

Lessons From St. Augustine and St. Monica – When Your Kids Stray from the Faith

Headline: We all want the best for our kids, in both this life and the next. When they waver from the faith, rather than despairing, we can always turn to prayer for both guidance and conversion. St. Monica provides a model for overcoming such an incredible challenge. She did this through persistent prayer which resulted in the conversion of her son, Augustine. St. Augustine was destined to be one of the most prolific writers and one of the first Doctors of the Church. He left us with his famous inspirational phrase "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee".

Objective: Surrounded by what often appears to be an increasingly secular world, it is easy to get discouraged, especially when our kids stray from the faith. In these situations, we can turn to the successful example of St. Monica. May we strive to become fathers who never stop believing that God's grace is still pursuing our children.

Song Suggestion: You Are Mine

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Prayer Context: St. Augustine, amid his conversion, and at the insistence of a child persistently singing "Take up and read" near his home, was inspired to change his life and to pray these words from **Romans 13:13-14**:

"Let us throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 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". This was a severe departure from his checkered past and

Eph 6: 10-11, 18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Catechism 2558

"Great is the mystery of Faith."This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.

Saint: St Monica - Faced with an abusive, arranged marriage to a pagan and a son who abandoned the faith, St. Monica never lost her own faith and hope. She prayed for her son's conversion for 17 years. St. Monica's unwavering faith, manifested by her persistence in action and prayer for her son Augustine, led to his conversion and ultimate sainthood. Such persistence likewise led to the conversion of her husband and her mother-in-law. Saint Monica is the patron saint of mothers, wives, and homemakers. She is also recognized as the patron saint of difficult marriages, disappointing or wayward children, victims of abuse and unfaithfulness, alcoholics, and widows. By emulating St. Monica's actions and prayer life, we are shown how we can overcome all odds through prayer and proper action.

Vignette:

John and his wife Mary seemed to have done all the right things. They made sure that the children were educated in Catholic schools, prayed daily as a family, attended Mass every Sunday as a family and volunteered at the parish in countless ways. Faith was a big part of their lives. Yet, when their son Mark returned from college after his freshman year, they noticed a change. He refused to go to Mass on Sunday, challenged the Church's beliefs and lived a selfish, promiscuous lifestyle. John and Mary were dismayed at this change for the worse. At first, they confronted him, but he only resisted even more and became ever more alienated from them. Mark doubled down on his ruinous lifestyle. Exasperated, John and Mary decided to turn to prayer. They made a point to say a daily prayer together requesting the conversion of Mark's soul. This continued for years. Slowly, Mark began to see the error of his ways on what he believed was his own terms. Mark slowly returned to the Church and is more devout than ever. Like St. Monica, John and Mary learned that faithful perseverance often accomplishes what persuasion alone cannot.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. What does it mean to "pray constantly"? How can I do this in my busy life? What are some opportunities to pray in my busy life?
2. Are you or can you be a St. Monica for someone else's benefit? Have you had a St. Monica in your life for your own benefit?
3. What do you or could you do today to emulate not just the prayer life but the actions of St. Monica for the conversion of a loved one in your life. What would that look like?
4. Do you truly believe in the power of prayer? Have you witnessed this in your lifetime? How?

Resources:

- Catholic Encyclopedia: <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>
- Knights of the Holy Eucharist – Prayer for the Conversion of a Loved One: <https://www.knightsoftheholyeucharist.com/for-the-conversion-of-a-loved-one-prayer-download/>
- *Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church* — Brandon Vogt

Action Plan:

1. Take the time to research further the story of St. Monica and St. Augustine and devote yourself to prayer for conversion or strengthening the faith of our children.
2. Read ***Confessions*** St. Augustine's most famous work. It details his sinful youth, his spiritual struggles, and his eventual conversion to Christianity.
3. Establish a prayer routine for those whom you know have drifted from the faith.

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