St Monica

322? – 387
Feast day: 27th August

"Son, nothing in this world now affords me delight. I do not know what there is now for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled."

St Monica

S.D.C.

**S O C I E T A S
D O C T R I N Æ
C H R I S T I A N Æ**

w w w . s d c . m e . u k

I was born in the year 322 at Tagaste in Algeria. I was a Christian, but my parents gave me in marriage to a pagan, Patricius, who lived in my hometown of Tagaste in North Africa. Patricius had some redeeming features, but he had a violent temper and was licentious. I also had to bear with a difficult mother-in law who lived in my home. Patricius criticized me because of my charity and piety, but always respected me. My prayers and example finally won my husband and my mother-in law to Christianity. My husband died in 371, one year after his baptism.

I had three children who survived infancy. Two of them, Perpetua and Navigius entered the Religious Life. My oldest, Augustine was 17 at the time of his father's death. Augustine was then a rhetoric student in Carthage. I was very distressed then because my son had accepted the Manichean heresy and was living an immoral life. For a while, I refused to let him eat or sleep in my house. Then one night I had a vision that assured me Augustine would return to the faith. From that time on I stayed close to my son, praying and fasting for him. I had to pray for him for 17 years, begging the prayers of priests who, for a while, tried to avoid me because of my persistence at this seemingly hopeless endeavour.

When Augustine was 29, he decided to go to Rome to teach rhetoric, and then to Milan to take on a professorship. I followed him there. In Milan I came under the influence of the bishop, St Ambrose, whom my son admired and who also became my spiritual director. I accepted his advice in everything and had the humility to give up some practices that had become second nature to me.

My son Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose in 387 after a three year struggle. I died later that same year, on the way back to Africa from Rome in the Italian town of Ostia.