

AUGUST 28, 2025, FATHER JOHN BERTAO

Yesterday we celebrated the feast of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. Many of us, as I'm sure you have heard, that he was born in the 4th century, just very, very briefly, and he was raised by his mother as a Christian, and then after some years of studying, he left the Christian faith and pursued a more secular life, of course, seeking—as so many do—the glamour, the life of glamour of temporal things.

Yet, God never gave up on Augustine. Neither did his mother for 30 years. Imagine, 30 years she never stopped praying for his return. And as we all know, it worked. It worked very well. How good to know that neither God nor his mother gave up on him. God doesn't give up on us as well, no matter what.

So after his return to the faith, St. Augustine was fully committed, totally changed, fully committed to serving the Church of Jesus with great success that to this day we're still benefiting from his wisdom, his writings, and most of all, his great faith in Jesus Christ and his church.

A few centuries before Augustine, as we hear in today's Gospel, Jesus promises us great victory celebration when He, Jesus, will return to put down the enemies of the Church and establish His everlasting kingdom of peace, joy, and righteousness. Let's keep in mind, dear friends in Christ, that on that day, when the Lord Jesus returns, there will be joy and peace for those who are prepared to meet Him—prepared to meet Him knowing that He's coming—and, of course, grief and sorrow will be for those who did not accept Him as Lord and ruler of all.

As I was doing preparation for this reflection, this homily, I read it from a scholar that tells us that Jesus' first coming was—and I love this word—the first coming 2,000 years ago was a rescue mission, Jesus' rescue mission for the world, for humanity. He was sent by the eternal

Father to save us from tyranny of sin, Satan, and, of course, eternal death.

Jesus told His disciples on several occasions that He would return again at the end of the present age, and He will come. However, not simply to rescue us from our enemies—and that's important to remember. We need to work and pray for our enemies. He'll rescue us and give us the courage to put up with them and, of course, one day be rescued. But as a victor King, He will come and Lord, who will vindicate all who have believed in Him. And I think that's you and me, right?

This is, of course, the background to Jesus' story about the householder and the thief in the night. It is for certain that the final day will come. No question, the final day will come. And you might ask, "What can I do to prepare to be ready for the coming of Jesus?"

Perhaps, like yourselves, we have an alarm in the church house, in the church. I have an alarm in my car, and of course in the middle of the night if somebody steals the car, I sleep so soundly I'm not going to hear it. So alarms are good, but they're not the end of it all. We need to emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ.

You see, the energy of being spent on material things and living a life outside the Church looking for instant gratification is very, very temporal and it's not going to save your soul. Let's not judge then those who haven't—those who haven't—but God is the judge, not us. Let's instead pray for them.

So in short, we can do two things for those who don't think that they have time for the Church, time for prayer, time for us, whatever it might be. Let's, first of all, pray for them. And gently remind them that what they are doing is wrong—to join us, gently, very gently. For example,

consider praying with something very, very small, such as making the sign of the cross.

When you get together with them for a coffee, for a doughnut, for a big meal, and they all want to dig in, and,—no, no, no, just a minute, just a minute. Can we first start acknowledging Jesus, the Lord, with a little prayer? “Oh, we don’t have time for that.” You don’t have time for it? You go ahead and eat, I’ll start. And slow, I do it all the time: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

And I could just hear them thinking, Get over it, get over it, get over it, and I look at them and say, “Did you join me in prayer? Okay, well, those of you who have started eating already, it’s gonna be fattening. But if you eat after prayer, it will be good for you.” it works. You don’t have to insult anybody, but just be you. Just be Christ-centered, focused on Christ. Don’t be afraid of who you are and who your Saviour is.

And then after, when everybody is sort of full and trying to leave, just say, “Oh, that was so good. Let me thank the cook. Let me thank the dishwasher. But first, let me thank the mother of Jesus.” And then say, “Oh, Mary...” You’d be surprised—by that time, full stomach and maybe the spirit can get full—and you say, “Thank you,” and you pray, “Hail Mary.”

And at the end, you’ll say to the people—if they could—you say to your parents, you say to your spouse, you say to your children, on a regular basis “Mom, I love you,” or the husband says to the wife and vice versa, “Honey, I love you,” and I hear that expression. Sometimes they say, “I love you more.” And that’s a good thing. It’s a very good thing.

But how about Jesus? How about Him? Especially when you go into the church, or if you’re just at home, if you’re driving—when, of course, we all need protection when we’re driving—just say, “Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you.” And no matter what’s happening around you, you

start eventually feeling the love of Christ upon you. It makes you holy. It makes you one with Him. Give it a try. I do it all the time and it's worth it.

Speaking of "I love you," I close with a little prayer:

Lord Jesus, you have captured my heart and it is yours. Take my life and all that I possess that I may have you alone as my only treasure and joy. Make me strong in faith, steadfast in hope, and generous in love that I may seek to please you in all things and bring you to glory. Amen. Jesus, I love you.

And speaking of love, let us conclude in asking our Blessed Mother to continue to guide us in a very special way in this short life:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed are our daughters and women, and blessed is the fruit of God and Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for our sinners, now and in the hour of our death.

Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us.