

REFLECTION**Son of Tears****By Guillermo de Carndonagh**

The modestly attired woman stood patiently on the causeway. Around her swirled the busy activities of the port. A South wind blew gritty clouds of sand from the land and the city about her ankles. Her face was grave and stained with tears. In secret, her oldest son had run away to the capital some four hundred miles to the north. It was her intention to follow him.

He was twenty-nine and a source of pride and pain. At seventeen he had begun his studies here in the port city and soon stood in first place amongst his peers eventually becoming a prominent academic. But sadly he simultaneously associated himself with a cult and also became involved with a woman who bore him a son. Now he had run away to the great capital to the north.

His younger brother and sister were so different; the former a stable family man and his sister a vowed religious. But this oldest son was a source of pain and tears.

The stay in the capital was short lived and soon another journey of more than three hundred miles was made to a regional capital even further north. The woman was not deterred and despite the difficulties of travel followed her son to this new place. Here she found herself in a place where the customs were very different and even the practices of the church community were strange. But she persevered in prayer and in tears and at age thirty-two her son was converted and restored to life in the church. For fifteen long years she had begged the Lord for the soul of her son and lived to see her prayers answered. She died about six months later and so did not live to see him ordained priest and then bishop.

The loss of a family member son, daughter, brother, sister, spouse to the enticements of the world is not a modern problem. It is a problem of human existence, and those who are faithful can often do only what this persistent woman did. One can pray and witness by their life to the fruitfulness of loving Christ and being faithful to His Church. Because St. Monica struggled so diligently and long for the soul of her son St. Augustine, she is an appropriate model and intercessor for those whose loved ones have left the Church. The human struggle that she experienced in the fourth century is very congruent with that which many of us experience. And our only recourse is like hers to persevere daily in prayer.

"Collect. {May 4, St. Monica, widow} O God, the Comforter of the sorrowful and the salvation of them that hope in Thee, who didst mercifully receive the loving tears of blessed Monica for the conversion of her son Augustine: grant us through their joint intercession to bewail our sins and to find merciful grace from Thee. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost"