

THE CAUSE FOR
Sister Annella Zervas, OSB



Introducing Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, the first candidate for beatification from both the Diocese of Crookston and the state of Minnesota—a woman of deep Catholic faith whose virtuous life has inspired the faithful for nearly a century.



SISTER ANNELLA *Guild*

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WELCOME, AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE LIFE OF SISTER ANNELLA ZERVAS, OSB.

This media and leaders' kit has been prepared to share the extraordinary life of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, a Benedictine Sister whose deep Catholic faith and embrace of redemptive suffering inspires many.

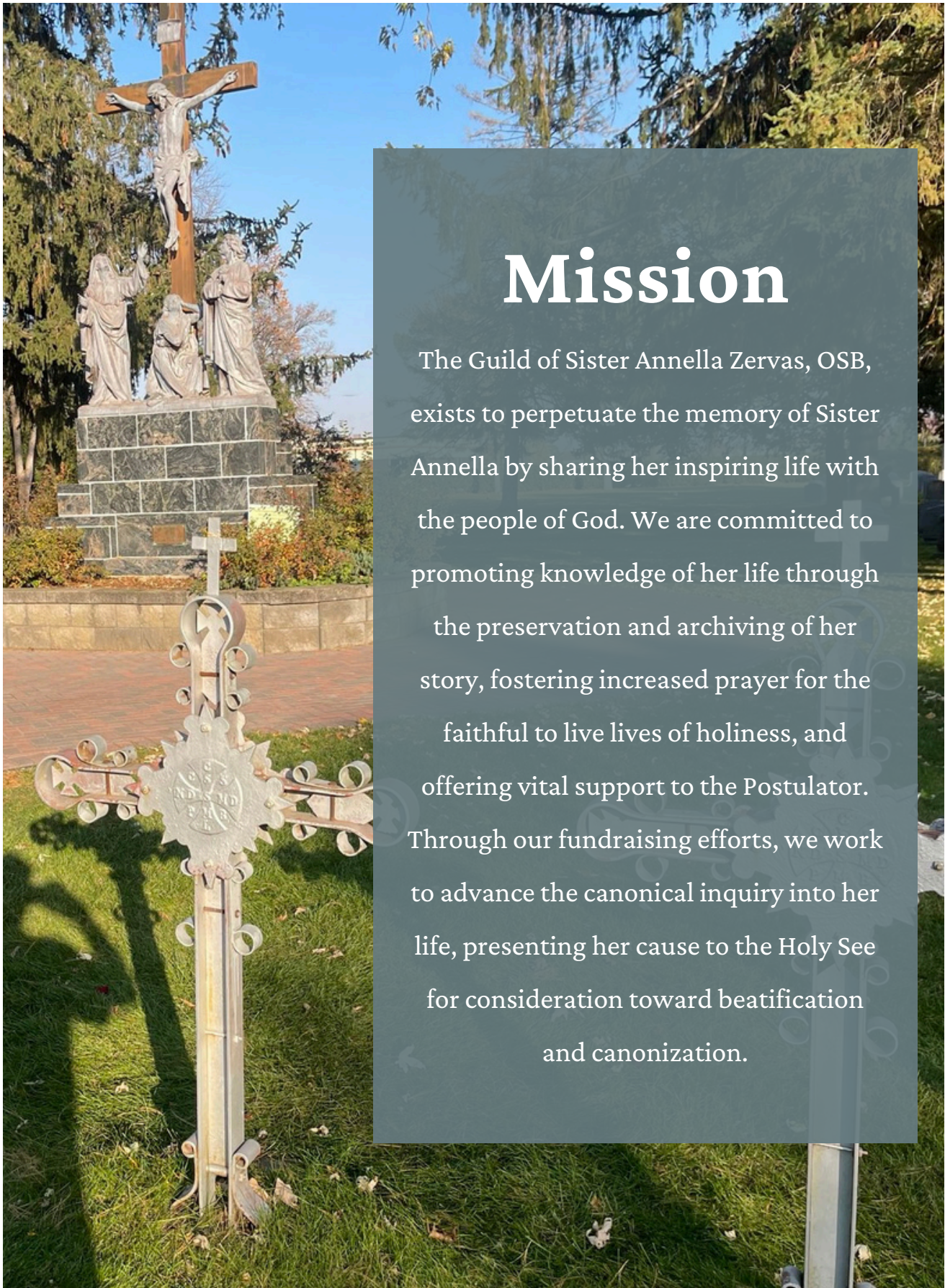
The Sister Annella Zervas OSB, Guild, Inc., has been erected as a private association of the faithful by the Most Reverend Andrew H. Cozzens, STD, DD, Bishop of the Diocese of Crookston (Minnesota). The Guild, its board of directors, and its members, exist to spread knowledge of Sister Annella's life and present her cause to the Holy See for consideration of beatification and canonization.

In this kit, you'll find resources that offer insight into Sister Annella's life and the work of the Guild. Included is our Mission Statement, a heartfelt greeting from Bishop Andrew Cozzens, and details about the Guild's purpose and board members who are passionately working to share the story of Sister Annella. Additionally, you'll find an abbreviated biography of Sister Annella's life. We've also included a section with frequently asked questions to address common inquiries and contact information for questions.

We hope this kit provides the tools you need to share Sister Annella's story and the Guild's mission. Thank you for joining us in spreading the word about this holy woman's life; we look forward to serving with you and furthering the mission of the Church together.

May God bless you,

The Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, Guild
Crookston, Minnesota



Mission

The Guild of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, exists to perpetuate the memory of Sister Annella by sharing her inspiring life with the people of God. We are committed to promoting knowledge of her life through the preservation and archiving of her story, fostering increased prayer for the faithful to live lives of holiness, and offering vital support to the Postulator. Through our fundraising efforts, we work to advance the canonical inquiry into her life, presenting her cause to the Holy See for consideration toward beatification and canonization.

GREETING FROM BISHOP COZZENS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am grateful to be able to share with you the remarkable life and testimony of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. She was a woman of deep faith, courage, and trust in God. Her life was characterized by her surrender to God in loving obedience, even when this meant an experience of the Cross. She believed that her cross, united to Jesus' Cross, was fruitful for the salvation of the world.

I first learned about Sister Annella through my sister, who considered her a spiritual friend and often turned to her for intercession. Thus, when I moved to Crookston, I was already inspired by Sister Annella's trust in God, even in the midst of great suffering.

Sister Annella was one of us, born and raised in Moorhead and dying in Saint Joseph's parish, and she can serve as a great example for us. She lived a deep but ordinary life of faith. As a child, she used to walk from her home in Moorhead to Saint Mary's Cathedral in Fargo for daily Mass on her way to school. She experienced an extra-ordinary sickness that, in the end, took her life.

All of us have pain and suffering in our lives, and God's question to all of us through Sister Annella is: What will you do with your pain? Sister Annella reveals that when we surrender our suffering to God, it can be transformed into a source of grace, healing, and sanctity. As Saint John Paul II said, "It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that "cosmic" struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the Letter to the Ephesians (cf. Eph 6:12), human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, constitute a special support for the powers of good, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers" (Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 27, emphasis original).

Sister Annella entered into that cosmic struggle between good and evil from her bedroom in Moorhead. There she tried to unite her suffering to the Cross of Jesus for the redemption of the world. I am sure that her offering continues to benefit us today, and I know that her intercession benefits us. She invites us to remember that suffering, when entrusted to God, becomes a means of healing, sanctity, and an opportunity to trust in His greater plan.

She shows us that suffering is not something to be feared or avoided but an invitation to trust God more deeply. She fully embraced her vocation, prioritizing God's will and selflessly serving others. Her example is a profound gift, not only to us in the Diocese of Crookston, but to the entire Church.

I am hopeful that Sister Annella will inspire each of us to live our own callings with deeper faith and trust. She was a simple soul who did not do anything great by the world's standards. But her gift of self to Jesus her bridegroom shows us all how we can seek to give ourselves in the midst of suffering. We are diligently working to gather her story and the testimonies of those who have received favors through her intercession to present them to the Holy See.

I found one particular story inspiring because of its simplicity and hope. A young man on the autism spectrum experienced his first serious heartbreak, which left him in a state of complicated grief and despair—a reaction often intensified for individuals with similar sensitivities. He even contemplated suicide. However, through discovering Sister Annella's story and her own journey through suffering, he learned that he could transform his pain into something meaningful. Sister Annella taught him that suffering is not a curse, but rather a path to a deeper union with God and an opportunity for transformation.

How might Sister Annella's testimony inspire you? Could her example encourage you to see your own suffering in a new light? Perhaps God, through Sister Annella's example and intercession, is reminding you that He loves you uniquely, has a specific purpose for your life, and is even calling you to sanctity.

As we continue to share Sister Annella's story in the Diocese of Crookston and with the wider Church, I invite you to join us in praying for her beatification and canonization. May her life inspire us to embrace our own unique callings, along with the suffering we encounter, with the same trust and surrender to God's loving plan.



Bishop Cozzens at Sister Annella Zervas' grave, Saint Benedict's Monastery, Saint Joseph, MN.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew H. Cozzens".

The Most Reverend Andrew H. Cozzens, S.T.D., D.D.
Bishop of Crookston

WHO WE ARE

Guild Board of Directors

- Bishop Andrew Cozzens, STD, DD | Ex Officio President
- Monsignor David Baumgartner, JCL | President
- Peter Crary, JD | Vice-President
- Father Robert Schreiner, STL | Spiritual Director
- Debbie Peterson | Notary
- Anna Kliner | Secretary
- Deacon Jeff Reese | Treasurer
- Nancy Dewey
- John Grill
- Helen Healy
- Peter Jordan
- Deacon Stuart Longtin
- Jayne Miller
- Brenda Posch

WHAT YOU CAN Expect from the Guild



Fostering the Catholic Faith

The Guild of Sister Annella Zervas is dedicated to sharing Sister's journey. By recounting her life, the Guild will highlight Sister Annella's Catholic faith, her embrace of suffering for God's greater glory, and her inspiring example of living in accordance with God's will. Through various initiatives and devotional efforts, the Guild will invite the people of God to grow in their own relationship with Christ and the Church.



Guild News

The Guild of Sister Annella Zervas will provide regular updates on her beatification and canonization progress, membership opportunities, events, and fundraising initiatives. Communications will be shared through newsletters, email, social media, and the Guild's website to keep everyone informed and engaged. By sharing milestones and opportunities to participate, the Guild will foster a community dedicated to advancing Sister Annella's cause.



Fundraising for the Cause

The Guild of Sister Annella Zervas is in the process of being approved for the Official Catholic Directory as a charitable organization. The Guild is committed to raising the necessary financial resources to support the canonical process for her beatification and canonization. By sharing her story and fostering devotion, the Guild actively engages in fundraising efforts to ensure the progress of this important cause.

ABBREVIATED

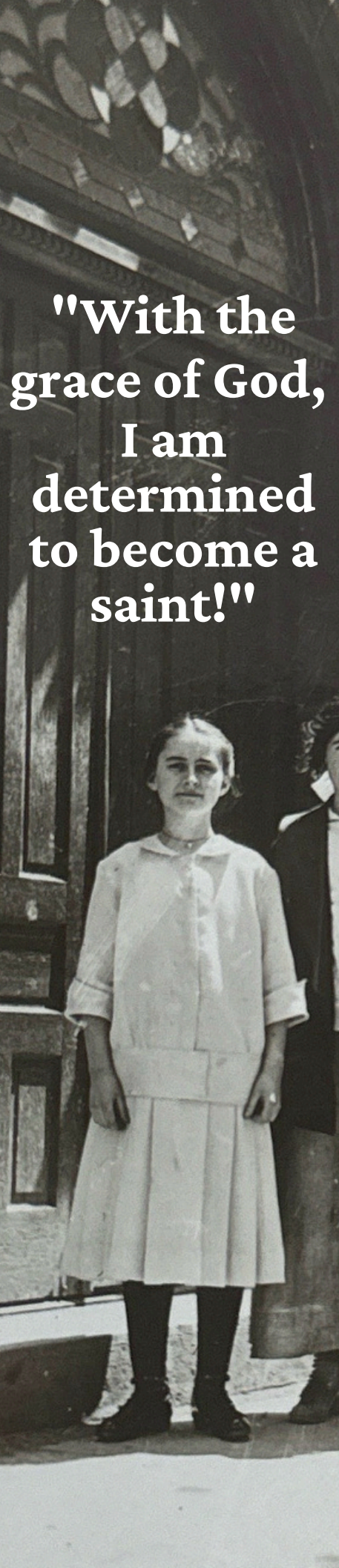
Biography of Sister Annella

The following is a condensed biography of Sister Annella Zervas, excerpted from *Ticket for Eternity* by James Kritzek.

Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, was born Anna Cordelia Zervas on April 7, 1900, in Moorhead, Minnesota. She was the daughter of devout Catholic German and French-Canadian immigrants Hubert and Emma Zervas. Annella was the second of six children in the family, which included an adopted brother and a brother who died shortly after birth. She was very attached to her family, which was a model Christian family. Annella exhibited a deep devotion to prayer and the Eucharist from a young age, showing a



remarkable commitment to her Catholic faith. Even in grade school, she demonstrated a spiritual maturity that set her apart from her peers. Annella had a profound love for the Mass and was a daily communicant from a young age. Her love for the Eucharist grew, and she frequently visited the Tabernacle. She would sacrifice to attend Mass daily, even walking to Mass in the frigid winter months of Fargo-Moorhead. Her understanding of the nature of Christian mortification was being lived out even then.



**"With the
grace of God,
I am
determined
to become a
saint!"**

Annella felt a strong calling to consecrate her life to God at fifteen. In August 1915, she entered the Order of Saint Benedict at the convent of the Benedictine Sisters at St. Joseph, Minnesota. Her novitiate was marked by gratitude, joy, and homesickness that tempted her to leave. However, she persevered with fervent prayer, willpower, support from her family, and guidance from her spiritual director. On June 17, 1918, she received the Benedictine habit and the name Sister Mary Annella. When her mother remarked that there was no Saint Annella, Annella responded, "Then I shall have to be the first one!" She greatly desired to be a saint. Repeated in her diary was this desire: "With the grace of God, I am determined to become a saint!" Annella made her simple profession on July 11, 1919, and her perpetual vows in July 1922.

Sister Annella's monastic life was filled with spiritual growth and deep happiness. She was known for her seriousness, musical talent, sense of humor, conscientiousness, popularity, artistic abilities, humble and childlike disposition, politeness, and kindness. One of her classmates remarked that she had the sweetest smile she had ever known. Her kindness and obedience endeared her to her parents and friends. She struggled with forgetfulness and was sometimes tempted to leave religious life because of homesickness. Despite these struggles, she was profoundly grateful to the Lord for calling her to be His bride.

Annella understood the importance of religious life and all vocations, praying fervently that no one would miss their vocation as Divine Providence outlined. She was always asking for the grace of perfect resignation and conformity with the holy will of God and was pleased when God was pleased. Annella loved sacred music and was a perfectionist with music. Despite her faults and difficulties, such as being very restless at night and often late to the chapel, she was always grateful for any advice and instruction and was reported to have never said an uncharitable word.



Annella was known to be generous and always helped others. She was greatly aware of God's generosity and wanted to do the little she could on this earth for Him. She always encouraged others in this.

Annella had a great love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Her behavior in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord indicated her living faith in the Real Presence. She knew that Jesus was the only one who truly understood us and could help us. Her devotion to the Virgin Mary was equally profound. Annella loved the Virgin Mary to such an extent that everything—every good work, every prayer, and every pain—passed through the Blessed Virgin's hands into those of Jesus.

About a year after her solemn profession, Annella was struck by a complex combination of afflictions, including severe stomach pain and a rare and painful skin disease, both of which were impossible to diagnose.

Sister Annella's illness reached such an advanced stage that, despite the deep sorrow she felt at the thought of leaving her convent home, it was determined that she would be cared for by her family in their home. This decision, made out of concern for her well-being, came with the permission of the Bishop of Saint Cloud and the Reverend Mother.

She received many medical treatments and visited different hospitals, including the Mayo Clinic, where doctors deemed her condition incurable.



Despite her severe physical suffering, which included violent chills, high temperatures, and painful attacks of itching, scratching, and weeping, her mental faculties always remained intact. The pus-like discharge from the skin disease had a sharp, biting, and decayed odor. Her frail body exfoliated between a pint and a quart a day of skin. At one point, she existed on almost no food.

Her constant cheerfulness and good humor were evident even during her hospital stays. She saw her suffering as a loving cooperation with God in consummating His redemptive love. She never asked to be relieved from the pain, only for the strength to bear it. Her mother remarked that Annella suffered death seven or eight times a day.

Despite her intense suffering, Annella continued to manifest interest in the spiritual welfare of others. Her kindness and politeness manifested in many ways, especially in her interactions with the poorer and less instructed. She remained cheerful and resigned to God's will, always wanting what pleased God. She trusted that God had a very special reason for her suffering and that He would bring it to an end when He wished.

There were different stages to her disease, each involving different levels of pain. She would beg to receive Holy Communion, which was her greatest consolation. In between her physical attacks of pain, Annella would do needlework, meditate on sacred scripture, and sing hymns and parts of vespers. Even in her pain, she would remain calm and never forget to thank others for any service. She had difficulty sleeping and was heard in the middle of the night saying, "All for Jesus, all for Jesus," and making acts of faith, hope, and charity.

Annella had no wish but to live as long as God wanted her to live. She remarked one day, "I am buying my ticket for eternity, and it is well worth the price." Sometimes, even when she didn't think she could bear more pain, she would pray, "Jesus, send me more pain, but give me the strength to bear it!" Annella also suffered from hearing issues, including a constant whistling in her ears. She averted talking about herself, always desiring to speak of heaven. She remarked that she thought it would be too good to be true to be with Jesus and see Him forever. She was so happy when thinking of being united with God forever. She told her mother not to cry but only to thank God.

Sister Annella passed away on the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, at the age of twenty-six. Her spiritual director had no doubt about her union with God. After her death, many reported receiving favors and intercessions through her prayers, leading to a growing devotion to Sister Annella. She is remembered as an "apostle of suffering for our day," with her life serving as a testament to radical trust in God and full obedience to His holy will.



AN INVITATION TO The People of God

We invite the people of God to join the Guild in prayer for the beatification and canonization of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. Please help share her story and witness to her life of holiness. Additionally, your financial support for the cause will assist in advancing the canonical process and making Sister Annella's life known to the world.

GET INVOLVED

- Pray for Sister Annella's Cause**
 - Offer prayers individually or join group efforts. Please see page 13 of this kit for Sister Annella's Beatification and Canonization Prayer.
- Share Her Story**
 - Spread the word with family, friends, and on social media. [Visit here for biography.](#)
- Make a Financial Gift**
 - Support the cause financially or help with fundraising. [Consider making an online gift here.](#)
- Attend Events**
 - Join local or virtual events to learn about Sister Annella and grow in faith. [Find details on upcoming public events here.](#)
- Stay Informed**
 - [Sign up here for updates, and visit the Guild's website for the latest news.](#)



Please mail financial gifts to Sister Annella Guild, 702 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN 56716, with checks payable to "Sister Annella Guild." Gifts can also be made online at sisterannella.org.



PRAYER

To Obtain the Beatification and Canonization of Sister M. Annella Zervas, OSB

O Heavenly Father, who art the Author of all virtue and Source of all holiness, and who, through Thy faithful servant, Sister Annella Zervas, hast been pleased to give the world an example of patience and obedient resignation under suffering, we pray Thee to grant us the grace which we ask through her meditation, and thus to manifest her sanctity, that Thy Holy Church may soon be able to proclaim it for Thy greater glory, O God, and for the glorification of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, whom Sister Annella loved so fervently.

Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father (three times). Amen.

Lord Jesus, glorify Thy Spouse, Sister M. Annella Zervas, O.S.B.

We beg of Thee by Thy Holy Cross. Amen.

DIGITAL Promotional Materials

READ



Biography

Reading and praying with Sister Annella Zervas' condensed biography, adapted from *Ticket for Eternity* by James Kritzeck, introduces the life of this remarkable Benedictine sister from Northern Minnesota. Her unwavering trust in God through excruciating suffering and her close relationship with Jesus, our truest friend, inspire us to embrace a life devoted to Christ and His Church.



SHARE



Help Build Excitement

Spread the word to family, friends, and your diocesan and parish community about Sister Annella Zervas, Minnesota's and the Diocese of Crookston's First Beatification Candidate—a woman of profound Catholic faith whose inspiring witness has inspired the faithful for nearly a century.

MOTIVATE



Encourage Donations

Please display and share this poster in gathering spaces to engage your diocesan and parish community in Sister Annella's cause. The flyer is designed to capture attention, with a QR code for easy online donations and contact information for further assistance or additional ways to give.

ENGAGE



Learn About the Guild

Explore what the Guild has to offer in deepening your Catholic faith and supporting Sister Annella's cause. From sharing her spirituality and inspiring trust in Christ to raising funds for her beatification and canonization, the Guild provides regular updates, events, and community engagement to bring Sister Annella's story to the faithful.

INFORM



Public Statements

We invite you to read official communications and updates from the Most Reverend Andrew Cozzens, STD, DD, Bishop of Crookston; Monsignor David Baumgartner, JCL, President of the Guild; and Amanda Zurface, JCL, Diocesan Postulator. Together, they share the latest developments regarding the cause for Sister Annella Zervas.

FREQUENTLY Asked Questions

What is the significance of Sister Annella's spirituality, and how does she inspire both the Diocese of Crookston and the universal Church?

Sister Annella's monastic vows, deep love for the Eucharist, humility, and acceptance of suffering are a beautiful example of a life lived for God. Her story offers a model of devotion and spiritual strength for the faithful of the Diocese of Crookston and beyond.

Has the cause for Sister Annella's canonization been opened before, and is Bishop Cozzens restarting the process?

The cause was initially explored years ago but was never formally opened. Bishop Cozzens is now guiding efforts to gather the necessary documentation to formally open the cause for the first time, advancing the inquiry into her life and sanctity.

Is the Benedictine Order supporting Sister Annella's cause for beatification and canonization?

Bishop Cozzens has enjoyed a conversation with the sisters regarding Sister Annella's cause. The sisters are providing access to their archives and are permitting prayer gatherings at Saint Benedict's Monastery Cemetery, where Sister Annella is buried.

How can I contribute to advancing Sister Annella's cause for beatification and canonization?

Financial gifts to support the cause can be made through the official Guild of Sister Annella Zervas. Contributions fund research and promotional efforts. Please mail checks to Sister Annella Guild, 702 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN 56716. To give online, [please follow this link to our online giving page.](#)

COMMUNICATION

We hope to hear from you.

We encourage you to reach out to the Sister Annella Guild with any questions or for more information.

Your interest and involvement are greatly appreciated as we work together to advance Sister Annella's cause.

Please don't hesitate to contact us for updates or to learn more about how your contributions can make a difference.

Contact Names



Monsignor David Baumgartner, JCL
President of the Guild



Amanda Zurface, JCL
Diocesan Postulator

Contact Details



sisterannellazervas@gmail.com



<http://sisterannella.org>

Social Media



www.facebook.com/sisterannella/

Office Hours & Response Time



T - F 9:00am - 5:00pm CST



24 - 48 hours except weekends





SISTER ANNELLA *Guild*
702 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN 56716