

27. August 2020

„The struggle for conversion“
St. Monica

Lk 7,11-17

It happened that soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. Now when he was near the gate of the town there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople was with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her and said to her, 'Don't cry.' Then he went up and touched the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you: get up.' And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Everyone was filled with awe and glorified God saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people.' And this view of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the region.

Today, the church commemorates St. Monica of Tagaste (now Souk-Ahras in Algeria), the wonderful woman who prayed for the conversion of her son. Short before her death she was allowed to experience the joy that the Lord heard her prayer and her son, St. Augustine, converted. Even she could win her difficult husband Patricius for believing in Christ.

To win someone for faith means that this person spiritually rises from the dead, so that the true life of God can flow into him, and when he is led to the source of baptism, he is incorporated into the mystical body of the Risen Lord.

This all happened with St. Augustine and so can the biblical text of today very well on the life of St. Monica be applied. She wept and wrestled so much for her son in prayer that we received the golden word of Bishop Ambrose, whom she sought in her distress: "A son of so many tears cannot get lost."

This might be a great consolation for many mothers who see their children going the wrong way and cannot reach them any longer. So they are in a

similar situation like the widow of the Gospel mourning for her only son. We can imagine her tears, because it's hard when the children die before their parents.

So it is also a heavy burden for those mothers when their children are spiritually dead. Maybe then they sometimes wonder, if they did something wrong, if their life testimony was not sufficient and thus reinforce the suffering. But also a St. Monica, who undoubtedly had a convincing Christian life, had to wait long for the conversion of her son.

We are not privy to the events of how a person converts. It is God himself who will touch the heart of man and enlighten his spirit. But that does not mean that we can only wait until the miracle of conversion happens. No, we can do our part! In addition to prayer and our testimony of life, offering little sacrifices, this includes the willingness to name things that can not exist before God. St. Monica had the courage to tell her son that he can not live with a woman unmarried and did not allow him to live with her in his parental home. Today we would easily consider that exaggerated or even rigorous. But it is like this? Is it not just the consequence of the truth of the Christian faith? Are we really serving man when we put a veil over circumstances that separate them from God?

Jesus took pity on the woman who grieved for her son, woke him up and gave him back to her. He did that also with St. Monica, who was so worried about her son. Jesus awakened him from spiritual death and gave him back to her in faith. They were now united in the Lord.

The following lines from the book of confessions of St. Augustine give a wonderful testimony of this.

"The day on which she (Monica) was about to depart from this life - you knew him, we did not - it met, as I believe through your secret leading, that we both alone, me and her, joined one another The windows stood leaning against the garden inside the house that housed us, there in Tiber-Ostia So we talked alone, deliciously intimate, and, forgetting what lay behind us, reaching out to what lies ahead, we asked ourselves in the face of the truth that you are, of what kind the eternal life of the saints would be one day, that life, of course, that saw no eye and no ear has been heard, and that has not penetrated into any human heart. (...)"

So, in the struggle for the conversion of those who are far from God and have lost their way, we can trust in St. Monica and ask for her intercession and should also ask for her perseverance.