



## **MONICA 331-387**

About 331 A.D. in North Africa, a baby girl was born who would become the mother of one of the most influential Christians of all times. Monica was born into a moderately wealthy family and raised by an old Christian maidservant, who also had raised Monica's father. Monica was raised in the Christian faith and later given in marriage to Patricius, who was not a Christian. Monica sought to win Patricius to the Lord by her conduct, patience and meekness following the advice of I Peter 3. Her mother-in-law came to believe in the Lord, but Patricius only found faith towards the very end of his life.

Monica prayed that all of her family might eventually come to Christ. She attempted to bring her children up in the ways of the Lord, and it pained her to see them stray from the truth she had taught them. Her most promising son, Augustine, was given an excellent education. But he ignored his mother's warnings against youthful lusts and pursued a life of self-gratification and immorality while continuing his classical education. He lived with a woman and fathered a child. Monica felt she didn't have the words to convince her son of the truth of Christianity, but she determined never to stop praying that he would turn to God.

When Augustine went to Italy to teach, Monica, by then a widow, followed him there. In Milan she attended the church pastured by Ambrose and rejoiced when Augustine was befriended by Ambrose and eventually became a Christian himself. Monica died in 387 at the age of 56. In his *Confessions*, Augustine spoke of his grief and weeping for the mother "now gone from my sight, who for years had wept over me, that I might live in your (God's) sight." However, Monica died a happy woman for she had seen her prayers answered, and both her husband and her son had become believers.

Augustine was only thirty-three at the time of his mother's death. For many years afterwards, he served Christ and His church. In later years Augustine could look back on his life and recognize the importance of his mother's perseverance in prayer to his own salvation and ministry. However, neither Augustine nor Monica could have foreseen that Augustine's own ministry would continue over the centuries and even influence such leaders as Luther and Calvin in reforming, purifying and strengthening the church.