

Reflection Saturday Week 21 St Monica 2022

Saint Monica (331 - 387) was born at Thagaste in Africa of a Christian family. She married Patricius at a young age and gave birth to Augustine. He had a brilliant intellect and his wayward spirit saw him becoming a Manichee and then a Neoplatonist. Monica prayed unceasingly to God for his conversion and her prayers were answered shortly before she died. She had a deep faith and outstanding virtue and is a wonderful example of a Christian mother.

It is said that the inner life of Augustine was dominated by one figure - his mother. According to his *Confessions*, Monica was strongly present at many of the turning points of his life. In Book I, he says that as a new-born he "was welcomed ... with the comfort of maternal milk." In Book II, when entering adolescence, Monica privately warned him not to go down the path of sexual sin.

In late adolescence Augustine joined the Manichean sect while in Carthage. Monica, in horror, forbade him to enter her house when he returned to Thagaste. Monica took her concerns to a bishop begging him to speak to Augustine, and to try to refute his errors. But the reputation of Augustine in rhetoric and oratory was so well-known that the bishop declined. But Monica followed him with her questions and tears. Eventually the bishop said, "Go, go! Leave me alone. Continue what you are doing. It is not possible that the son of so many prayers and tears should be lost."

In Book III, Augustine wrote that Monica had a dream in which an angelic figure assured her that Augustine would later be converted, "Where you are, he will be also." In Book V, her bitter tears for Augustine "daily ... watered the ground" when he planned to sail to Rome. In Book VI, she joined him in Milan, and played "a large part" in sending away his de facto partner of fourteen years so that he could legally marry a woman who had Monica's approval. In Book VIII, to her great joy she learned of the conversion of Augustine and Alypius. (*Confessions* I, 6; II, 3; III, 66-67; V, 101; VI, 131).