

St. Rita's Centre

Augustinian Recollect Spirituality Centre

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Dear Friends,

Having waited for four years at long last I had my knee replacement operation in May. I had been warned that the recovery would be long and painful. In my mind I thought I would be up and running within a couple of weeks, but this was not the case. I was lucky enough to be able to recover in the peace and tranquillity of our centre at St Rita's in Honiton. I had to do exercises regularly, the pain was ongoing and took much longer than I had expected.

During those long days I was very bored and watched a lot of daytime television. Now one of the things I dislike are the adverts; I find them irritating and they spoil the programme. I couldn't record the programmes during my convalescence and so I had to put up with them. Normally I would record the programme and then fast forward through the ads. Among the constant repetition of ads. telling me, what to buy, what to wear and what to eat, a couple in particular stood out from the dross. They showed children going blind in want of a small operation and disfigured children in need of serious surgery. My heart went out to these children. I really felt a bit selfish and silly. I had had my operation and was sitting in comfort waiting for my recovery.



I realised that these poor afflicted children were in need of consolation. It was then I remembered that Our Lady of Consolation in the 2nd century was often referred to as "Mary Consoler of the Afflicted". This title appears in the litany we say after the rosary as Comforter of the Afflicted.

There are so many people who are afflicted in this world today. Those suffering from Covid or who have lost family. Those waiting in long queues for serious surgery. Cancer patients, the seriously ill, and people who suffer from mental health problems. We might even think of our own Dr. Toni working in the rain forest in Brazil with the people suffering from Hanson's disease (Leprosy). All of these afflicted are in serious need of the comfort and consolation that Our lady can bring.

May Our Lady of Consolation shine on you, brighten up your lives and bring hope to those who are suffering illness or the loss of a loved one during the terrible pandemic. The Community in Honiton will remember all your intentions in their Mass on the feast day, 4th September.

Everyone at St Rita's would like to thank you for your generosity and continuing support of our Order and its many and varied projects both at St Rita's Centre and abroad in our missions. We do hope you can join us in our novena this year, especially those in most need of consolation.

Fr. Gerald Wilson. O.A.R.

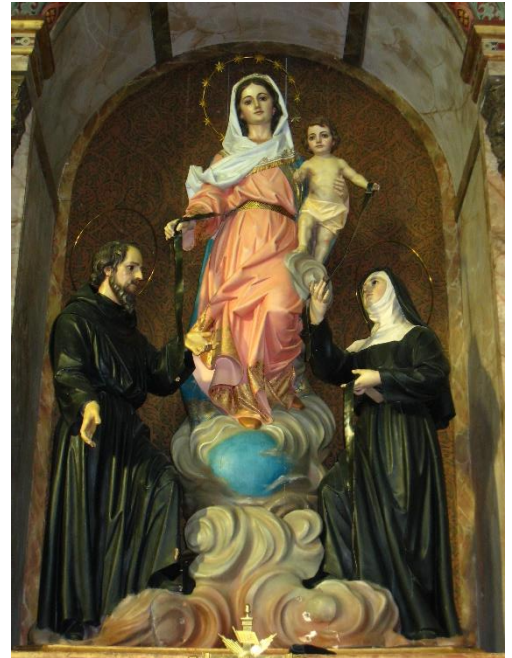
THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT HOLY MONTH

New Novena to Saint Monica and Saint Augustine
for the conversion and sanctification of ourselves and our loved ones.

Dear friends of St. Rita's Centre,

After a very long year of the pandemic crisis with all its negative impact on all the aspects of our life, we all need a long holiday where we can spend time with our family and friends and take a rest from all the stress and isolation we have been through.

When everyone is thinking about the summer holidays, we, Augustinian Recollects long for **a special time of celebration in our liturgical year**, which spans along the second half of August and the first half of September. During this period, on the **28th of August** we celebrate the **solemnity of our Patron Saint, the great Saint Augustine**. A day before (**27th of August**) we commemorate the **feast day of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine**. After these two great saints we also celebrate the **solemnity of Our Lady of Consolation**, principal advocacy of the Holy Virgin within our Order and in a very close connection with the figures of St. Augustine and St. Monica. **The celebration of Saint Augustine, Saint Monica and Our Lady of Consolation is the nucleus of this holy month; and represents the origin of our Augustinian Religious life, established by Saint Augustine in the monasteries he founded and expressed in the Religious Rule he wrote as a testimony of the religious way of life established by him.**



Our Lady of Consolation with St. Augustine and St. Monica. (Convent of Monachil, Granada, Spain)



Chapel of St. Ezekiel Moreno Shrine in Monteagudo, Spain.

To complete the Holy Month, before them we celebrate **Saint Ezekiel Moreno (19th of August)** and after them, **Saint Nicholas of Tolentine (10th of September)**. These two great saints represent the most important saints of the two other stages of the History of our Order.

Saint Nicholas of Tolentine, Patron Saint of the Holy Souls, is already known to you all, because during the whole month of November we pray together to him on behalf of our beloved departed ones. Yet, his liturgical celebration is on the 10th of September. He belongs to the **second stage of our Order**, when the Pope established the so-called *Great Union*, summoning many monasteries and groups of eremites of Italy who lived under the rule of Saint Augustine to form the **Order of Saint Augustine**. **Saint Nicholas of Tolentine is the first canonized saint of this stage. To that period also belongs our dearest Saint Rita of Cascia.**

ST. EZEKIEL MORENO O.A.R.
Patron Saint of Cancer Patients



In the sixteenth century the **Recollect reformation of the Order** was born in Spain; it was a movement to live in a renewed and more austere way its original Augustinian charism, and it led in the 20th century to the birth of the **Order of Augustinian Recollects**, to which we belong. **The representative Saint of this last stage is the bishop Ezekiel Moreno, Patron Saint of cancer patients, who was the first canonized Augustinian Recollect saint.** His figure was introduced to you all last year when we sent you his Novena for the first time.

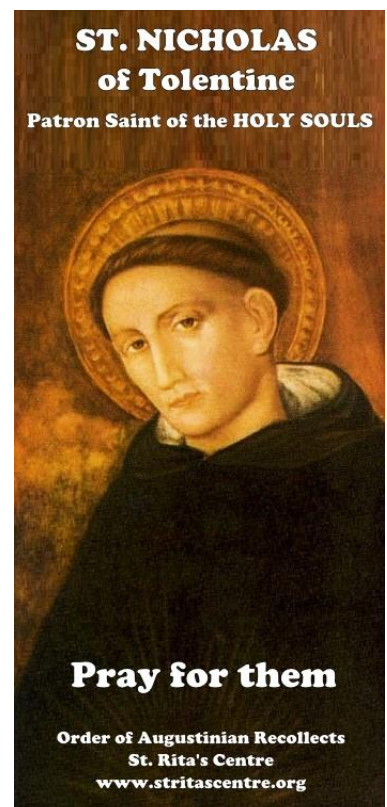
This year we are very pleased to promote this new **Novena to Saint Monica and Saint Augustine** *for the conversion and sanctification of ourselves and our loved ones.* Although most of you should already know these two popular saints, let us use this opportunity to introduce them to you all and to explain a bit more the meaning of this novena.

The Church has set aside on two consecutive days the liturgical celebration of Saint Monica and Saint Augustine, a mother and a son whose journey of holiness was made together. **Saint Augustine acknowledges that he was brought to faith in the Church through the prayers and the tears of his saintly mother who, in turn, was led to confident trust in God through the prayers she offered continually for her wayward son.**

Monica, given in marriage to Patricius, a pagan, had three children, Augustine, Navigius and a daughter. Strong of character as well as of faith, she sought to guide her family in their human and Christian development most of all by her own example and prayer but, when necessary, also by her persuasive words and diligent actions. Thus, she brought her husband to discover the beauty of the Catholic faith, as well as her son Augustine through her many tears. Monica figures significantly in Augustine's journey all the way through to his eventual conversion and is remembered in history -according to his own words- as the mother ***"who brought me to birth, both in her flesh, so that I was born into this temporal light, and in her heart, that I might be born into eternal light"* (Conf. 8, 17).**

The story of the conversion of Saint Augustine, is the story of God's tireless pursuit of his beloved, the story of the faithfulness of God to the devoted and persistent prayers of a mother on behalf of her loved ones, and the attentiveness and openness of that soul at last to God's love. Conversion, or the turning to God, is a movement that is possible for us at every moment of our journey – not simply once and forever, but continually and ever more deeply.

Augustine himself records in his *Confessions* the climactic moment in which he surrendered to God's grace and was relieved of the doubts and fears which had so long kept him imprisoned. *"How sweet did it suddenly become to me to be free of the sweets of folly: things that I once feared to lose it was now joy to put away. You cast them forth from me, you the true and highest sweetness, you cast them forth, and in their stead, you*



entered in, sweeter than every pleasure..." (*Conf. 9, 1*) Certainly **the story of Augustine's conversion numbers among the most well-known and most significant of all Christian history**: well-known, through Augustine's own recoding of it in his *Confessions*; significant, not only for the impact which his life of faith – as monk, bishop, and theologian – has had on the Catholic Church ever since, but also on the many men and women of every period whose own personal lives have been altered by reading it.

In close relationship with these two saints is the **devotion to the Most Holy Virgin as Mother of Consolation**. According to tradition, **Monica, immersed in sorrow because of the death of her husband and the waywardness of her son, was granted a vision of Mary and the Child Jesus, who sought to offer her comfort and consolation**. Mary handed her a **leather cincture** which she asked Monica to wear as a **continual reminder of her presence and thus, a visible sign of encouragement**. From that moment Monica wore the cincture and, after his conversion, recommended it also to her son as an indication of Mary's abiding protection. Thus, by this same tradition, it became historically, **the principal and common symbol for all who follow Augustine's Monastic Rule**.

With this new Novena, we not only complete the list of the most important and popular saints of our Order and give a better comprehension of the title of Our Lady of Consolation, but the most important thing is that we offer to you all their model and powerful intercession on behalf of the conversion and sanctification of ourselves and our loved ones. I hope this Novena will help so many mothers who following the example of Saint Monica, **pray hard for the conversion and sanctification of their children and**

grandchildren. So many of you write letters and ask prayers for these intentions. **From this year on, we will all pray this Novena to Saint Monica and Saint Augustine for this important aim**. How many young people of ours have abandoned God, Jesus and the Church! How many Catholic women are married with husbands that belong to other churches or do not share even our Christian faith! I hope that like last year, so many people who had loved ones who were suffering from cancer welcomed the novena to Saint Ezekiel Moreno, so this year, **this new Novena can help and support our prayers for all those wayward members of our families, so that they can return to God, to Christ and the Catholic Church**.

May God, through the intercession of St. Monica and St. Augustine, help you and your loved ones on the road to conversion and sanctification. May the Lord bless you all with abundant gifts of grace and holiness every day of your life.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jose Romero OAR (Fr. Promoter)



Ecstasy of Monica and Augustine in Ostia

(Artist: Álvarez de Sotomayor.)

Place: Augustinian School of Valdeluz, Madrid, Spain)