

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Freed to do a Monica

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Grace to you and peace from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Monica is the patron saint of girdles, tears, and wayward husbands.

It's true. Clearly, by looking at her life only briefly, we see why she is the patron saint of tears, wayward husbands, and how girdles got in there I don't know, and I don't really care to know, although I am thankful that there is a patron saint for girdles, and I can certainly see the relationship between girdles, tears, and wayward husbands, and that we get one-stop patron sainting for all three is truly a help for those afflicted with any of the above.

Now obviously, there was more to Monica's life than the misfortune of the aforementioned adversities in her life. In fact, she is remembered because she was the mother of St. Augustine.

Now I gotta confess, I spent some time troubled by the reason for her remembrance. I mean, if you look at other saints whom we recall, we get Philipp Melancthon, renewer of the Church, Florence Nightingale and Clara Maass, renewers of society, Kaj Munk, Danish pastor and martyr, and so forth, they are known for what they've done; renewing and pasturing and martyring. Monica is remembered only because she happened to mother somebody whose name we know better than hers.

Perhaps my concern stems out of a feminist awareness that all too often women define ourselves and are defined by others by our relationships to others; so and so's mother, or so and so's spouse, for example. My mother spent much of her life being known primarily as Pastor Madsen's wife. That ain't all bad, by any means, but don't stop there! Mom was a flag maker, pottery-baker, Red Cross volunteer, caterer, and proud avoider of Ladies' Aid! I think she'd spin in her grave if one day we would look in our date books and find

“Marjorie Madsen, wife of George Madsen”, or even worse, “Mother of Anna!” She’d much prefer something more colorful like, “Marjorie Madsen, patron saint of girdles, tears and wayward husbands.”

Not that she bears any of those afflictions, mind me, but she’d figure somebody must and she’d be happy to help if she could.

So do you see my quandary? Do you see my concern about Monica’s epitaph? So as I was harrumphing around the house after I had become first aware of Monica, my husband, who was marvelously intuitive, noticed that I was not happy, and asked why. “Monica is only remembered because she was Augustine’s mother!” I grumped. “It’s only because of her relationship with others that we pay her any mind at all.” And he said, quietly wise, “Isn’t that the point of a saint?”

Isn’t it indeed. Of course it’s the point of a saint. That’s why every reading of today concerns not the needs of one person, but people’s necessary relationship to others, be it in terms of justice and kindness, comfort and mercy, healing and guiding. It’s as if our texts tell us that we are supposed to be known by our relationship to others.

Much, if not all that we know of Monica, comes from the pen of Augustine, who speaks very fondly of his mother. Her husband really was wayward—violent and disposed to “dissolute living.” Augustine testifies that she was the sole source of stability in his boyhood home. And she did shed many tears, not only about her husband, but mostly about Augustine, who tended to take after his father, particularly in terms of enjoying the fantasies of the flesh.

Monica was quite concerned with Augustine’s propensity to enjoy the passing pleasures of life, oh, like concubines, for example. She was also plagued with the notion that he was not baptized, and when he became a

Manichean, she fell into despair. Matters became so strained between Monica and her son that he finally moved out and into the home of his patron.

In 384 Augustine left Africa, intentionally not telling his mother of his departure, and fled to Rome. But Monica followed him. When she arrived in Rome, she discovered that he had left for Milan, and so she picked up her bags and followed him again. There in Milan they reunited, made amends (after she kicked out two illicit lovers), and the story ends quite happily with Augustine being baptized. They left Milan together to return to Africa, and on the way home, in 387, Monica died.

To our ears, we might look at this tale and think that Monica might have had a few “boundary issues.” After all, when Augustine arrived in Africa he was thirty years old, for goodness sake. Now it is a happy thing to be close to one’s mother. I am, and I invited her- begged her, really- to live with me. But “invite,” we might figure, is the operative word.

However, it is possible that in our stress on healthy boundaries, we might run the risk of not intervening when we ought, of giving up on our concern, of being afraid to push ourselves onto those who may have lost hope themselves but in whom we never will.

See, Monica understood what we mean when we speak of the “communion of the saints.” Who needs your tears? Who’s stuck still wearing girdles? And what are you going to do about it?

So we’re got a community here at Augustana. Who needs your persistence? Who is wayward? Who needs your tears? Who’s stuck still wearing girdles? And what are you going to do about it?

Not because you have to do something about it. Not because you feel guilty into doing something about it.

But because on Easter Jesus freed you to do something about it. You get to do something about it. When he sprung from the grave, Jesus said, “Hey. I may be alive, but there still is waywardness in the world, not to mention the tears and girdles. People still live in Good Fridays. Let this empty tomb open you to a little risk, and give you a few boundary issues. Go do a Monica,” Jesus tells us. May all your epitaphs read your name,

and then mother to, or child of, or friend to, justice-seeker for, kindness-giver to. For thanks to Jesus, through our relationship to him we cannot help but be in a relationship to others. And that indeed, is good news, and a fine reason to honor a saint.

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

FACULTY RECOGNITION AWARD - ASA will be awarding the Faculty Recognition Award on Friday, May 5th, during worship.

SENIOR SPEAKERS - Sign-up for senior speakers for 2006-07 school term has begun. The sign-up sheet is on the Narthex table. Senior who are going to be off-campus during either semester are encouraged to select a Friday when they are on campus.

MIDNIGHT MADNESS - Our Savior's Lutheran Church is again opening it's doors to Augie students on **Sunday, May 14th and Monday, May 15th**, for study areas during finals. Study space will be available from 6 pm to 2 am each night. Snack and beverages are provided as well as well as a late night meal of 'comfort food' from 11 - 12 pm.

FR. MIKE'S 2ND ANNUAL 1K "RUN" - The Vikings and the Cougars are teaming up for this 'challenging event'. Come on over to Christ the King parish (26th and Lake Ave.) **at 4 pm on Wed., May 17th**. Sign up on the Chapel Narthex table. T-shirts available to participants.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Friday (5)	Worship, 10 am - Angie Hummel, Sr. Speaker; Faculty Recognition Award
Sunday (7)	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Monday (8)	Worship, 10 am - Peg Preston, Hist
Tuesday (9)	Koinonia, 10 am
Wednesday (10)	Holy Communion, 10 am - Jim Bies; ASA Inauguration; Women's Choir
Friday (12)	Worship, 10 am - Celebration of Intern Sarah!!
Sunday (14)	Worship, 11 am - Sarah Sumner-Eisenbraun
Sunday (21)	Baccalaureate, 10 am - Elmen Center Commencement, 2 pm - Arena