

**22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time/
Feast Days of St. Monica/St. Augustine**



On August 27, the Church celebrates the Feast of Saint Monica, who is known for praying for the conversion of both her son, Augustine, and her husband for several years before they accepted Christ. The steadfast prayer life and peace that Monica was able to maintain during episodes of chaos and confusion in her household were reflective of her trust in God's will.

Rather than complaining about the faults of others, she was faithful to the work put in front of her by God. She was patient with the response she had gotten from the Lord, waiting 18 years for Augustine's conversion. Moreover, she established boundaries that were suitable to her household and teaches us what it means to take up our cross and follow Jesus—a command we hear in this week's Sunday Gospel Reading.

Monica met a man named Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Ambrose had a way of preaching the Word of God that captivated Monica and later Augustine. He was impressed by the faithfulness of Monica as she devoted herself to his church. Upon her request, he came to offer a fatherly relationship to Augustine who would later mention how fond he was of the teaching and guidance of Ambrose. Fellowship among Ambrose and others in Milan offered a final push toward Augustine's conversion and willingness to profess his faith as a Christian.

Saint Augustine struggled with sins of the flesh as a teenager and into his young adult years. He was intelligent and gifted, and used his talents to achieve earthly success and pleasure. He was also a known womanizer who abused alcohol and drugs.

Thanks to the grace of God, the prayers of Monica, and the counsel of Ambrose, Augustine was baptized and became a Christian. In fact, he is now known as one of the Fathers of the Church. His experience with darkness and the empty nature of addiction gave him the drive to speak boldly of God. In speaking to the Lord, Augustine famously wrote, "You have made us for yourself, o Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

We can be tempted to think that things which bring power, pleasure, honor, and wealth will lead us to happiness and fulfillment. Our experience shows that they simply widen the hole in our hearts and leave us more dependent upon our next fix.

Once we recognize that we are powerless over addiction/compulsions and that our lives had become unmanageable, the miracle starts to take form. We enter a purging period—a *baptism* of sorts—as we rediscover the role of God in our lives. We are given a chance to act upon our willingness to surrender to His will by making a personal inventory, cleaning up our side of the street, and making amends when it's right to do so.

Soon, we see that the small steps we take are accompanied by massive leaps from the Lord. When we get the opportunity to look back, we see that our actions do not happen in a vacuum.

Finally, there are a few moments in recovery when we get to express our love and care for those closest to us. Augustine recalls a special moment he had with his mother upon his return:

“We went indoors and told my mother, who was overjoyed. When we related to her how it had happened she was filled with triumphant delight and blessed you, who have power to do more than we ask or understand, for she saw that you had granted her much more in my regard than she had been wont to beg of you in her wretched, tearful groaning. Many years earlier you had shown her a vision of me standing on the rule of faith; and now indeed I stood there, no longer seeking a wife or entertaining any worldly hope, for you had converted me to yourself. In so doing you had also converted her grief into joy far more abundant than she had desired, and much more tender and chaste than she could ever have looked to find in grandchildren from my flesh.”

- How is God asking for your trust and patience in this moment?
- What boundaries (emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual) are important in keeping you rooted in Christ and your recovery?
- What is your primary source of restlessness?

Saint Monica Prayer

St. Monica,
I need your prayers.
You know exactly how I'm feeling because you once felt it yourself.
I'm hurting, hopeless, and in despair.
I desperately want my [loved one] to return to Christ in his Church
but I can't do it alone.
I need God's help.
Please join me in begging the Lord's powerful grace to flow into
my [loved one's] life.
Ask the Lord Jesus to soften his heart, prepare a path for his
conversion, and activate the Holy Spirit in his life. Amen.

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

2nd Reading: Romans 12:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27