St. Monica (332-387)

Patron Saint of Patience

Monica had three children, two sons and a daughter, but St. Augustine was her favorite. She liked to have her boy with her, "as is the way with mothers," he recalled, "but far more than most mothers." Monica was devoutly Catholic, and she raised her children in the faith. But at age seventeen, when Augustine went away to the university at Carthage, he renounced the Catholic faith and joined the Manicheans. This sect believed there were two gods, one good, the other evil, constantly at war with each other for control of the world. At the same time, Augustine took a mistress.

That her son was living an unchaste life pained Monica, but his conversion to the Manichean sect infuriated her. The first time Augustine came home from the university, she locked him out of the house. Years later Augustine retaliated. He decided to move to Rome in hopes of finding a teaching post, and Monica had said she would move there with him, his mistress, and his son. On the day of their departure, Augustine suggested Monica visit a small chapel near the dock while he arranged to have the luggage stowed aboard ship. When Monica finished her prayers, she walked to the dock to find that Augustine had sailed without her.

For seventeen years, Monica prayed to God to reclaim the soul of her wayward son. Through Monica's prayers, Augustine was converted. He and his son were baptized by St. Ambrose at the Mass of the Easter Vigil in 387. Several weeks later, Monica died. Her feast day is August 27.

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