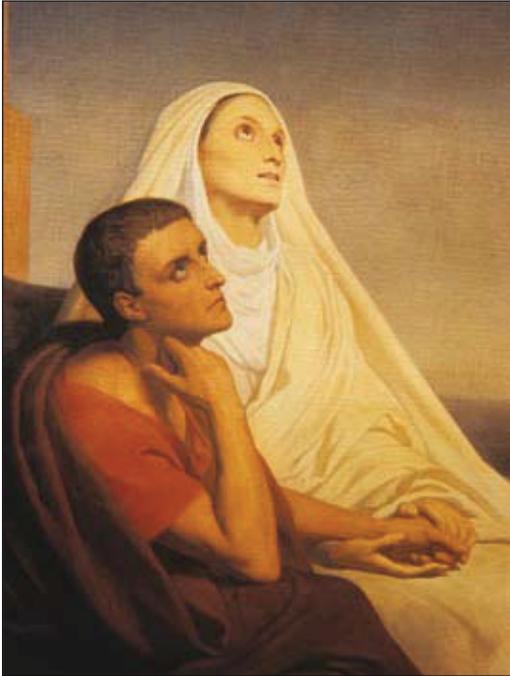


“I HAVE MY MOTHER TO THANK FOR WHAT I HAVE BECOME AND THE WAY THAT I GOT THERE!”

St. Augustine



Independent of age or social status, any woman can become a mother for priests. This type of motherhood is not only for mothers of families, but is just as possible for an unmarried girl, a widow, or for someone who is ill. It is especially pertinent for missionaries and religious sisters who have given their lives entirely to God for the sanctification of others. John Paul II even thanked a child for her motherly help: *“I also express my gratitude to Bl. Jacinta for the sacrifices and prayers offered for the Holy Father, whom she saw suffering greatly.”* (13 May 2000)

Every priest has a birth mother, and often she is a spiritual mother for her children as well. For example, Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pope Pius X, visited his 70-year-old mother after being ordained a bishop. She kissed her son’s ring and, suddenly pensive, pointed out her own simple silver wedding band saying, *“Yes, Giuseppe, you would not be wearing that ring if I had not first worn mine.”* Pope St. Pius X rightfully confirms his experience that, *“Every vocation to the priesthood comes from the heart of God, but it goes through the heart of a mother!”*

One sees this particularity well in the life of St. Monica. Augustine, who lost his faith at the age of 19 while studying in Carthage, later wrote in his famous “Confessions” regarding his mother: *“For love of me, she cried more tears than a mother would over the bodily death of her son. Nine years passed in which I wallowed in the slime of that deep pit and the darkness of falsehood. Yet that pious widow desisted not all the hours of her supplications, to bewail my case unto Thee where her prayers entered into Thy presence.”*

After his conversion, Augustine said thankfully, *“My holy mother never abandoned me. She brought me forth in her flesh, that I might be born to this temporal light, and in her heart, that I might be born to life eternal.”*

St. Augustine always desired to have his mother present at his philosophical discussions. She listened attentively and sometimes intervened with such fine intuition that the scholars who had gathered were astounded by her inspired responses to intricate questions. It should come as no surprise then that Augustine described himself as *her* “disciple of philosophy”!