

M.O.M.s unite to pray for their children's return to the faith

WE MAY HAVE OR KNOW OF AN 'AUGUSTINE' IN OUR LIVES

INSPIRED BY ST. MONICA AND THE YEARS SHE SPENT IN PRAYER FOR HER SON AUGUSTINE TO RETURN TO THE FAITH, A GROUP OF WOMEN CREATED A TIME AND PLACE TO UNITE IN PRAYER FOR THEIR OWN CHILDREN, GODCHILDREN AND CONFIRMANDS.

Millions of Monicas (M.O.M.s) recognizes the countless mothers, biological or spiritual, who, rather than fret for the souls of their children, want to join forces and do something to gently lead them back to our beautiful Catholic faith.



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I was invited to join in their prayers as part of a new M.O.M.s program at my parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) in Grand Rapids. Every Monday, we spend an hour of prayer for "our children who have wandered from the faith or are still practicing but struggling against the forces of the world."

There is deliberate structure to each "Monicas" evening. This is not a support group where help is sought to "fix" our children or their circumstances. Quite the contrary, there is no sharing of stories or group discussions. No one knows and no one asks why each mother is there. Souls are simply united in prayer, allowing God to shoulder our concerns.

Each "Monicas" evening begins with contemplative

music, drawing participants into the church where a song of praise is then offered. A collective prayer of surrender and trust is also offered, reminding each mother our children are not our own but gifts to offer back to the Father.

A recorded reflection of the day's Gospel via the Laudate app affords time for *Lectio Divina* prayer. Small groups of four are then formed. The only time participants are asked to speak is to share the first and middle name of each child in order to pray for them specifically. Taking turns holding a crucifix, silent intercessory prayer is offered for each mother and child. There is a great solace knowing each person within that small group will be carrying each of those children in their prayers

throughout the coming week.

Women remark how helpful it is to have a regular time and place to intentionally pray for their children and also realize the power in evangelizing each other's children as well. A portion of the evening allows participants to recount, in writing, the ways their prayers have been answered (signs) and the ways they have encouraged other children to remain in and/or grow in their faith (sowings). A profoundly moving portion of each evening is praying for each mother as she comes forward to offer her "signs and sowings" at the foot of the altar. Not knowing the heaviness of heart or the relief of answered prayer she brings with her, the spirit of unity of intention is palpable.

We round out the evening with a rosary, invoking our Blessed Mother's grace "to prevent us from doing anything which might lead us to further distance our children from the Lord." A song of praise sends us forth toward a new week of prayer and hope.

Since its inception at IHM, new Millions of Monica groups have formed, from Delaware to Hawaii, St. Bernard's in Benton Harbor to Our Lady of Consolation in Rockford. †



FOR THE MILLIONS OF MONICAS meeting calendar and information about forming your own group in your parish, go to MillionsofMonicas.com.