, because "the exact and heartfelt knowledge of his life awakens the thirst for God, the attraction of Christ, the love for wisdom and truth, the need for grace, prayer, virtue, fraternal charity, and the yearning for eternal happiness."

. . . . He had been brought up in a Christian manner by his mother, the pious and holy Monica. In virtue of this education, Augustine always remained not only a believer in God, in providence and in the future life, but also a believer in Christ, whose name he "had drunk in," as he says, "with my mother's milk." After he had returned to the faith of the Catholic Church, he said that he had returned "to the faith which was instilled in me as a child and which had entered into my very marrow." If one wishes to understand his interior evolution, and what is perhaps the most profound aspect of his personality and his thought, one must take this fact as one's starting-point.

. . . . The sixteenth centenary of the conversion of St. Augustine offers a highly favorable opportunity to increase the study of St. Augustine and to spread devotion to him. I exhort in particular the religious orders, male and female, which rejoice to bear his name, to live under his patronage and to follow his Rule in whatever way, to dedicate themselves to this task, so that this may be for them the occasion to follow St. Augustine's example of wisdom and holiness, and to spread this zealously to others. . . .

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St. Augustine and St. Monica pray for us.

## DO YOU HAVE *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 \$20.00 U.S. funds (outside U.S.—\$30.00) 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](mailto:stmonicasodality@yahoo.com) Website: [www.cantius.org](http://www.cantius.org).

PAST ISSUES of *Encouragement* and more information about the St. Monica Sodality is available on the website, [www.cantius.org](http://www.cantius.org). under Parish Life Activities, St. Monica Sodality.

JULY 2002

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IN MY DISTRESS  
I CRIED UNTO  
THE LORD

*St. Monica, pray for us.*