

Monica - Because of her name and place of birth, Monica is assumed to have been born in Thagaste (present-day Souk Ahras, Algeria).[3] She is believed to have been a Berber on the basis of her name.[4] She was married early in life to Patricius, a Roman pagan, who held an official position in Tagaste. Patricius had a violent temper and appears to have been of dissolute habits; apparently his mother was the same way. Monica's alms, deeds and prayer habits annoyed Patricius, but it is said that he always held her in respect.[5]

Monica had three children who survived infancy: sons Augustine and Navigius and daughter Perpetua. Unable to secure baptism for them, she grieved heavily when Augustine fell ill. In her distress she asked Patricius to allow Augustine to be baptized; he agreed, then withdrew this consent when the boy recovered.

But Monica's joy and relief at Augustine's recovery turned to anxiety as he misspent his renewed life being wayward and, as he himself tells us, lazy. He was finally sent to school at Madauros. He was 17 and studying rhetoric in Carthage when Patricius died.[5]

Augustine had become a Manichaean at Carthage; when upon his return home he shared his views regarding Manichaeism, Monica drove him away from her table. However, she is said to have experienced a vision that convinced her to reconcile with him

At this time she visited a certain (unnamed) holy bishop who consoled her with the now famous words, "the child of those tears shall never perish." Monica followed her wayward son to Rome, where he had gone secretly; when she arrived he had already gone to Milan, but she followed him. Here she found Ambrose and through him she ultimately had the joy of seeing Augustine convert to Christianity after 17 years of resistance.

In his book Confessions, Augustine wrote of a peculiar practice of his mother in which she "brought to certain oratories, erected in the memory of the saints, offerings of porridge, bread, water and wine." [6] When she moved to Milan, the bishop Ambrose forbade her to use the offering of wine, since "it might be an occasion of gluttony for those who were already given to drink". So, Augustine wrote of her:

In place of a basket filled with fruits of the earth, she had learned to bring to the oratories of the martyrs a heart full of purer petitions, and to give all that she could to the poor--so that the communion of the Lord's body might be rightly celebrated in those places where, after the example of his passion, the martyrs had been sacrificed and crowned.

— Confessions 6.2.2

Mother and son spent 6 months of true peace at Rus Cassiciacum (present-day Cassago Brianza) after which Augustine was baptized in the church of St. John the Baptist at Milan. Africa claimed them, however, and they set out on their journey, stopping at Civitavecchia and at Ostia. Here death overtook Monica, and Augustine's grief inspired the finest pages of his Confessions.

Augustine –

Augustine was born in the year 354 AD in the municipium of Thagaste (now Souk Ahras, Algeria) in Roman Africa.] His mother, Monica was a devout Christian; his father Patricius was a Pagan who converted to Christianity on his deathbed. Scholars generally agree that Augustine and his family were Berbers, an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa but that they were heavily Romanized, speaking only Latin at home as a matter of pride and dignity. In his writings, Augustine leaves some information as to the consciousness of his African heritage. For example, he refers to Apuleius as "the most notorious of us Africans," to Ponticianus as "a country man of ours, insofar as being African,"[35] and to Faustus of Mileve as "an African Gentleman."[]

Augustine's family name, Aurelius, suggests that his father's ancestors were freedmen. Augustine's family had been Roman, from a legal standpoint, for at least a century when he was born. It is assumed that his mother, Monica, was of Berber origin, on the basis of her name.

At the age of 11, Augustine was sent to school at Madaurus a small Numidian city about 19 miles (31 km) south of Thagaste. There he became familiar with Latin literature, as well as pagan beliefs and practices. His first insight into the nature of sin occurred when he and a number of friends stole fruit they did not want from a neighborhood garden. He tells this story in his autobiography, *The Confessions*. He remembers that he did not steal the fruit because he was hungry, but because "it was not permitted." His very nature, he says, was flawed. "It was foul, and I loved it. I loved my own error—not that for which I erred, but the error itself." [41] From this incident he concluded the human person is naturally inclined to sin, and in need of the grace of Christ.

At the age of 17, through the generosity of his fellow citizen Romanianus, Augustine went to Carthage to continue his education in rhetoric. It was while he was a student in Carthage that he read Cicero's dialogue *Hortensius* (now lost), which he described as leaving a lasting impression and sparking his interest in philosophy.[43] Although raised as a Christian, Augustine left the church to follow the Manichaean religion, much to his mother's despair.[44] As a youth Augustine lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a time, associating with young men who boasted of their sexual exploits. The need to gain their acceptance forced inexperienced boys like Augustine to seek or make up stories about sexual experiences.[45] It was during this period that he uttered his famous prayer, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet." [46]

At about the age of 19, Augustine began an affair with a young woman in Carthage. Though his mother wanted him to marry a person of his class, the woman remained his lover [47] for over fifteen years [48] and gave birth to his son Adeodatus, [49] who was viewed as extremely intelligent by his contemporaries. In 385, Augustine ended his relationship with his lover in order to prepare himself to marry a ten-year-old heiress. (He had to wait for two years because the legal age of marriage for women was twelve.) By the time he was able to marry her, however, he instead decided to become a celibate priest. [48][50]

Augustine was from the beginning a brilliant student, with an eager intellectual curiosity, but he never mastered Greek [51]—he tells us that his first Greek teacher was a brutal man who constantly beat his students, and Augustine rebelled and refused to study. By the time he realized that he needed to know Greek, it was too late; and although he acquired a smattering of the language, he was never eloquent with it. However, his mastery of Latin was another matter. He became an expert both in the eloquent use of the language and in the use of clever arguments to make his points.

Augustine taught grammar at Thagaste during 373 and 374. The following year he moved to Carthage to conduct a school of rhetoric and would remain there for the next nine years.[42] Disturbed by unruly students in Carthage, he moved to establish a school in Rome, where he believed the best and brightest rhetoricians practiced, in 383. However, Augustine was disappointed with the apathetic reception. It was the custom for students to pay their fees to the professor on the last day of the term, and many students attended faithfully all term, and then did not pay.

Manichaeian friends introduced him to the prefect of the City of Rome, Symmachus, who while traveling through Carthage had been asked by the imperial court at Milan[52] to provide a rhetoric professor. Augustine won the job and headed north to take his position in Milan in late 384. Thirty years old, he had won the most visible academic position in the Latin world at a time when such posts gave ready access to political careers.

Although Augustine showed some fervour for Manichaeism, he was never an initiate or "elect", but an "auditor", the lowest level in the sect's hierarchy.[52] While still at Carthage a disappointing meeting with the Manichaeian Bishop, Faustus of Mileve, a key exponent of Manichaeian theology, started Augustine's scepticism of Manichaeism.[52] In Rome, he reportedly turned away from Manichaeism, embracing the scepticism of the New Academy movement. Because of his education, Augustine had great rhetorical prowess and was very knowledgeable of the philosophies behind many faiths.[53] At Milan, his mother's religiosity, Augustine's own studies in Neoplatonism, and his friend Simplicianus all urged him towards Christianity.[42] Initially Augustine was not strongly influenced by Christianity and its ideologies, but after coming in contact with Ambrose of Milan, Augustine reevaluated himself and was forever changed.

Like Augustine, Ambrose was a master of rhetoric, but older and more experienced.[54] Augustine was very much influenced by Ambrose, even more than by his own mother and others he admired. Augustine arrived in Milan and was immediately taken under the wing by Ambrose. Within his Confessions, Augustine states, "That man of God received me as a father would, and welcomed my coming as a good bishop should." [55]

Soon, their relationship grew, as Augustine wrote, "And I began to love him, of course, not at the first as a teacher of the truth, for I had entirely despaired of finding that in thy Church—but as a friendly man." [55] Augustine visited Ambrose in order to see if Ambrose was one of the greatest speakers and rhetoricians in the world. More interested in his speaking skills than the topic of speech, Augustine quickly discovered that Ambrose was a spectacular orator. Eventually, Augustine says that he was spiritually led into the faith of Christianity.[55]

Augustine's mother had followed him to Milan and arranged a marriage for him. Although Augustine accepted this marriage, for which he had to abandon his concubine, he was deeply hurt by the loss of his lover. He wrote, "My mistress being torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, my heart, which clave to her, was racked, and wounded, and bleeding." Augustine confessed that he was not a lover of wedlock so much as a slave of lust, so he procured another concubine since he had to wait two years until his fiancée came of age. However, his emotional wound was not healed, even began to fester.[56]

There is evidence that Augustine may have considered this former relationship to be equivalent to marriage.[57] In his Confessions, he admitted that the experience eventually produced a decreased sensitivity to pain. Augustine eventually broke off his engagement to his eleven-year-old fiancée, but never renewed his relationship with either of his concubines. Alypius of Thagaste steered Augustine away from marriage, saying that they could not live a life together in the love of wisdom if he married. Augustine looked back years later on the life at Cassiciacum, a villa outside of Milan where he gathered with his followers, and described it as *Christianae vitae otium* – the Christian life of leisure.[58].

In late August of 386,[60] at the age of 31, after having heard and been inspired and moved by the story of Ponticianus's and his friends' first reading of the life of Saint Anthony of the Desert, Augustine converted to Christianity. As Augustine later told it, **his conversion was prompted by a childlike voice he heard telling him to "take up and read" (Latin: tolle, lege)**, which he took as a divine command to open the Bible and read the first thing he saw. Augustine read from Paul's Epistle to the Romans – the "Transformation of Believers" section, consisting of chapters 12 to 15 – wherein Paul outlines how the Gospel transforms believers, and the believers' resulting behavior. The specific part to which Augustine opened his Bible was Romans chapter 13, verses 13 and 14, to wit:

Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.[61]

He later wrote an account of his conversion – his very transformation, as Paul described – in his Confessions (Latin: *Confessiones*), which has since become a classic of Christian theology and a key text in the history of autobiography. This work is an outpouring of thanksgiving and penitence. Although it is written as an account of his life, the Confessions also talks about the nature of time, causality, free will, and other important philosophical topics.[62] The following is taken from that work:

Late have I loved Thee, O Lord; and behold,
Thou wast within and I without, and there I sought Thee.
Thou was with me when I was not with Thee.
Thou didst call, and cry, and burst my deafness.
Thou didst gleam, and glow, and dispell my blindness.
Thou didst touch me, and I burned for Thy peace.
For Thyself Thou hast made us,
And restless our hearts until in Thee they find their ease.
Late have I loved Thee, Thou Beauty ever old and ever new.[62]

Ambrose baptized Augustine, along with his son Adeodatus, in Milan on Easter Vigil, April 24–25, 387.[63] A year later, in 388, Augustine completed his apology On the Holiness of the Catholic Church.[52] That year, also, Adeodatus and Augustine returned home to Africa.[42] Augustine's mother Monica died at Ostia, Italy, as they prepared to embark for Africa.[64] Upon their arrival, they began a life of aristocratic leisure at Augustine's family's property.[65][66] Soon after, Adeodatus, too, died.[67] Augustine then sold his patrimony and gave the money to the poor. The only thing he kept was the family house, which he converted into a monastic foundation for himself and a group of friends.[42]

In 391 Augustine was ordained a priest in Hippo Regius (now Annaba), in Algeria. He became a famous preacher (more than 350 preserved sermons are believed to be authentic), and was noted for combating the Manichaean religion, to which he had formerly adhered.[52]

In 395, he was made coadjutor Bishop of Hippo, and became full Bishop shortly thereafter,[68] hence the name "Augustine of Hippo"; and he gave his property to the church of Thagaste.[69] He remained in that position until his death in 430. He wrote his autobiographical Confessions in 397–398. His work The City of God was written to console his fellow Christians shortly after the Visigoths had sacked Rome in 410.

Augustine worked tirelessly in trying to convince the people of Hippo to convert to Christianity. Though he had left his monastery, he continued to lead a monastic life in the episcopal residence. He left a regula for his monastery that led to his designation as the "patron saint of regular clergy." [70]

Much of Augustine's later life was recorded by his friend Possidius, bishop of Calama (present-day Guelma, Algeria), in his Sancti Augustini Vita. Possidius admired Augustine as a man of powerful intellect and a stirring orator who took every opportunity to defend Christianity against its detractors. Possidius also described Augustine's personal traits in detail, drawing a portrait of a man who ate sparingly, worked tirelessly, despised gossip, shunned the temptations of the flesh, and exercised prudence in the financial stewardship of his see.

Shortly before Augustine's death the Vandals, a Germanic tribe that had converted to Arianism, invaded Roman Africa. The Vandals besieged Hippo in the spring of 430, when Augustine entered his final illness. According to Possidius, one of the few miracles attributed to Augustine, the healing of an ill man, took place during the siege.[71]:43 According to Possidius, Augustine spent his final days in prayer and repentance, requesting that the penitential Psalms of David be hung on his walls so that he could read them. He directed that the library of the church in Hippo and all the books therein should be carefully preserved. He died on 28 August 430.[71]:57 Shortly after his death, the Vandals

lifted the siege of Hippo, but they returned not long thereafter and burned the city. They destroyed all of it but Augustine's cathedral and library, which they left untouched.[72]

Augustine was canonized by popular acclaim, and later recognized as a Doctor of the Church in 1298 by Pope Boniface VIII.[73] His feast day is 28 August, the day on which he died. He is considered the patron saint of brewers, printers, theologians, sore eyes, and a number of cities and dioceses.[9]



