

THE CECILIAN

A NEWSLETTER TO HONOR ST. CECILIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR
AND A CHRONICLE OF MICHAELA SASSE'S DISCERNMENT AS A CONSECRATED VIRGIN LIVING IN THE WORLD

ISSUE NO. 8 | AUGUST 27, 2026 | FEAST DAY OF ST. MONICA



OUR LADY UNDOER OF KNOTS
SEPTEMBER 28TH

And He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,’ and he says in reply from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’ I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:5-13)

In *The Great Adventure Bible*, this Gospel text falls under the heading “Perseverance in Prayer.” I prayed with the above passage on August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption, and this newsletter is the fruit of that prayer.

Initially, I had no intention of writing this as I had already published my August issue (and also written next month’s). However, the prompting of the Holy Spirit to write an article regarding persistence in prayer was apparent. I thought, “If there is a saint that fits this theme, I will write an article.” I looked up feast days that fell toward the end of August, and in God’s providence, my eyes landed on the Feast Day of St. Monica, commemorated on August 27th. Oh!

My relationship with prayer has changed drastically over the course of the last decade. I remember asking a friend in undergrad, “Why should I bother with petitions in prayer when God already knows what I need?” Although it is true that God knows what we need before we ask, He delights in dialogue with His children and desires for us to cooperate with his grace. He longs to spend time with us. As our Father, He loves us so intimately that He wishes to hear from us and respond to our needs according to His most gracious will. Simply, our petitions matter to God.

The following is an excerpt from *Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity* and a testament to the power of intercessory prayer: “Every priest has a birth mother, and often she is a spiritual mother for her children as well. For example, Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pope Pius X, visited his 70-year-old mother after being ordained a bishop. She kissed her son’s ring and, suddenly pensive, pointed out her own simple silver wedding band saying, ‘Yes, Giuseppe, you would not be wearing that ring if I had not first worn mine.’ Pope St. Pius X rightfully confirms his experience that, ‘Every vocation to the priesthood comes from the heart of God, but it goes through the heart of a mother!’ One sees this particularity well in the life of St. Monica. Augustine, who lost his faith at the age of 19 while studying in Carthage, later wrote in his famous *Confessions* regarding his mother: ‘For love of me, she cried more tears than a mother would over the bodily death of her son. Nine years passed in which I wallowed in the slime of that deep pit and the darkness of falsehood. Yet that pious widow desisted not all the hours of her supplications, to bewail my case unto Thee where her prayers entered into Thy presence.’”¹

Sometimes I am astounded at how quickly my prayers are answered. Props to Our Lady Undoer of Knots who tirelessly presents my petitions to the Father. Other prayers of mine have gone seemingly unanswered for years. No matter the outcome, it is consoling to trust the Father is handling it. From St. Monica we learn the importance of persistence in prayer. May we never become discouraged, but trust that our Father *listens* as we ask, seek, and knock.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- For an increase in holy vocations to the priesthood and religious life
- For those counseled in spiritual direction, that they are receptive to God's call
- For hardened hearts to be softened by the Father's grace; for the conversion of sinners and for devout souls to become more ardent
- For those who struggle with addiction, especially alcoholism
- For students and teachers as they begin a new school year



ST. MONICA

Model of Patience, Instrument of Conversion, Persistent in Prayer

St. Monica is a woman often admired for her patience and perseverance. Though her life presented circumstances which could have easily given way to frustration and resentment, she used her trials to draw nearer to God, resulting not only in her own sanctification, but also in the conversion of those closest to her.

Born in 331 AD in Tagaste, a town in Northern Africa, Monica became well versed in resisting temptation from an early age. As a young girl, she was often asked by her parents to retrieve wine from the cellar and bring it to them. On one such occasion she decided to take a sip of the wine, and she quickly developed a habit. The sips became a bit more generous each time she visited the cellar, and she was convinced no one knew about her routine. Then one day during a quarrel with a servant, Monica was accused of drinking too much, and she realized that her actions had been wrong. She used this as an opportunity to overcome her temptation and promptly stopped drinking wine.

As soon as Monica was of age, her parents married her off to the Roman pagan Patricius who was from her hometown. Not only was Monica forced to endure her husband's violent temper, but she also lived with her mother-in-law, who was of a similar nature to the irritable Patricius. Though he was annoyed by Monica's piety and prayer, Patricius respected his wife and was eventually won over to Christianity by her virtuous example. Monica's marriage was not a happy one, but her life inspired many other wives in her town, and they often sought her advice.

Monica and Patricius had three children who survived infancy – Augustine, Navigius, and Perpetua. While Navigius and Perpetua stayed close to their faith, Augustine became lazy and uncivilized, eventually falling into a life of sin which caused his mother great distress. As a young adult, Augustine subscribed to the Manichean heresy, believing that everything of the flesh is evil. Upon learning of Augustine's immoral lifestyle, Monica forbade him to return home.

Monica's disposition toward Augustine changed when she had a vision revealing that her son would eventually return to the faith. She became fiercely committed to prayer and fasting for his conversion, and she stayed close to him despite her disappointment in his lifestyle. She sought the consolation of a local bishop, who assured her that "the child of those tears shall never perish."

When Augustine was 29 he decided to leave for Rome, and upon learning of his mother's intention to follow him there, he departed secretly without her knowing. Monica followed him anyway, and when she arrived in Rome, she learned that he had left for Milan. So, Monica went to Milan. It was in Milan that Augustine came under the influence of the bishop, St. Ambrose, who also became Monica's spiritual director. Augustine experienced his conversion and was baptized by St. Ambrose at Easter in 387, answering the fervent prayers of his mother.

After her son's conversion, Monica began to sense that she was near the end of her life, but she felt that her purpose had been accomplished. "Nothing in this world now affords me delight," she told her son, "I do not know what there is now left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled." When asked if she feared dying so far from home, she simply replied, "Nothing is far from God." Monica passed away in Ostia in 387 AD on August 27th.³

REFLECTION

"It is to my mother that I owe everything. If I am Thy child, O my God, it is because Thou gavest me such a mother." – St. Augustine

Pope St. John Paul II was so convinced of the importance of spiritual motherhood that he established a cloistered convent in the Vatican where nuns would pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff. The vocation of spiritual motherhood is a vocation that is frequently hidden, invisible to the naked eye, but meant to transmit spiritual life.²

It is unlikely that we will know the complete efficacy of our prayers in this lifetime. Nevertheless, persist, and do not give up hope that there is spiritual fruit! "Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and it shall be yours." Mark 11:24

St. Monica, pray for us.



OFFICE OF CONSECRATED VOCATIONS UPDATES

- The St. Bernadette Fund for Consecrated Vocations allocated funding to its first recipient, a young woman discerning religious life with the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. The funding will alleviate the financial strain of travel costs as she attends a Come and See weekend in Phoenix, Arizona.
- The Friends of the Bridegroom team, (Fr. John Burns, Sr. Miriam James, and Emily Davenport), hosted their first Zoom call to discuss 2026-2027 cohort formation for the renewal of religious life. I am excited for the opportunity to meet with others who share this vision for the Church. Visit renewreligious.org for more information.

ST. MONICA PRAYER

Dear St. Monica, model of patience and perseverance, you never gave up on Augustine, your son, as he meandered away from God and into a life of sin. Pray that we may remember that at times, we've all turned away from God. Ask God to bless us with a fraction of your patience, that we may bask in the fullness of joy that the love of God offers us. Through your intercession we ask God to watch over all mothers and heal, strengthen and bless the relationships they share with their children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CHARISM CORNER

The Spiritual Gift of Intercessory Prayer

Jill Simons of Many Parts Ministries writes: "The charism of intercession empowers a person to pray without ceasing for the intentions of others with great faith that prayer changes things. People with this gift often serve as a means by which God's love reaches others."⁴

Each charism, or spiritual gift, makes some aspect of God present in the world in a way that can be seen and experienced. Intercessory prayer makes His steadfastness present. Certainly, we are all called to a life of prayer, but as Jill Simons writes, "those with an intercession charism are supernaturally oriented toward intercessory prayer that serves as both an example to others and an avenue of grace for the Church. There is usually a joy and a desire to pray for people in those who possess this gift."⁵

Someone with this gift may keep praying for your petition month after month — long after you've stopped thinking about it yourself. This level of devotion is an image of the Father's continuous, providential care and His attentiveness to our needs.

This charism was clearly present in St. Monica who remained faithful to prayer despite St. Augustine's waywardness. It can also be seen in the friend who delights in praying for your intentions.

If you have a desire to bring others to the Father in prayer, consider the following:

- Pray a daily rosary for an increase in holy vocations
- Check-in with friends regularly regarding their prayer intentions
- Offer a weekly holy hour for your parish priest
- Spiritually adopt a seminarian and pray for their formation and protection



ST. MONICA

Patron saint of alcoholics, conversion, married women, and mothers

¹ *Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity*. (2007). <https://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2008-01/25-13/Adoration.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ *St. Monica*. The GIVEN Institute. (2022, October 25). https://giveninstitute.com/saint_stories/st-monica/

⁴ Simons, J. (n.d.). *The Spiritual Gift of Intercession - A Catholic Guide*. Many Parts Ministries. <https://www.manypartsministries.com/spiritual-gift-of-intercession>

⁵ Ibid.

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