Augustine 354-430

Despite the extensive nature of Augustine's writings - for he was arguably the most
influential Christian thinker in the West for almost a millennium - he is beloved as much for
being a personal model as for his scholarly inspiration. This is undoubtedly due to the
popularity of his Confessions, an autobiography wherein he describes his early education, his
attachment to the Manichaean belief, and his final conversion to Roman Christianity. The line
of the Confessions (9:2), "You had pierced our hearts with the arrows of your love," inspired
Augustine's symbol of a flaming heart pierced by two arrows, depicted in the lunette above
his head.

The saint's conversion from a
philosophy that conceived of the
universe as a duality of good and
evil to the Christian belief in an
omnipotent good was a deep
concern of his mother, St. Monica.
In the Confessions he writes of
Monica’s love of God and her
influence on him: "My mother had
come to me, for her piety had
given her strength to follow me
over land and sea, facing all perils
in the sure faith she had in You. In
her prayers to You she wept for me
as if I were dead" (Confessions, 6:1). In popular tradition, Monica's tears were an oft-cited
aspect of the role of the attentive mother. The Golden quotes a bishop she pursued to
intercede on behalf of Augustine: "It cannot be," the bishop says, "that the child of so many
tears should per