

Monica

(331-387 AD)



August 27



St. Monica



Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, was born in Tagaste, northern Africa, in 332. She was brought up in a good Christian home. Her strong training was a great help to her when she married the pagan Patricius. Patricius admired his wife, but he made her suffer because of his bad temper. Monica bore this with patience and fervent prayer. At the end of his life, Monica saw her prayers answered. Patricius accepted the Christian faith in 370. He was baptized on his deathbed a year later. His mother, too, became a Christian.

St. Monica's joy over the holy way in which her husband had died soon changed to great sorrow. She found out that her son Augustine was living a bad, selfish life. This brilliant young man had turned to a false religion and to an immoral way of life. Monica prayed and wept and did much penance for her son. She begged priests to talk to him. Augustine was brilliant, yet very stubborn. He did not want to give up his sinful life.

But Monica would not give up either. When he went to Rome without her, she followed him. At Rome, she found he had become a teacher in Milan. So Monica went to Milan. And in all those years, she never stopped praying for him. What love and faith! After years of prayers and tears, her reward came when Augustine was converted. He not only became a good Christian, as she had prayed. Augustine also became a priest, a bishop, a great writer, and a very famous saint. We celebrate his feast on August 29, the day after St. Monica's.

Monica died in Ostia, outside Rome, in 387. Augustine was at her bedside. St. Monica is the patron of married women and of Christian mothers.

We shouldn't become discouraged if our prayers aren't answered right away. Like St. Monica, we should keep praying. Jesus tells us in the Gospel to ask with perseverance and we shall receive.

Augustine

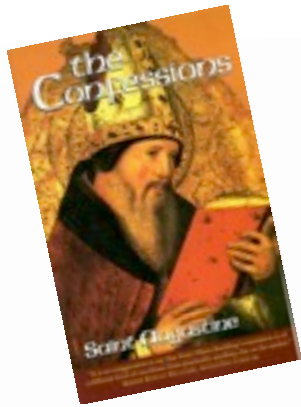
(350-430 AD)



August 28



St. Augustine



St. Augustine was born in Tagaste in modern Algeria on November 13, 354. He was brought up in a Christian atmosphere by his mother, St. Monica, whose feast we celebrated yesterday. Augustine went to Carthage to study. After a while, he left the practice of the Christian faith and spent many years in sinful living and in false beliefs. His mother Monica prayed daily for her son's conversion. In Milan, the marvelous sermons of St. Ambrose made their impact too.

Finally, Augustine became convinced that Christianity was the true religion. Yet he did not become a Christian then, because he thought he could never live a pure life. One day, however, he heard about two men who had suddenly been converted after reading the life of St. Anthony of Egypt, whose feast we celebrate on January 17. Augustine

felt ashamed. "What are we doing?" he cried to one of his friends. "Unlearned people are taking heaven by force. Yet we, with all our knowledge, are so cowardly that we keep rolling around in the mud of our sins!"

Full of bitter sorrow, Augustine went into the garden and prayed, "How much longer, Lord? Why don't I put an end to my sinning now?" Just then he heard a child singing the words, "Take up and read!" Thinking that God intended this as a message for him, he picked up the Bible and opened it. His eyes fell on St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 13, where Paul says to stop living immoral lives and to live in imitation of Jesus. It was just what Augustine needed. From then on, he began a new life.

He was baptized on Holy Saturday, 387. Four years later, he was ordained a priest. In 396, he was made bishop of Hippo when Bishop Valerius died. Augustine wrote many works to explain and defend the Catholic faith. Even today, his letters, sermons, and treatises are important to the study of theology and philosophy. On the wall of his room, he had the following sentence written in large letters: "Here we do not speak evil of anyone." St. Augustine defended the Church's teachings against errors, lived simply, and supported the poor. He preached very often and prayed with great fervor right up until his death. "Too late have I loved you," he once cried to God. But Augustine spent the rest of his life in loving God and leading others to love him, too.