

A Brief Biography of Augustine

Lectori salute! Welcome to this summary tale about Augustine of Hippo. Would you like to walk along the life of this church father, theologian and philosopher?"¹

354-366 AD (age 12)—Aurelius Augustine is born in Thagaste, North Africa, as son of the Roman Patricius and Monica. His parents made great financial sacrifices to pay for his education. At his sixteenth birthday they had reached their limit, which caused a period of mischief in his life. The story about the theft of pears, found in his *Confessions* (Book 2), written during the years 397-398 AD, is an example.

370-372 AD (age 16-18)—After a year, his parents, friends and relatives had gathered enough money to finance his further education. In Carthage, he took lessons in Rhetoric and moves in with his concubine. She gives him a son named Adeodatus (given by God). Augustine tells or writes few words about this development, but with considerable pain this relationship ends by a marriage arranged by his mother.

373-383 AD (age 19-29)—After reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, he becomes a true philosophos: a lover of wisdom. He begins an intense search for imperishable, stable truth. He looks for salvation among the Manicheans, a quasi-Christian sect. On his 29th birthday, he moves to Rome to lecture in Rhetoric, as he did earlier in Thagaste and Carthage.

384-387 AD (age 30-33)—Very soon Augustine is appointed to a state position in Milan. There he gets to know the church father Ambrose, whose sermons wean him away from Manicheism. But old habits don't die easily: he does not succeed to convert. Till one day he hears children singing *Tolle, Lege* (Take and Read). He opens the Bible, reads Romans 13:13-14 and experiences a feeling of liberation. He quits his position, decides not to marry and has himself baptized together with his son.

¹ Augustinus van Hippo Geïllustreerd door Studio Joop www.studio-joop.nl . Trans. Jan H. Boer. Original title: "Het leven van Augustus van Hippo." Unfortunately, lack of skill and resources have forced us to skip the illustrations.

388-395 AD (age 34-41)—Eventually, he returns to Thagaste, where he establishes a small community of monks. In the course of a working visit to the port city of Hippo in 391, the local church congregation grabs him and ordains him a priest. Four years later, he is ordained bishop. His many responsibilities, among them daily sermons and administering justice, sometimes are a burden to him.

397-430 (age 43-75)—Augustine is not one to avoid public debate. He writes innumerable letters and books, among them the apologetic work *The City of God*. On his deathbed he consoles himself with a word from the *Enneades* by the NeoPlatonic philosopher Plotinus: “He is not great who thinks it is great that wood and rocks fall apart and that mortal beings die.” At that very moment, Hippo is surrounded by the Vandals. Augustine spends his last days by praying penitential psalms.