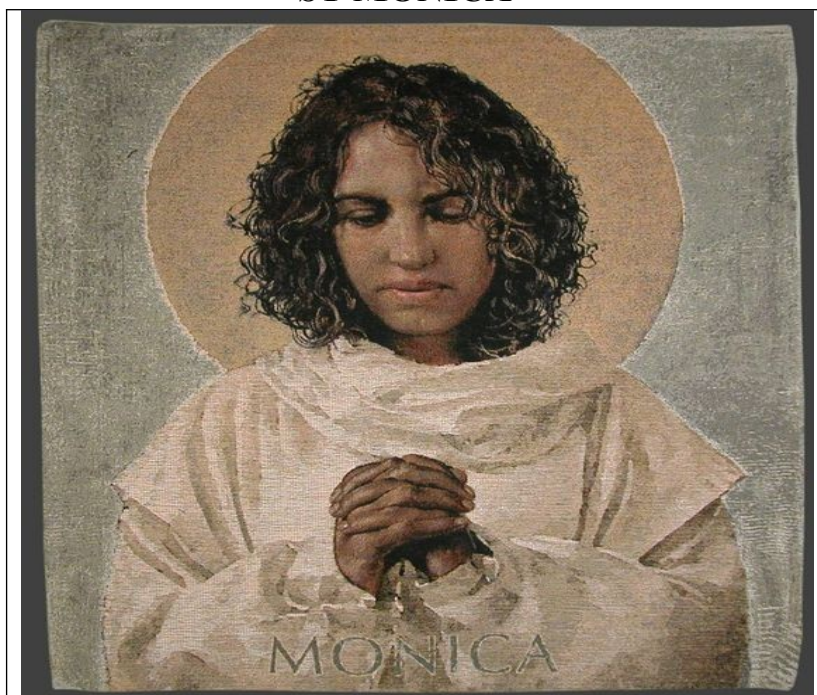


ST MONICA



St. Monica was, above all, a stubborn mother.

Much of what we know of St. Monica revolves around her son, St. Augustine, and the long seventeen years in which she prayed and laboured for the salvation of his soul.

She was married at a young age to a very unfaithful government official with a violent temper. Years of Monica's patience and prayer converted him to Christianity just before he died. She prayed unceasingly for her children as well, especially for her brilliant but wayward son, Augustine. Priests learned to avoid her because of her persistence in asking for prayers for him.

She followed Augustine as he pursued studies in Carthage and Rome, praying at shrines and chapels the whole way. They both finally arrived at Milan, where they met St Ambrose. It was under Ambrose's guidance that Augustine fulfilled his potential and became one of the most brilliant writers and thinkers the Church has ever known. After 17 years of constant prayer, Monica saw her son baptized when he was 32.

In St. Augustine's *Confessions* is recorded his last hours with his mother, St. Monica. He tenderly speaks of her, and of the final time they spent together in Ostia on the Tiber. St. Augustine writes: "in the course of our conversation that day, the world and its pleasures lost all their attraction for us. My mother said: 'Son, as far as I am concerned, nothing in this life now gives me any pleasure. I do not know why I am still here, since I have no further hopes in this world. I did have one reason for wanting to live a little longer: to see you become a Catholic Christian before I died. God has lavished his gifts on me in that respect, for I know that you have even renounced earthly happiness to be his servant. So what am I doing here?'"

St. Monica is the patron saint of alcoholics, victims of abuse and adultery, widows, and mothers facing family difficulties.