

August 27, 2023



Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Elbingen, Germany

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

By Julie Mussché

From Today's Gospel for the Memorial of St. Monica

*Jesus journeyed to a city called Nain,
and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him.
As he drew near to the gate of the city,
a man who had died was being carried out,
the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.
A large crowd from the city was with her.
When the Lord saw her,
he was moved with pity for her and said to her,
"Do not weep."
He stepped forward and touched the coffin;
at this the bearers halted,
and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!"
The dead man sat up and began to speak,
and Jesus gave him to his mother.
Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming,
"A great prophet has arisen in our midst,"*

and "God has visited his people."

*This report about him spread through the whole of Judea
and in all the surrounding region.*

LUKE 7:11-17

Reflection

The Gospel above is from the alternate readings for the Memorial of Saint Monica. Jesus, moved by compassion for a mother who lost her son, intervenes -- bringing the dead man back to life. What a fitting passage to remember the life of St. Monica who, while living in a dysfunctional marriage with a husband who in today's world we would identify as a philanderer and abusive, intervened through prayer for her children, particularly Augustine. She was relentless in seeing that her children were baptized into the new life of Christianity, and persisted for seventeen years to ensure that Augustine was brought into the faith.

As a spiritual director, I have listened to the laments of mothers whose children have strayed from, rejected, or for some reason been ostracized by their church of origin. The sorrow of a mother whose child is struggling through a loss of faith, despair, addiction, lawbreaking, or estrangement from the family is heart-rending. How can one not respond with compassion and intentional presence?

A quick sidestep: several years ago while serving in the District Attorney's Office, I got to know and admire Victim Witness Advocates and their good works with victims of crime. In particular, I was moved to behold how these sponsors of justice guided and cared for victims of domestic violence and abuse. The complexity and entanglements of such crimes make navigating the justice system, the ongoing safety of and reentry into a "new normal" for such victims, quite challenging and frustrating. One general observation: Victim Witness Advocates are patient and tenacious in their mission. This reminds me of St. Monica, who not only was persistent with ensuring the welfare of her children, but is also the patron of those challenged by difficult marriages, mothers, alcoholics, wayward children, victims of abuse, conversion, and -- some might add -- patience.

Happy Feast Day!



Globe surrounded by candles
Photo by Mikhail Nilov

For Prayer

Prayer for the Memorial of St. Monica

Redeemer God, as we remember and celebrate the life and intercession of St. Monica, her faith, patience, and tenacity, let us call to mind and heart:

Victims of abuse: let us pray

Mothers whose children are lost and struggling: let us pray

Women in challenging marriages: let us pray

For people and families struggling with the addiction of alcohol: let us pray

For the gifts of patience and tenacity and an abiding faith when facing difficult circumstances: let us pray

Amen

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