

# Weekly Bulletin

St. Margaret's, St. Joseph's & St. Finnan's

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Weekly Bulletin Online: [www.gaeldom.com/bulletin/](http://www.gaeldom.com/bulletin/)

Sunday August 26<sup>th</sup>. 2007



Our knowledge of St. Monica comes almost entirely from the writings of her much-loved son, the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine of Hippo. His relationship with his mother was a close one, especially during Monica's last years. In one of his early books, called *Confessions*, he gives us many details of her life, and expresses his gratitude for her devotion in moving terms.

Monica was born about the year 332 in Tagaste, North Africa, of a Christian family of some substance. As soon as Monica had reached marriageable age, her parents found a husband for her, the pagan Patricius. He was a man of violent temper and their home could scarcely have been a happy one. Monica endured his outbursts with the utmost patience, although he was critical of Christians and their practices. The daily example of her gentleness and kindness finally had its rewards, and a year before

his death, which occurred when Augustine was seventeen, Patricius accepted his wife's faith. Monica and Patricius had three children, Navigius, who seems to have been an exemplary son, Augustine, and Perpetua, a daughter, who became a religious. Augustine, the more brilliant of the sons, was sent to Carthage, so that he might develop his talents and become a man of culture. He took to learning naturally but he also spent time in youthful carousing. This caused his mother great anguish, and when he returned home, she disapproved so strongly both of his loose living and his interest in the popular heresy of Manichaeism that she refused at first to allow him to live at home. She relented only after having seen a vision. One day as she was weeping over his behaviour, a figure appeared and asked her the cause of her grief. She told him her sorrow for her son, and a voice said her to dry her tears; then she heard the words, "*Your son is with you.*" Monica related this story to Augustine, and he replied that they might easily be together if she gave up her faith, for that was the main obstacle keeping them apart. Quickly she retorted, "*He did not say I was with you: he said that you were with me.*" Augustine was impressed by the quick answer and never forgot it. Although his conversion was not to take place for nine long years, Monica did not lose faith. She continually fasted, prayed, and wept on his behalf. She implored the local bishop for help in winning him over, and he gently told her to be patient, saying, "*God's time will come.*" Monica persisted in seeking his help, and the bishop spoke these words which have often been quoted: "*Go now, I beg you; it is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish.*"

Augustine was twenty-nine and a successful teacher when he decided to go to Rome. Monica opposed the move, fearing that his conversion would be indefinitely postponed. Her son went on with his plan, and set off with his young mistress and little son Adeodatus for the seaport. His mother followed him there, and when he saw that she intended to accompany him, he outwitted her

. He embarked while she was spending the night praying in a church. Although this grieved her deeply, Monica was still not discouraged about her wayward son, for she continued on to Rome. >>>>>>

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On reaching Rome, she learned that her son had gone to Milan. There he had come under the influence of the great Bishop, St. Ambrose. When his mother finally found him in the northern city, he had given up Manichaeism, although he was not yet a Christian. Monica's friendship with Ambrose became very close, and he treated her with kindness. In time, she became a great friend of the saint, and he had the utmost regard for her because of her holiness.

The joyous day of Augustine's conversion came at last. His mother had been trying to end her son's illicit relationship of so many years' standing. She hoped now to find a suitable bride for him, but after his mistress went back to Africa, Augustine informed her that he would now adopt a celibate life and devote himself to God's service. His *Confessions* give us glimpses of the period of preparation preceding his baptism. The time was passed in the house of a friend, where a close-knit group, consisting of his mother, brother, Adeodatus, and a few companions occupied themselves with discussions of religion and philosophy. At Easter, when Bishop Ambrose baptized Augustine, his mother's cup was full to overflowing.

Augustine and the members of his family now set out for their return to Tagaste. At the port of Ostia, Monica fell ill. She knew that her work had been accomplished and that life would soon be over. She was so overjoyed at the answer to her prayers that her sons were totally unaware of her approaching death. As her strength failed her, she said to Augustine: "*I do not know what there is left for me to do or why I am still here; all my hopes in this world are now fulfilled. All I wished for was that I might see you a Catholic and a child of Heaven before I die.*"

With beautiful simplicity, she continued: "*Nothing is far from God,*" and indicated that she was content to be buried where she died. Monica's death plunged her children into the deepest grief, and Augustine, "the son of so many tears," in the *Confessions*, implores his readers' prayers for his parents.

It is the prayers of Monica herself that have been invoked by generations of the faithful who honour her as a special patroness of married women and as an example for Christian motherhood and perseverance in prayer.

After his conversion, Augustine returned to North Africa where he established a monastic community for himself and his friends in his parents' home at Thagaste. He devoted a joyful three years to study, dialogue, and prayer, and it is at this time that Augustine wrote his famous *Rule* for the monks who lived with him.

The scope of Augustine's intellectual and apostolic achievement is staggering. In addition to his incredible literary output, he was a priest and bishop who travelled thousands of miles in the Church's service and fought tirelessly against the people who were trying to divide the Church. But in the midst of these demanding activities, Augustine's life had a very different side; he was at heart a monk.

When he became a bishop of Hippo, where he was to spend the remainder of his forty-four years, Augustine was determined not to abandon a way of life that he had found so fulfilling. He established a monastery for priests in his bishop's residence. There they lived together in a religious community according to the *Rule*. Augustine had come to believe that a monk could lead both a contemplative life and a life of action, as expressed in his work *The City of God*. A monk's first responsibility was serving the Church; but study, scholarship and contemplation would make that service all the more meaningful.

St Augustine's writings and spirituality still continue to guide people, and his works are widely used in seminaries training students for the priesthood.



## *St. Augustine's Prayer*

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for you.

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**Our new deacon Rev Martin Matheson.**

## Ordained to the permanent diaconate

In an impressive ceremony in St. Peter's, Daliburgh, South Uist, last Wednesday evening, Martin Matheson was raised to the diaconate by Bishop Murray. There was a packed congregation of over 300 parishioners and friends who gathered for the occasion, which must have given Martin great encouragement.

There were twelve priests present from the diocese and four deacons from other parts of Scotland, who had studied for the diaconate about the same time as Martin.

The whole liturgy was very moving, with well chosen passages from scripture, and beautiful singing supported by an excellent choir. Everyone was presented with a magnificently produced booklet prepared by the late Canon Galbraith's housekeeper, Sandy Stephens.

Martin's father died when he was very young, and later his mother met and married a Uist man, and the family moved to Garrynamonie. After completing his education in Uist, and his studies at university, he returned to the island and successfully

applied for a planning officer position with the Western Isles Council. He has recently been appointed by Argyll and Bute Council as Director of Planning for the whole of Argyllshire, a highly responsible position, for all the plans submitted to him by his staff must meet with his approval.

Martin is married with four grown-up children, and he and his wife and family have been living in South Uist for the past 23 years.

After the mass, there was a beautiful buffet in the hall, and the evening ended with a traditional Uist Ceilidh. We wish Martin God's blessing in his new vocation, and every joy and happiness in his new life, which will be divided between his work during the week, centred in Lochgilphead, and his weekends serving in his parish.

## Our Sick

**Mary Morrison** is back in the Belford again, and we pray that she may soon be well and allowed to come back home in the near future.

**Jimmy Keenan** is still undergoing treatment from home, and the consultants are determined to find the virus which he picked up, and has been responsible for his set back. As always, he remains very happy and contented, and is looked after with great care by his wife, Mary, and the family.

**Katie MacKintosh** continues to make good progress and is now walking about the house without the help of any aids.

**Joe Beattie** is home, and I tell him that so many of the parishioners are asking for him. His progress has been rather slow, but he is immensely cheerful.

**Nell MacDonald**, Altour Road, was moved a few weeks ago from the Belhaven Ward to Newtonmore.

It is unfortunate that there is no long-term provision locally for people like Nell who need special help.

Our sick have always a very special place in our prayers at mass each weekend, and also throughout the week. Our Lord had a very tender love for those who were sick, and comforted them by his visits and cured them.

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## ***Race Nite next Saturday Spean Bridge Hall at 7.30 p.m.***

**Frank MacKenzie has still some horses for sale,  
and you can buy one for £5 after the 11.30 a.m. mass.  
All the proceeds go towards replacing the roof of St. Joseph's.**

**We hope as many parishioners and friends will come along to Spean Bridge Hall next Saturday evening, September 1st, to support this fund raising effort.**

**There will be entertainment, and refreshments will also be on sale, so it promises to be an enjoyable evening - plus the fact that your horse may win!**

## **Church Rota August 31st –September 1st, 2007**

**St Joseph's**  
**Reader: Almy Leider**  
**Bidding Prayers: Christina Fyfe**  
**Euch. Ministers: Liz Campbell & Moira Coutts**  
**Church Cleaning: special rota**

**St. Margaret's**  
**Readers: Helen MacDonald Nilda Hawke**  
**Bidding Prayers: Deirdre MacDonald**  
**Euch. Ministers: Ishbel Campbell, Ann MacKintosh**  
**Church Cleaning: Liz MacDonald**

### **Welcome**

We welcome **Eddie Carlin** to our parish. Eddie is from Northern Ireland, and teaches English in Lochaber High School. For several months he had lodgings in Spean Bridge, but has now a flat in town. However, he loves coming to mass in Roy Bridge, wishes to be a member of the parish and has offered to have his name put on the rota as a reader. He is reading this Sunday. His parents came over to visit him recently and he brought them to mass in Roy Bridge to show them the church where he regularly attends mass. I am sure Eddie will be delighted to meet our parishioners, and I know they will make him feel welcome.