

**Homily for Mass for the Equestrian Order
Of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**

**Memorial of Saint Monica
August 27, 2018**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, Deacon(s), Esteemed Knights and Ladies, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It is good for us to be here to celebrate this Mass for the annual gathering of the members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is the only lay institution of the Vatican State charged with the task of providing for the needs of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and for all the activities and initiatives which are necessary to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land. In our prayers at this Mass, we ask God to bless and strengthen the Order in its mission to pray for and support the Church in the Holy Land.

In the first reading from today's Mass, we hear Saint Paul praising the the Christian community in Thessalonica for their strong faith, even in the face of adversity and persecution. Later, he goes on to exhort them to stay

strong and so that they might be considered worthy of the kingdom of Heaven.

Today, we celebrate the memorial of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. Saint Monica serves as a model of staying strong in faith even in the face of adversity. While the adversity that she faced was not of the same nature as that faced by the early Christians, it was no less real. To put this into perspective, it is helpful to reflect briefly on the life of her son, Saint Augustine, who is most well-known for his conversion from leading a licentious life to being one of the great doctors of the Church. Despite being raised in the Church, it is said that at a young age, Augustine lost both his faith and his innocence. And, rather than pursuing holiness of life he gave in to the desires of the flesh. Eventually, at the age of thirty-two, Augustine realized the error of his ways and returned to the Church.

However, as with any sort of change of heart, Saint Augustine's conversion did not occur on his own or in a vacuum devoid of the influence of others. Rather, it occurred through the fervent prayer of his mother, Saint Monica who, heartbroken by her son's actions, dedicated herself to praying for the transformation of her wayward son.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ. For us here today, this message is very timely and important for us to hear. In light of the recent news of the Grand Jury report describing sexual misconduct by clergy in the State of Pennsylvania and by former Cardinal, now Archbishop, Theodore McCarrick, our being heartbroken combined with our justifiable anger may make it hard for us to follow the example of Saint Monica and to pray for the renewal of Holy Mother Church. However, today the Church is need of our fervent prayers for her wayward sons who have turned their attention from building up treasure in Heaven to focusing on what the world has to offer.

Even in the face of this adversity, we must remain convinced that Christ has not abandoned us, and so we must not give up on our commitment to live as His disciples. We must recognize that this is exactly what Satan wants, for he is the prince of darkness. He wants us to turn our back on our Lord and His Church. On the contrary, like the disciples in the early Church, we must use this unfortunate set of circumstances to commit ourselves to live ever more fully for Christ as His disciples in the midst of the world today.

May God give us this grace. Amen.