

## **St. Augustine and St. Monica**

### **Objectives**

- ❖ To learn about how God accepts the prayers of the righteous as well as a sinner's repentance.

### **References**

- ❖ "Samples of the life of Righteous and Saints" HG Anba Youannis
- ❖ "The Fathers and the Saints of the Church" St. George Church- Alexandria
- ❖ "St. Augustine of Hippo" Catholic Encyclopaedia

### **Scriptural Verse**

- ❖ "Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me" (Songs 6: 5)

### **Lesson Guidelines**

#### **Life of St. Monica**

- ❖ Born in the year 332 AD in North Africa and was raised as a faithful Christian.
- ❖ Her faith and prayers grew with her and she was very distinguished in all aspects.
- ❖ She was married to a pagan evil man who deceived her parents by his high position.
- ❖ She lived with him, his evil mother and servants. She did not complain but discovered the cross she would carry and never failed to show them the beauty of Christianity.
- ❖ Augustine was the eldest of her three children who were her delight in this tough life.
- ❖ She is known by her faith in prayers. With her fervent prayers, she was granted the belief of her husband and the repentance of her son.
- ❖ She rejoiced with the first fruit of her prayer, the belief of her husband, but not for a long time as he became sick and died to leave her a widow in the middle of her youth.
- ❖ She consecrated her life to serving her children and worshipping God with prayers and charitable deeds. St. Augustine said, "She took care of us as a mother to us all and served us as a daughter to us all."
- ❖ She was granted the grace of tears that distinguished her among the saints of the church.
- ❖ Her son Augustine deviated from the right path. She put her worries in front of God as words and counselling were of no value with her arrogant son.
- ❖ She asked the Bishop to convince him. He refused and said that it is useless to speak with an arrogant man who knows how to debate leaning on his intelligence. But told her the beautiful saying: "Go in peace for the son of so many tears will not perish".
- ❖ She got the fruits of her tears after 20 years. She went to Milan to attend Augustine's Baptism. She accompanied him to Africa and told him that she wants nothing from the world as she got all her wishes.
- ❖ She became sick and went in peace to her beloved Lord Jesus Christ at 56 years old. St. Augustine said that they were talking together about eternal life and considered this talk before her departure as the holiest time of all his life.

## Life of St. Augustine

- ❖ Born in 354 AD in North Africa, Had a sister (became a nun and head of a nunnery), and a brother (got married and beheld a righteous family).
- ❖ He studied in his country the primary and intermediate levels and went to Carthage to complete his studies and became a teacher.
- ❖ He worked as a brilliant teacher for 12 years in Milan (North Italy).
- ❖ His mother taught him Christianity as a little boy. However, his studies with the Pagan teachers and his reading to their books and philosophy erased it from his mind.
- ❖ He immersed himself into the worldly pleasure and had an illegitimate child. He said about himself: “I was ashamed not to do the evil deeds openly”.
- ❖ The tearful prayers of his righteous mother started to work in him. He listened to the preaching of St. Ambrose the bishop and began to read the Holy books. He felt the calling of God to a holy life of purity, humility and poverty.
- ❖ He read about the life of St. Anthony and loved him. He felt inferior when he remembered the righteousness and teaching of his mother.
- ❖ He felt sorrow for his life, but God enlightened his mind to read in the Epistle of St. Paul “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep... let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13: 11- 12).
- ❖ He felt the call of God, so he decided to repent and vow to complete his life in virginity.
- ❖ He left his job, went to a far place and stayed in a friend’s palace to read and study the holy books. His mother, a friend and two disciples stayed with him. He was not yet baptized.
- ❖ He was baptized at 33 years old by St. Ambrose and dedicated himself to God.
- ❖ When his mother departed, he wept over her and went back to his country, sold his properties and gave the money to the poor. He established a monastery for monks and stayed in it.
- ❖ He struggled in fasting and prayers with good deeds in a highly ascetic life.
- ❖ He became very well known and people came from everywhere asking his guidance.
- ❖ The Old Bishop of Hippo asked for his help. He appointed him a Bishop’s helper and died after one year. St. Augustine succeeded him in the Bishopric at 42 years old.
- ❖ As a Bishop, he continued to live his ascetic monastic life. He established a monastery in his bishopric site and urged his priests to live a monastic life. He became the father of monks in North Africa and loved the poor and the needy to the point that once he sold the vessels of the church to help release some believers from their capture.
- ❖ At 72, he appointed a helper and asked his priests to ordain him a bishop after his departure.
- ❖ He wrote around 232 books in history like his confessions, philosophy, apologetics, explanation of the holy books and in asceticism and virtues.
- ❖ He departed in peace in the year 430, at 76 years old.
- ❖ May his blessing and the blessings of his mother St. Monica be with us all.

## **Discussion Points**

St. Augustine said: “When I was a young man, I sought to understand the meaning of the holy books through my intellectual powers and not through humble petition to God... and so I closed the door leading to God with my pride and arrogance. Instead of knocking and having the door opened to me, my search was the reason for the door’s closing... I demanded with pride that which only the humble can obtain.”

Discuss how arrogance and pride can push us away from God.

## **Conclusion**

After searching for the truth, St. Augustine realized that:

- ❖ The human brain is weak and cannot understand the divine unless guided by a divine Power and that the church is that power.
- ❖ The secret of Incarnation is humbleness and that pride and arrogance in thinking pull the person into the depth of ignorance and sin.

## **Activities / Workshop**

St. Augustine said about St. Ambrose: “That man of God received me as a father and showed me kindness. I began to love him, at first not as a teacher of truth, but as a person who was kind to me.”

Give examples of the different ways of God to attract people

Examples: St. Paul (Appeared to him), St. Pachomius (Kindness of the people in Tiba), St. Anthony (By His word), St. Paul (death of a great man), etc.