

Today we celebrate the memorial of St. Monica.

Monica was born in northern Africa around the year 322 AD. Her name is the only name of a saint in the northern African language called "Berber."

Her husband was a pagan, who was annoyed by her religion and piety - but always respected her ... and her pagan mother-in-law also lived with her.

She had three children who survived infancy - the most famous being St. Augustine, whose memorial we celebrate tomorrow.

Monica shed many a tear over her pagan husband, who was eventually baptized and became a Christian a year before his death.

Her son, Augustine, took up with an eastern cult that was a mixture of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

Monica followed him everywhere he went - across northern Africa, then to Rome, and finally to Milan.

After several years, Augustine was baptized, and less than a year later - on a trip that was to be their return to northern Africa - Monica died in a port town in Italy.

As she lay dying, she told Augustine: "Put this body anywhere. Do not let care about it disturb you. I ask only this: that you remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you may be."

After her death, Augustine recounts that she was buried according to the Italian custom at the time, which included celebrating the Eucharist at the grave site prior to burial.

The town of Santa Monica in California is named for her - and outside of that town is a spring that is popularly called "the tears of St. Monica."

A prayer group known as St. Monica's Sodality offers prayers for family members who have left the faith.

Monica's life reminds us that nothing is beyond prayer ... and St. Monica certainly exhausted her life in prayer.

As we approach this altar to receive the sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us place our cares at the foot of the altar and trust in God's grace to overcome what we cannot achieve through human effort.

May the example and the intercession of St. Monica help us to recognize the power of God in our daily lives and the lives of those we love.