

## HOLY HEROS

**SAINT MONICA (MOTHER), 332-387 - Feast Day: May 4th**

**SAINT AUGUSTINE (SON), 354-430 - Feast Day: August 28th**

or Aug 27

Our knowledge of St. Monica comes almost entirely from the writings of her much-loved son, the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine of Hippo. His relationship with his mother was a close one, especially during Monica's last years. Monica was born about the year 332 in Tagaste, North Africa, of a Christian family. As soon as Monica had reached marriageable age, her parents found a husband for her, the pagan Patricius. He was a man with a bad temper and their home was not a happy one. Monica endured his outbursts with a lot of patience, even though he spoke badly of Christians and their practices. The daily example of her gentleness and kindness finally had its rewards, and a year before his death, Patricius converted to Christianity.

Monica and Patricius had three children, (1) Navigius, who seems to have been a very well-behaved son, (2) Augustine, and (3) Perpetua, a daughter, who became a nun. Augustine, the more brilliant of the sons, was sent to Carthage so that he could develop his talents and become a man of culture. He was very smart, but he also spent very much time doing immoral things and rejecting God. This caused his mother great anguish. She continually fasted, prayed, and wept on his behalf. She implored the local bishop for help in winning him over, and he counseled her to be patient saying, "God's time will come."

Augustine was twenty-nine and a successful teacher when he decided to go to Rome. Monica did not want him to go, afraid that this would keep him even further away from loving God. However, the joyous day of Augustine's conversion came at last. When Monica finally found Augustine in Rome, he surprisingly told his mother that he would now adopt a celibate life and devote himself completely to God's service.

Soon after Augustine's conversion, Monica became ill. She knew that her work had been accomplished and that her life would soon be over. As Monica's strength failed, she said to Augustine: "I do not know what there is left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled. All I wished for was that I might see you a Catholic and a child of Heaven. God granted me even more than this in making you want to turn away from your evil living and consecrate yourself to God's service." Monica's death plunged her children into the deepest grief, especially Augustine, "the son of so many tears". It is the prayers of Monica herself that have been invoked by generations of the faithful who honor her as a special patroness of married women and as an example for Christian motherhood. Her feast day is May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Augustine devoted the rest of his life to serving God and always remembering his mother and the many prayers she had said for him. He put away all impurity and began to live in imitation of Jesus. He was baptized, became a priest, a bishop, a famous Catholic writer, founder of religious orders, and one of the greatest saints that ever lived. He became very devout and charitable, too. 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 practiced great poverty and supported the poor, 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 with his holy life he certainly made up for the sins he committed before his conversion. His feast day is August 28th.