August 27th: Memorial of Saint Monica

Gospel text (*Lk* 7,11-17): Jesus went to a town called Naim and many of his disciples went with him —a great number of people. As He reached the gate of the town, a dead man was being carried out. He was the only son of his mother and she was a widow; there followed a large crowd of townspeople. On seeing her, the Lord had pity on her and said, «Don't cry». Then He came up and touched the stretcher and the men who carried it stopped. Jesus then said, «Young man, awake, I tell you». And the dead man got up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. A holy fear came over them all and they praised God saying, «A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people». This news spread out in the Jewish country and the surrounding places.

«Do not weep»

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Today the church rejoices in the sanctity of a great mother: St. Monica (332-387), born near Carthage. Great for her piety —she would frequently beg in tears— and because of the "giant" son she gave to Christianity: St. Augustine.

Monica was married to Patritius. She had no choice in the matter (such were those times!). She had much patience for 30 years with an ill-tempered, irreligious husband … That suffering certainly did not go unnoticed by kind Jesus, who had shown mercy on widow Nain a few centuries before. Patritius was finally baptized not long before his death.

From their marriage, 3 children were born. The eldest, Augustine, made her suffer very much. He was a brilliant son, but one that turned away from the Christian path. History tells us that St. Monica once confided her anguish to a bishop, who comforted her telling her, "Be at peace because it is impossible for the child of so many tears to perish." And so it was, she would cry for Augustine. At the same time that son was laughing at his mother's tears…

But Jesus Christ never laughs at our tears: "Do not weep" (Lc 7,13) He told the widow Nain … Even so, Monica spared no effort; when Augustine decided to depart to Rome, leaving his mother, she traveled there also as to not abandon her son. Things being as they were, it happened that Monica - and later Augustine - met the already famous bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose. Captivated by Ambrose's catechism and by St. Paul's writings, Augustine changed his life and finally was baptized.

The year was 387. St. Monica had accomplished the mission of her life! She said, "My son, now that I see you have turned into a servant of Jesus, what am I doing in this world?" As they headed to Carthage, while waiting at the port of Ostia, she became gravely ill… St. Augustine transcribed his last words, "The only thing that I beg of you is to remember me at the Lord's altar (…)". That is how this merciful and blessed soul left this earth.