

Lessons from St. Augustine and St Monica - When your kids stray from the faith.

Objective: All of us carry within our heart wounds from society and from our families, especially stresses in raising our own children. In St. Monica, there was an extraordinary woman who experienced enormous family problems, gaping wounds, excruciating pains and suffering. However, she did not throw in the towel or give up. Rather, over many years through continuous prayer she saved her family and was instrumental in the conversion her son, St Augustine of Hippo, who would ultimately become one of the Doctors of the Church. We must imitate St. Monica and persevere as we pray for the growth of faith in our children.

Song Suggestion: Here I Am, Lord / The Servant Song / Make Me A Channel of Your Peace

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Romans 13: 13-14

"Let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh."

John 3: 5-6

Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.

Catechism 2742

"Pray constantly . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." St. Paul adds, "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints." For "we have not been commanded to work, to keep watch and to fast constantly, but it has been laid down that we are to pray without ceasing." This tireless fervor can come only from love. Against our dullness and laziness, the battle of prayer is that of humble, trusting, and persevering love.

Saint: Augustine of Hippo, c. 354-430, Patron Saint of printers, brewers and theologians. A Doctor of the Church. Saint Monica, Mother of St. Augustine, c. 331- 387, Patron Saint of difficult marriages, homemakers, and mothers.

Vignette: – For years, Michael had watched his son Jeff “scale down” not only his Catholic faith, but any apparent belief in God. The years of weekly mass, sacraments and religious education Jeff had growing up seemed to have little to no part of Jeff’s life today. Jeff and his wife were all about friends, careers and accumulation of assets. Michael lamented world problems in general but was especially tormented by the apparent absence of a spiritual component in his son’s life. In last week’s sermon, the priest spoke on the topic of God working on His own timeline in the life of each individual. Father mentioned that one of the early “Fathers of the Church”, St Augustine, was fallen away as a young man and his mother, St. Monica, prayed for his conversion for 17 years. Now those prayers surely were answered...on God’s timeline. Augustine in his travels away from home eventually encountered the wise St. Ambrose who strongly influenced Augustine’s powerful conversion. Michael took the example of St. Monica to heart and continued to pray in earnest for Jeff, and the arrival of a St Ambrose in Jeff’s life.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

St Augustine was a “Doctor” of the early Catholic Church. His conversion did not take place until later in his life and yet he grew to be a powerful leader. Are there powerful converts in your life?

Was there a St. Monica in your life? Are you a St. Monica in someone else’s life? If not, should you be?

Sometimes prayer needs to be accompanied by “action.” St. Monica literally followed Augustine to Rome to show her love and concern, even introducing Augustine to the wise St Ambrose. What prayerful “actions” do you see people taking to bring people to spiritual awareness?

Easier said than done. Waiting for our prayers to be answered can be excruciating. Scripture tells us to be demanding with our prayer and at the same time we are directed to be humble and patient. How do you deal with this dichotomy in your prayer?

Resources:

My Catholic Life – Saint Monica

<https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/st-monica-mother-of-st-augustine-august-27/>

20 Lessons We Can Learn from St. Monica’s Unrelenting Love

<https://catholicexchange.com/twenty-lessons-we-can-learn-from-st-monicas-unrelenting-love/>

How St. Monica Gave Birth to St. Augustine, “Twice!”

<https://aleteia.org/2022/08/27/how-st-monica-gave-birth-to-st-augustine-twice/>

Action Plan:

1. The story of St. Monica and St. Augustine offers timeless lessons. Become familiar with it.
2. The Catholic church at the time of Augustine was dealing with major issues regarding the nature of Jesus as both God and man. Consider what a large challenge that was when compared to the challenges the church faces today!

Opening Prayer:

Saint Monica, you were persevering in your efforts to straighten the crooked paths of your son’s life. Your prayers, pilgrimages, fasts, and words were fruitful, but only after many tears. Help us to be as concerned as you for the immortal souls of those who are close to us.

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