

she cheered those on board by her serene confidence in God's mercy. On reaching Rome, Monica learned that her son had gone to Milan. There he had come under the influence of the great Bishop Ambrose. When his mother found him in Milan, he had given up Manichaeism, although he was not yet a Christian. Monica's friendship with Ambrose is worth noting. She apparently made a friend of this eminent churchman and he entertained the highest opinion of her. Here in Milan, as at home in North Africa, Monica was foremost among the women in all charitable works, and also in her devotions. The bishop persuaded her to give up some of the customs practiced by the Christians of her homeland, for they were derived from ancient pagan rites; carrying food and wine to the tombs of the martyrs was one of the customs which Monica now relinquished.

The day of Augustine's conversion, which he fully describes in his <confessions>, he told his mother that his mistress was going back to Africa, and that he would now adopt a celibate life and devote himself to God's service. 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 to return to Tagaste. At the port of Ostia, the ancient port city of Rome, Monica fell ill and died. She knew that her work had been accomplished and that life would soon be over. Augustine was so deeply moved by his mother's death that he was inspired to write his Confessions, "So be fulfilled what my mother desired of me-more richly in the prayers of so many gained for her through these confessions of mine than by my prayers alone." Her relics are interred in a chapel left of the high altar of the Church of St. Augustine in Rome, Italy.

* (excerpted from: www.wf-forg.com; www.ewtn.com)

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Saint Monica

Patron Saint of Mothers and Wives

Feast Day: May 4



Patience, Endurance, Charity, Prayer and Conversion

These five words were so much the life of St. Monica.

PRAYER

In your mercy, Lord, you received the tears of St. Monica as she wept for her son. At the intercession of both mother and son, give us grace to weep for sin and to obtain Your Forgiveness. Amen.

Saint Monica

*Monica, a saint especially revered by mothers because of her tireless prayers for the conversion of her wayward son, Augustine, was born of Christian parents in Tagaste, North Africa in 333, and died in Ostia, near Rome, in 387. She was married at a young age to a government official, Patricius, who was not a Christian, and had a bad temper, though she bore her burdens patiently, and their life together was relative peaceful. Three children were born to Monica, Augustine, Navigius, and a daughter, Perpetua.

Our knowledge of Monica comes almost entirely from the writings of her much-loved son, the great Doctor of the Church, Saint Augustine of Hippo. We are given one episode of her childhood which suggests a possible origin for her firmness of will. She was sometimes sent down to the cellar to draw wine for the family, and fell into the habit of taking secret sips. She developed such a passion for wine that before long she was drinking great draughts of it whenever opportunity offered. One day a family slave who had been spying on the little girl denounced her as a wine-bibber, and Monica, covered with shame, gave up the habit. Soon afterwards she was baptized, and thenceforth seems to have led a life of irreproachable virtue.

Augustine, the eldest son, though brilliant, was, according to his own account, a lazy and dissolute youth whose bad behavior caused his mother much grief especially so after he went away to school at Madaura and to Carthage. Although Patricius (Monica's husband) became a Christian shortly before he died, Augustine persisted in his pursuit of pleasure, and, as a nineteen year old student, joined the heretical Manichaean sect. When he began to spout heresies, Monica became alarmed, and intensified her efforts to bring him to Christ.

At first, she refused to allow him to live at home. She relented only after having seen a vision. One day as she was weeping over his behavior, a figure appeared and asked her the cause of her grief. She answered, and a voice issued from the mysterious figure, telling 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 another nine 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 counseled her to be patient, saying, "God's time will come." Monica persisted in importuning him, and the bishop uttered the 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 plans, and set off with his young mistress and little son Adeodatus for the seaport. His mother followed him there, and when Augustine saw that she intended to accompany him, he outwitted her by a deception as to the time of sailing. Monica was not discouraged and she continued on to Rome. The ship on which she took passage was tossed about by a storm, and