

Sibylle Rett - An "Angel" who Supports the Carmelite Missions

Sibylle Rett, formerly a social worker and teacher, has been a professional watercolor artist for the past two decades. Sibylle's work can best be described as expressions of life, its intrigues and mysteries. Sibylle's subjects have included scenes that project the harmony of nature. Her distinctive images of people present gentle figures that relate to each other and their natural surroundings. Skillfull combinations of form and color have caused viewers to comment on a unique spiritual quality present in Sibylle's paintings. She has donated a limited series of portraits on angels to the Order of Carmelites, in the hopes that the sale of her art will benefit Carmelite Missions across the globe. As of today, over \$1,000 in proceeds has been generated through her kindness.

The nine donated art renderings, shown on this page, depict angels in thought-provoking postures and have been reproduced as a limited series of prints available exclusively at the Carmelite Gift Shop in Darien, Illinois, with all proceeds going, at the request of Sibylle, to the Carmelite Missions. Her paintings continue to be displayed in numerous annual solos, community, and professional art exhibitions.



To view and purchase her donated work, visit the Carmelite Gift Shop website at www.carmelitegifts.com.



Dear Friends of the Carmelite Missions,

Would you like the Carmelite Missions to offer credit card capability for donation purposes?

Please check the box below and return to the Carmelite Missions. Thank you for your time.

Yes, I would like to pay by credit card.

No, I would not like to pay by credit card.

If you would like a relative or friend to receive a complimentary copy of our monthly newsletter, or perhaps a bookmark of our dear St. Therese, Patroness of the Missions, please fill in the form below and return to:

Carmelite Missions
8501 Bailey Road
Darien, IL 60561-8418

Name: _____

Address: _____

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November, 2005



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May your days be joyous, your lives be full...let your hearts be thankful! Our thanks to you for your generous spirit!

Best wishes for a Blessed Thanksgiving holiday.

Fr. John Malley, O.Carm., Gloria and Maria

Dear Friend of the Missions,

Many of you are familiar with the sad but hope-filled story of the newest Catholic country in Asia -- East Timor or Timor Lorosae. For many centuries, this island was a colony of Portugal, the reason for its Catholic heritage in a predominantly Moslem area. In 1975, because of the potential for oil off the coast, Indonesia annexed the island against the will of the majority of its people. For almost 25 years, these poor but fervent Catholic people endured great suffering under a cruel military regime. Only in 1999, did East Timor receive its independence through the help of the United Nations.

The Bishop during those trying years was Carlos Ximenes Belo. In 1996 he received the Nobel Prize for Peace because of his work for the human, civil and religious rights of his people. He saw almost 200,000 of his people forcefully removed from their homes; many of them were subsequently tortured and killed.

In 1994 Bishop Belo encouraged a group of Carmelite Nuns to found a monastery in his diocese of Dili. For four years, life among the Sisters was fairly tranquil and peaceful, but in February 1998 the monastery was surprisingly devastated by flooding. An investigation showed that the Indonesian Military Brigade (a paramilitary group that was supported by the government and opposed to the Church) had changed the flow of the water from a nearby river to a new channel that went straight toward the monastery. The Nuns experienced a new phenomenon -- flooding.

After the United Nations assured the independence of East Timor in September 2000, the Sisters tried to have the problem corrected. They were promised help by the United Nations and by the new provisional government, but unfortunately the Indonesian paramilitary forces had done such extreme damage to the Church that the monastery still remains far down on the list for help. The Sisters have been told: "There is no money."

For this reason, they have turned to our Carmelite Missions and to other friends to provide some assistance. We are trying to help them in a small but significant way. We are able to do this because of the generosity of many good friends like yourselves. I sincerely thank you for making this possible. I have asked the Sisters in East Timor to remember you and your family in their prayers and sacrifices. I am sure that they do this!



Love and peace,

Fr. John Malley, O.Carm.

Father John Malley, O.Carm.
Director of Carmelite Missions

"REMEMBER THE
CARMELITE MISSIONS
WHEN YOU WRITE
YOUR WILL"

☞ Saint of the Month



St. Monica ☜

It is said that behind every great man is a great woman. Never was this truer than in the case of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, probably one of the greatest minds of Christian history. St. Ambrose, who knew them both, once said to Augustine: "Thank God for having given you such a mother. She is one in a thousand." What a great woman! As a young person she had a problem with drinking, but straightened out her life; married to a pagan with a terrible temper, she led him to conversion; saddled with a difficult mother-in-law, she won her over; troubled with a wayward son, she prayed and led him to Christ. She was a model woman, a model wife, a model mother, a model Christian. Certainly a fitting model for all women, wives and mothers today!

Early Years and Marriage

From what we know, Monica was born in Tagaste, Africa, the modern Souk Ahras, about sixty miles from Carthage. She was apparently from a well-to-do family as we read of servants in her home; her nanny had taken care of her father when he was a boy. It was from this servant that she learned her first lessons about loving God in a special way, the way of self-denial. She taught Monica to discipline herself by not drinking between meals. How well this served her! As a young woman she developed a taste for wine. When sent by her parents to bring wine from the wine cellar, she began to sip a bit and gradually drank more and more until it became a problem. Taunting her, one of the servants called her a wine bibbler; that was enough to bring her to her senses.

In those days, girls were married off at the disposition of their fathers. Her father made a marriage contract for Monica with one Patricius, a man quite a bit older. While he wasn't a bad man, he had a terrible temper, and as a pagan he indulged in the good things that his money brought him. Other women knew of his temper, but they never heard Monica complain, nor did she ever show 'badges of submission,' bruises other

women carried from their husbands' beatings. When asked, she told them: "If you can master your tongue, not only do you run less risk of being beaten, but perhaps one day you may make your husband better."

To the marriage were born three children, Augustine, Navigius and Perpetua. Patricius would not hear of baptism, but Monica at least had them enrolled as catechumens, a ceremony in which the sign of the cross was drawn on the forehead and the child was dedicated to Christ. She taught the children at home, and meanwhile she showered kindness on her husband to remind him of God's presence and love in their lives. Augustine tells us his father was: "outstanding in kindness but quick to anger." Monica would remain silent when his temper flared, and when the anger subsided, she would speak softly and gently to him explaining the reasons for her actions.

Her Son Augustine

It was soon clear to Patricius and Monica that Augustine was an exceptionally gifted child, and from the local school he continued his education in Carthage. Apparently the parents were having financial difficulties at the time. It seemed that Augustine would have to leave school, but fortunately a wealthy man sponsored him, and he was able to graduate. Academically he did excellent, but in the process he rejected all traces of Christianity, lived a wild life, and took up with a mistress with whom he had a child. He joined the Manicheans, a heresy that taught: "something within me sins, but it is not I who sins." This teaching was enough to calm the weak conscience that he had!

Augustine returned to Tagaste and began to teach. He expected Monica to accept his way of life, but she was not that weak. Rather than being cowed by his demands that she accept him as he was, she told him to leave the house! It was at this time that she had a famous dream. She was standing on a beam bemoaning her son's downfall when she saw a radiant being that

asked her the reason for her sorrow. When she told him of her son's depravity, he told her to dry her tears as 'your son is with you.' Looking she saw Augustine standing on the beam next to her. When she told Augustine about her dream, he said it was a sign that she accept him as he was. But Monica wisely reminded him: "He did not say I was with you; he said you were with me." This made Augustine think.

Soon afterwards, her kindness won her husband over. Patricius saw what a wonderful woman she was and what she was able to do among her neighbors as a peacemaker. Daily she went to Mass, and her charity was unbounded. A year before his death in 371, Patricius took instructions into the Catholic Church and died peacefully.

Conversion of Augustine

Monica knew that her work was still not done; her son Augustine was estranged from Christ. She asked a bishop who had been a Manichean to talk to him, but he refused and told her: "Go your way and God will be with you. It is not possible that the son of these tears should perish."

Augustine told her he wanted to go to Rome to find more suitable work, and she resolved to follow him. Secretly he left without her. It took her some time to find the money for the trip, but she sold some of her things and followed him to Rome. When she got there, Augustine had already left for a job in Milan. So she too went north in search of her son and his soul.

She was very pleased to meet the Bishop Ambrose in Milan, and even more pleased when she learned that her son had become a friend of his. She asked Ambrose to win her son over by intellectual arguments, but he was wise enough to know that Augustine was not ready to leave all his sinful ways. He had already become disgusted with the teachings of the Manicheans, but he could not bring himself to accept Christianity in its fullness since that would

demand a change and conversion in his life. Monica prayed with all her heart that God would warm his soul with enough grace to prompt him to learn about Christ and accept Him.

For seventeen years she pleaded with God for the conversion of her son, and God heard her prayers. Finally Augustine himself was ready. He gave up his bad habits, dismissed his mistress, and opened himself to the faith that God offered him. On Easter, 387, Monica saw her son baptized as a Catholic. Anxious to keep him close to Jesus, she wanted to arrange a marriage for him with a pious Christian woman, but Augustine said no. He would dedicate the rest of his life to Jesus Christ and His teachings.

When Augustine wrote his famous *Confessions*, he spent quite a bit of time speaking of his mother. He wrote: "If I did not long ago perish in sin and misery, it is because of the long and faithful tears with which she (Monica) pleaded for me." And again: "If I prefer the truth to all other things, it is the fruit of my mother's teachings." Describing her holiness, he wrote: "One felt God's presence in her heart through the fruitful evidence of her saintly manner of life."

Death of Monica

After the baptism, Monica and her son decided to return to Africa. It was a long tiresome overland journey, south from Milan to Ostia where they would rest and then sail to Africa and home. Augustine tells us that he and his mother talked at that time of what awaited them in heaven. She told him that her job was done: "What am I doing here? All my hopes in this world have now been fulfilled." Soon afterwards, as she was suffering with a fever, Augustine and her family tried to strengthen her will to live by reminding her of her desire to be buried at Carthage with her husband, but she replied: "It does not matter. Nothing is far from God, and there should be no fear that He will not know from whence to resurrect me at the end of time." She died in Ostia and was buried there.

Augustine tells us that she did not want any expensive casket nor any special tomb or memorial, but asked "that they pray for her at the altar which she had attended each day throughout her life." Monica was fifty five when she died; her brilliant son was then thirty three. She had been a model woman, a faithful wife, and a loving mother. It is no wonder that the Popes have made her the patroness of women's sodalities and of the Confraternity of Christian mothers. Modern mothers whose sons have strayed can find great solace in her story; they too with God's help can pray their sons to Christ.



Retreat house staff in Maubara, East Timor



Construction work at the major seminary in Maumere, Indonesia



Family gathering in Sabah, Malaysia



Novices in Batu, Java (Indonesia) with their Master and Fr. John