

Monica was married in an arranged marriage at a young age to Patricius, an older man who served as a Roman civil servant and did not share his wife's religion. Together, they raised 3 children: Augustine, Nagivius, and Perpetua although they did not always see eye-to-eye as to what was best for their children. As a Catholic, Monica wanted to have her children baptized, but he would have nothing of it.

Patricius had a volatile temper but did not take his anger out with physical violence towards his family. Although married life was difficult for Monica, she maintained a cheerful disposition and prayed for the conversion of her pagan husband. Monica's prayer, witness and counsel helped other wives who found themselves in similar circumstances with equally difficult husbands.<sup>i</sup> In time, Monica's prayers for her husband bore rich fruit. He was baptized into the Church a year before his death in 371. Augustine, the oldest of the three children was fifteen. Monica, now a single mother, dedicated the rest of her life to raising her children alone.

Augustine soon began to assert his independence and became the new focus of Monica's prayers. He fathered a child out of wedlock and Monica was not at all happy with the woman he chose to live with. He began to practice the false religion of Manichaeism which further upset her Christian sensitivities. Her first impulse was to shun her son. Like Saint Joseph, troubled over Mary, peace came after a dream that strengthened her conviction that her son would eventually come around. She allowed Augustine to return home but constantly prayed for his conversion.<sup>ii</sup>

Augustine had a keen intellect, a fine education, and a wandering soul. As an adult, he left home without saying goodbye and moved to Milan to take a teaching position. Monica followed her son to Milan once she learned of his whereabouts. Ambrose was the bishop of Milan and he provided spiritual comfort for Monica as she saw her son abandon the false religion of Manichaeism and gradually come around to embracing Christianity. "After three years of struggle against his own desires and perplexities, Augustine succumbed to God's grace and was baptized in 387."<sup>iii</sup>

Monica is the patron saint of mothers.<sup>iv</sup> She never gave up on her son's spiritual conversion. She shed many tears over the choices and decisions he made as a teenager and a young adult. When she asked a bishop for help in bringing her son to Christianity, he urged her to remain steadfast in her prayers, stating it was "impossible that the son of such tears should perish."<sup>v</sup>

In the Gospel today, when Jesus saw the tears of a widow grieving the death of her only son, "he was moved with pity for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' He stepped forward and touched the coffin." The dead man was returned to life and "Jesus gave him to his mother" (Luke 7:13-15). Monica prayed for 17 years before her tears stopped. With Augustine's conversion to Christianity, the relationship between mother and son improved, and with a common spiritual bond, they became much closer.

The family set out to return to Africa where Augustine went on to become a priest and bishop with a profound impact on Christianity for the centuries to come. On the way home, Monica shared a profound mystical experience with her son. In his book, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, he relates what she told him: "Son, for myself I have no longer any pleasure in anything in this life. Now that my hopes in this world are satisfied, I do not know what more I want here or why I am here... The only thing I ask of you ... is that you make remembrance of me at the altar of the Lord wherever you are." Her prayers were answered, her mission in life complete, she died but was born to eternal life. As Jesus teaches, "I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

---

<sup>i</sup> [ewtn.com/catholicism/saints/monica-705](http://ewtn.com/catholicism/saints/monica-705)

<sup>ii</sup> [franciscanmedia.org/saint-monica/](http://franciscanmedia.org/saint-monica/)

<sup>iii</sup> [catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-monica-572](http://catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-monica-572)

<sup>iv</sup> [nationalshrine.org/blog/st-monica-the-patron-saint-of-mothers/](http://nationalshrine.org/blog/st-monica-the-patron-saint-of-mothers/)

<sup>v</sup> [catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-monica-572](http://catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-monica-572)