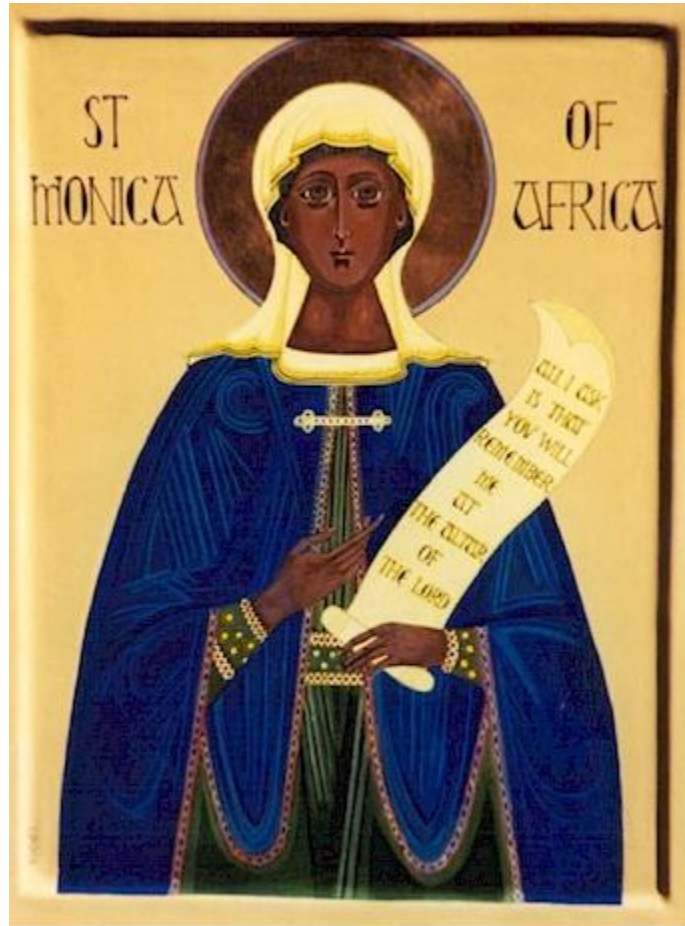


LIVES OF SAINTS

St Monica



Saint Monica, the mother of St Augustine of Hippo (June 15), was born in 322 in Tagaste, North Africa. Her parents were Christians, but little is known of her early life. Most of our information about her comes from Book IX of her son's CONFESSIONS.

St Monica was married to a pagan official named Patritius, who had a short temper and lived an immoral life. At first, her mother-in-law did not like her, but Monica won her over by her gentle disposition. Unlike many women of that time, she was never beaten by her husband. She said that Patritius never raised his hand against her because she always held her tongue, setting a guard over her mouth in his presence. (Ps. 38/39:1).

St Monica and Patritius had three children: St Augustine, Navigius and Perpetua. It was a source of great sorrow to her that Patritius would not permit them to be baptized. She worried about Augustine, who lived with a young woman in Carthage and had an illegitimate son with her. Her constant prayers and tears for her son had the effect of

converting her husband to Christ before his death. Augustine, however, continued on the path that led away from Christ.

While in Carthage, Augustine fell under the influence of the heretical Manichean sect. His mother was horrified and tried to turn him away from his error. She had a dream in which she was told to be patient and gentle with her son. Augustine, however, paid little attention to her arguments, and remained in his delusion for nine years. St Monica must have felt disheartened and disappointed, but she never gave up on him. She even tried to enlist the help of a bishop who had once been a Manichean himself, but he would not dispute with Augustine. He said he couldn't reason with the young man, because he was still attracted by the novelty of the heresy. He did reassure her saying, "Go on your way, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should be lost."

St Monica went to Rome with Augustine when he lectured there in 383. Later, he received an appointment to Milan, where he met St Ambrose (December 7) and was greatly impressed by his preaching. Bishop Ambrose came to have a high regard for St Monica, and often congratulated Augustine on having such a virtuous mother.

One day Augustine was reading the New Testament in a garden, and came to Romans 13:12-14. There and then Augustine decided to "cast off the works of darkness," and to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." He was baptized on the eve of Pascha in 387.

After his baptism, Augustine and his mother planned to return to Africa. They stopped to rest in Ostia, where St Monica fell asleep in the Lord at the age of fifty-six. She was buried at Ostia, and her holy relics were transferred to the crypt of a church in the sixth century. Nine centuries later, St Monica's relics were translated to Rome.

In the West, St Monica is considered the patron saint of wives and mothers whose husbands or sons have gone astray.

Source: OCA.org