

## Women of the Church Study

### St. Monica

St. Monica, who lived from 330-387, is the patron saint of alcoholics, conversion, married women, mothers, and those abused. She is known for her patience, perseverance, prayerful disposition, and deep faith.

Her family gave her in marriage to a pagan, Patricius (even though she was a Christian). Patricius had a violent temper; he abused Monica and criticized her because of her charity and piety, yet is said to have respected her beliefs. He was also unfaithful to Monica. Monica also had to bear with her cantankerous mother-in-law who lived in their home. Monica became a source of comfort to other women in difficult marriages Monica's prayer and example did finally lead to the conversion of both her husband and mother-in-law.

Monica and her husband had three children. The oldest and most famous was Augustine. The other two children, Navigius and Perpetua, entered religious life. But Augustine, who was brilliant and gifted, chose a life of immoral living, becoming a "wayward" son. At the time of his father's death, Augustine was a rhetoric student in Carthage. He accepted the Manichean heresy. Monica refused to let Augustine eat or sleep in her house for a time period. Then she had a vision that assured her Augustine would return to the faith. Monica stayed close to her son from that time on, praying and fasting for him.

Augustine did not want his mother to stay close to him. At one point he tricked his mother and set sail for Rome. Monica followed him there and then to Milan. In Milan, Augustine came under the influence of the bishop St. Ambrose who also became Monica's spiritual director. Monica became the leader of the devout women in Milan. She continued her prayers for Augustine. Augustine was baptized by Ambrose in 387.

Monica died shortly after this; prior to her death she told Augustine all her hopes had been fulfilled. St. Augustine became one of the most influential thinkers in Western history and one of the greatest saints in the Church. He included much about his mother Monica in his famous work *Confessions*. Their feast days are August 27 and August 28.

In 1430 Monica's relics were brought to Rome as ordered by Pope Martin V; many miracles were reported to have occurred along the way. Later, a church was built to honor St. Augustine and her relics were placed there in a chapel.

Resources:

[www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-monica/](http://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-monica/)

[www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=1](http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=1)

[www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/how-st-monica-can-help-your-child-return-to-the-church/](http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/how-st-monica-can-help-your-child-return-to-the-church/)

### Reflections

-St. Monica is known for her patience and her persistence in prayer. As she endured hardships in family life, eventually her prayers were answered as her family members were converted to the faith. In the end, she had a wonderful relationship with Augustine and he showed the utmost love and respect for his mother.

What person or situation have I persisted in praying for?

What has it been like for me to pray persistently without giving up? Have my prayers been answered in some way?

What are some ways I might continue my prayers and be patient in awaiting answers?

--St. Monica endured some significant family stressors and opposition even within her own home (from her husband, her mother-in-law, and her son Augustine). Yet she became a source of comfort for others in similar difficult situations.

Have some of my challenges resulted in me being able to minister to others?

What has this experience been like for me?

How could I expand on this to provide comfort, reassurance, or strength to others who are going through difficult times?

-St. Monica is also known for literally "chasing after" her son Augustine in the hopes of helping him change his life. Monica showed "tough love" with Augustine; her great faith helped her to both set limits and seek

reconciliation with him. Monica was very “in tune” to God’s direction for her with regard to her son. She did not give up on him. After his conversion she felt all of her hopes had been fulfilled.

Who in my life am I willing to “chase after” to bring to the faith?

How might this be done for this person in my life?

What limits might I need to set?

In what ways may I need to reconcile with this person?

How can I keep from giving up?

-St. Ambrose became instrumental in Augustine’s conversion and he became Monica’s spiritual director.

Although Monica sought out her son tirelessly and prayed for him without ceasing, she needed and benefitted from the help and support of another.

Who else may I depend upon or call upon to support me in prayer for another?

How might I support someone else in their prayer for another?

### **Devotions and Prayers**

St. Monica is known for her persistent prayer. She was a true intercessor, particularly for her son Augustine, for whom she interceded for 17 years.

Many Scripture passages encourage us to pray (intercede) for others and to persistently pray without giving up. Following are several from the New Testament to consider:

2 Corinthians 1:11

Philippians 1:19

Ephesians 6:18

1 Timothy 2:1

James 5:14

Matthew 5:44

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Luke 18:1-8.

Luke 11:5-10

Philippians 4:6-7

Acts 1:14 and 2:42

-See the following short article on persistent prayer

<http://www.acatholic.org/sunday-101616-persistent-prayer/>

-See the following article on intercessory prayer

<https://christlife.org/blog/the-power-of-intercessory-prayer>

### **-Novena to St. Monica**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Dear Saint Monica, you were once the mournful mother of a prodigal son. Your faithfulness to prayer brought you and your son so close to God that you are now with him in eternity. By your intercession and God’s grace, your son St. Augustine became a great and venerable Saint of the Church. Please take my request to God with the same fervor and persistence with which you prayed for your own son. (Mention your intentions here) With your needs, worries and anxieties, you threw yourself on the mercy and providence of God. Through sorrow and pain, you constantly devoted yourself to God. Pray for me, that I might join you in such a deep faith in God’s goodness and mercy. Above all, dear Saint Monica, pray for me, that I may, like your son, turn from my sin and become a great saint for the glory of God. Amen.

Read more at: <https://www.praymorenovenas.com/st-monica-novena>

### **For those praying for a specific child:**

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
under the weight of my heartfelt burden, I turn to you, dear Saint Monica  
and request your assistance and intercession.

From your place in heaven, I beg that you will plead before the Throne of the Holy One,  
for the sake of my child, [Name], who has wandered from from the faith, and  
all that we have tried to teach.

I know, dear Monica, that our children belong not to us, but to God,  
and that God often permits this wandering as part of one's journey toward Him.  
Your son, Augustine, wandered, too; eventually he found the faith, and came to believe,  
and in that belief became a true teacher.  
Help me, therefore, to have patience, and to believe that all things — even this disappointing movement away  
from the faith — work ultimately to His own good purposes.  
For the sake of my child's soul, I pray to understand and trust in this.  
St. Monica, please teach me to persist in faithful prayer as you did for your son's sake.  
Inspire me to behave in ways that will not further distance my child from Christ, but only draw [Name] gently  
towards his marvelous light.  
Please teach me what you know about this painful mystery of separation,  
and how it is reconciled in the re-orientation of our children  
toward heaven.  
O Saint Monica, lover of Christ and His Church,  
pray for me, and for my child [Name], that we may acquire heaven,  
joining with you, there, in offering constant and thankful  
praise to God,  
Amen.

From:

<https://aleteia.org/2016/12/28/prayer-to-st-monica-help-my-child-turn-to-christ/>

## **Practical Applications**

St. Monica is well known for her persistent prayer over a long period of time. And best of all she received answers for her prayer, particularly in the conversion of her son, Augustine. (She prayed for him for 17 years!!)  
--Reflect upon an intention for someone or something for whom you have prayed long and hard. Journal about this experience... Has your prayer been answered?...Have there been times you have given up hope?.. Have you seen answers to your prayers, even if these have not been what you expected?... If/as you continue to pray, you may want to write a prayer from your heart about this person or thing and pray it daily. You may need to change or adjust your prayer as time continues or as situations change or as you begin to see answers.

St. Monica accepted support from St. Ambrose who became influential in the conversion of her son, St. Augustine.

--Is there a person in your life who can or already does support you in your prayer? If you know of someone who would be willing to pray for and with you on your intention, ask them to do so. If there is already someone who does this, offer gratitude to them.

--Is there a person in your life to whom you can offer to support in prayer? If so, offer to do this. Ask the person how you can best support them in their prayer intention. Remember...

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

There are many Scripture passages and other resources on persistent prayer and intercessory prayer.

-Refer to the Scripture passages noted on last week's material and/or seek out passages on your own Read these passages silently and/or aloud and reflect upon them.

-Look up resources on persistent prayer or intercessory prayer. Ponder the information you find and see how it might apply to what you are praying about.

-Discern if there are some renewed ways you might pray for an intention for someone or something in your life.