

THE CAUSE FOR CANONIZATION

SISTER ANNELLA ZERVAS, OSB

2025 MEDIA & LEADERSHIP KIT



SISTER
ANNELLA
GUILD



Meet **Sister Annella Zervas, OSB** —

the first candidate for canonization from both the Diocese
of Crookston and the state of Minnesota, whose virtuous life
has inspired the faithful for nearly a century.



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*“What He has in store for me, I do not know, but all
He does is well, so there is no need to worry.”*

SISTER ANNELLA



WELCOME *from the* GUILD

Thank you for your interest in the life of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, a Benedictine Sister whose deep faith and embrace of redemptive suffering continue to inspire.

This media and leadership kit introduces her extraordinary life and the mission of the Sister Annella Guild. Our organization has been established 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 seeks to spread Sister Annella's story and present her cause to the Holy See for consideration of canonization.

In this kit, you will find resources about Sister Annella's life and the work of the Guild. From sharing her spirituality to raising funds for her cause, the Guild leadership provides regular updates, events, and community engagement to bring Sister Annella's story to the faithful.

We hope this information 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,

Board of Directors
Sister Annella Guild
Crookston, Minnesota

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. So 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 in Moorhead and dying in Saint Joseph's parish—and she remains a powerful example for us today. 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 extraordinary 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 united her suffering to the Cross of Jesus for the redemption of the world. I am confident that her offering and intercession continue to bless 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, 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 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.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Andrew H. Cozzens

The Most Reverend Andrew H. Cozzens, STD, DD
Bishop of Crookston



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

Sent down from Thine own hand.
Dear Jesus I long for Heaven: & Thee.
To be in Thy Father's home
I, a poor exile out on this sea
Leave Oh leave me not alone.
Shorten dear Lord these days, I would ask,
That I must spend 'neath Thine



OUR MISSION

The Sister Annella Guild, exists to perpetuate the memory of Sister Annella by sharing her inspiring life with the people of God. We promote knowledge of her life through the preservation of her story, foster increased prayer for the faithful to live lives of holiness, and offer 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 canonization.

WHAT THE GUILD OFFERS

OUR PURPOSE

The Guild shares the story of Sister Annella's Catholic faith, her embrace of suffering for God's greater glory, and her inspiring example of pursuing God's will.

STAY CONNECTED

We provide regular updates on her canonization progress, membership opportunities, events, and fundraising initiatives through newsletters, email, social media, and our website to keep you informed and engaged.

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE

The Guild is a non-profit organization devoted to securing the necessary funds to advance the cause of Sister Annella's canonization.





A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY *of* SISTER ANNELLA

(ADAPTED FROM *TICKET FOR ETERNITY* BY JAMES KRITZECK)

EARLY LIFE

Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, was born Anna Cordelia Zervas on April 7, 1900, in Moorhead, Minnesota to devout Catholic immigrants Hubert and Emma Zervas. From a young age, Annella showed a profound devotion to prayer and the Eucharist, with a remarkable commitment to her Catholic faith. Even in grade school, she demonstrated a spiritual maturity that set her apart from her peers. A daily communicant, she often walked to Mass in the frigid Fargo–Moorhead winters and frequently visited the Tabernacle.

RELIGIOUS VOCATION

Annella felt called to religious life at age 15 and joined the Benedictine Sisters in St. Joseph, Minnesota, in 1915. Her novitiate was marked by gratitude and joy, though homesickness tempted her to leave. However, she persevered through fervent prayer, personal willpower, family support, and guidance from her spiritual director.

On June 17, 1918, she received the Benedictine habit, taking the name Sister Mary Annella. When her mother remarked there was no Saint Annella, she responded, “Then I shall have to be the first one!” Her diary echoed this earnest 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.

MONASTIC LIFE

Sister Annella's monastic life was filled with spiritual growth and immense happiness. She was known for her seriousness, musical and artistic talents, sense of humor, humility, obedience, kindness, and childlike disposition. Though she struggled with forgetfulness and occasional homesickness, Annella remained profoundly grateful to the Lord for calling her to be His bride.

Annella deeply valued religious life and all vocations, praying fervently that no one would miss their vocation. She often asked for the grace of perfect resignation and conformity with the holy will of God, finding joy in pleasing Him. While she struggled with restlessness at night and was often late to the chapel, she welcomed advice and instruction and was reported to have never said an unkind word.

DEVOTION AND KINDNESS

Annella was generous and always eager to help others. She was greatly aware of God's goodness and encouraged others to do what little they could for Him. Her deep and unwavering love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was evident in her reverent behavior in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord.

Her devotion to the Virgin Mary was equally profound. Annella entrusted every good work, every prayer, and every pain to the Blessed Virgin, who then passed them through her hands to Jesus.

SUFFERING AND ILLNESS

About a year after her solemn profession, Annella was struck by a complex illness, including severe stomach pain and a rare, painful skin disease that doctors could not diagnose.

Her condition worsened so much that she had to leave the convent to be cared for at home by her family, despite the deep sorrow she felt at the thought. This decision, made out of concern for her well-being, was approved by the Bishop of Saint Cloud and the Reverend Mother. She underwent many medical treatments and hospital visits, including at the Mayo Clinic, where doctors deemed her condition incurable.

OFFERING HER SUFFERING

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

Though in pain, she would beg to receive Holy Communion, which was her greatest consolation. Between agonizing attacks, Annella would do needlework, meditate on sacred scripture, and sing hymns. Even in her suffering, she stayed calm and thanked others for any service.

Annella wished to live only as long as God willed it. She once said, "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!" She avoided talking about herself, preferring to speak of heaven.

DEATH AND LEGACY

Sister Annella passed away on the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. She was only twenty-six years old. 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," exemplifying radical trust in God and full obedience to His holy will.





EXPLANATION *of the* SISTER ANNELLA GUILD LOGO

The new logo for the Sister Annella Guild features a cherished photograph of Sister Annella in the habit she received at her final vows—symbolizing her love for religious life and her total consecration to Christ. Clothed as a bride for the Lord, she embraced a life wholly dedicated to God, even in the midst of great suffering.

The gentle waves in the background recall both the waves in the crest of the Diocese of Crookston and the many lakes of her beloved Minnesota. They reflect her identity as a daughter of the Diocese—born, raised, and called to eternal life here—and her upbringing in Saint Joseph Parish in Moorhead. The waves also speak to her redemptive suffering, offering hope to the Dioceses of Minnesota, which have endured their own deep trials. Through her witness, Sister Annella assures us that when we unite our suffering to Christ's, it can bear abundant fruit.

At the center stands a Benedictine cross, representing her vocation as a religious of the Order of Saint Benedict in Saint Joseph, Minnesota. Its design mirrors the cross that crowns the dome of Sacred Heart Chapel at Saint Benedict's Monastery—a place Sister Annella loved dearly.

The encircling border of the logo unites all these elements, symbolizing the Eucharist—the heart of the Catholic faith and the wellspring of Sister Annella's deepest intimacy with the Lord. The blue tones recall both her bright blue eyes and the Marian blue long identified with Our Lady through the centuries, to whom she entrusted everything to give to Jesus.

This logo serves as a visual summary of Sister Annella's life—rooted in her Benedictine vocation, her love for the Eucharist, her ties to the Diocese of Crookston and the state of Minnesota, and her total dedication to God through the intercession of the Blessed Mother.





AN INVITATION *to the* PEOPLE OF GOD

We invite the faithful to join the Guild in prayer for the canonization of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. Your prayers and support help advance the canonical process and share Sister Annella's story with the world.

PRAY FOR HER CAUSE

Offer prayers individually or join group efforts. See page 20 for the official canonization prayer.

SHARE HER STORY

Read about Sister's Annella's unwavering trust in God through immense suffering, in her biography "[Ticket for Eternity,](#)" written by [James Kritzeck](#). Spread the word to family, friends, and others on social media.

MAKE A GIFT

Support the cause financially or help with fundraising. Consider making an [online gift](#) at or mail donations to: Sister Annella Guild, 702 Summit Avenue N, Crookston, MN 56716. Checks payable to "Sister Annella Guild."

ENCOURAGE DONATIONS

Display and share [materials](#) in gathering spaces to engage your diocesan, parish, and school community. Each includes donation and contact information to support Sister Annella's cause.

LEARN ABOUT THE GUILD

Discover how the Guild supports Sister Annella's cause and enriches your Catholic faith through regular updates, events, and community engagement to bring Sister Annella's story to the faithful.

STAY INFORMED

Visit the [Guild's website](#) for the latest news and to sign up for updates. Join local or virtual events to learn and grow in faith. You can also get updates on our [Facebook page](#).



AN INVITATION To DIOCESAN, PARISH, *and* SCHOOL LEADERS

SHARE SISTER ANNELLA'S STORY THROUGHOUT THE DIOCESE

Invite the faithful to encounter the witness of Sister Annella by praying for her cause during Mass, school prayer services, and Eucharistic Adoration. Make use of the Guild's official prayer cards and Prayers of the Faithful. Reflect on the themes of her life through the Litany of Suffering, drawing closer to Christ through her example of joyful surrender to God's will.

Visit [our Resources page](#) to download free materials and/or to order prayer cards and other resources to support your community's involvement.

EDUCATE AND INSPIRE THROUGH FORMATION AND PARISH MISSIONS

Share Sister Annella's story through OCIA, adult faith formation, youth ministry, and Catholic school programs. Her life offers a powerful witness during Lent, Advent, and All Saints Day.

Contact the Guild to schedule a Sister Annella-themed parish mission or speaker event.

Download her biography for free or [order hard copies](#) to distribute in your parish, school, or diocesan initiatives.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN PRAYER AND DISCIPLESHIP

Encourage involvement through parish prayer groups, Guild chapters, and witness-sharing events. In schools, establish a sorority or fraternity in Sister Annella's honor to foster friendship, service, and prayer rooted in Catholic virtue. These initiatives help parishioners of all ages accompany one another in pursuing lives of holiness.

Share any favors or answered prayers attributed to Sister Annella's intercession by [submitting testimonies](#) to the Guild.

PROMOTE VOCATIONS AND THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

Sister Annella's life reminds us that every person—regardless of vocation—is called to holiness. Use her example in retreats, vocation nights, youth talks, and Catholic school events to spark meaningful conversations about discernment, suffering, and trusting in God's plan. Invite Sister Annella's story into vocation ministry, especially when encouraging young people to be open to God's will for their lives.

Support vocations and share Sister Annella's story by [purchasing](#) official Guild merchandise.

SUPPORT THE CAUSE FOR CANONIZATION

Help advance Sister Annella's cause through prayer, promotion, and financial support.

Make a gift, download resources, or get involved by visiting www.sisterannella.org.



FREQUENTLY *Asked* QUESTIONS

How does Sister Annella's life of faith encourage others in the Church?

Sister Annella's monastic vows, her 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.

What are the steps to becoming a saint in the Catholic Church?

The path to canonization begins when the faithful petition a bishop to open a cause at least five years after a person's death. If accepted, the individual is named Servant of God, and after a careful investigation of the person's life, virtues, and miracles, they may advance through the titles Venerable, Blessed, and finally, Saint.

Has the cause for Sister Annella's canonization been opened?

Bishop Cozzens has gathered the necessary documentation to formally open the cause for the first time, advancing the inquiry into Sister Annella's life and sanctity. Her cause will be formally opened on October 9, 2025.

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

Financial gifts to support the cause can be made through the official Sister Annella Guild. Contributions fund research and promotional efforts. Please mail checks to Sister Annella Guild, 702 Summit Avenue N, Crookston, MN 56716. Gifts can also be made online at sisterannella.org/support.

CONTACT INFORMATION *and* LEADERSHIP



GUILD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MEDIA CONTACT

Amanda Zurfue, JCL | Diocesan Postulator (amanda@sisterannella.org)



HERE TO HELP

Monsignor David Baumgartner, JCL | President of the Guild
(frdavid@sisterannella.org)

Father Robert Schreiner, STL | Spiritual Director (frbob@sisterannella.org)



CONTACT DETAILS

Email: info@sisterannella.org

Website: sisterannella.org

Facebook: facebook.com/sisterannella



OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday-Friday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM CST

Response Time: 24-48 hours (except weekends)



Prayer to Obtain the Canonization of the Servant of God Sister 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, OSB, 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 mediation, 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).

Lord Jesus, glorify Thy Spouse Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. We beg of Thee by Thy Holy Cross.

The Prayer for Canonization was written by Joseph Kreuter, OSB.

