



Friday 27th August 2021  
Twenty-first week in Ordinary Time Year  
Saint Monica

## Gospel

Lk 7:11-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

*She bore me in the arms of her prayer that you might say to the son of the widow: Young man, I command you – rise up.*

Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. When he was near the gate of the town it happened that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople were with her. When the Lord saw her he felt sorry for her. 'Do not cry,' he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, 'Young man, I tell you to 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 praised God saying, 'A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people.' And this opinion of him spread throughout Judaea and all over the countryside.

## Reflection - Fr Graham Fullick

Born 333 and died 387 aged 54. North African from Tagaste: challenges our European image of saints. Mother of St. Augustine who referred to her in his confessions. Christianity was now legal in the Roman Empire by virtue of the Edict of Milan of 313. Her husband Patritius was a violent man who mistreated her, yet she persisted in her marriage. She had 3 children from him. He was pagan and she was born of two Christian parents. Her prayer and almsdeeds, that is loving God and loving neighbour, or living the Our Father, hallowing God and helping His kingdom come on earth were things that incensed her husband. Still she persisted in prayer and charity. By her sweetness and patience she won over many of the other suffering wives in Tagaste in her apostolate of word and example.

Her husband Patritius refused permission for baptism of any of their 3 children. He gave permission for Augustine when the son fell gravely ill, but immediately withdrew permission when he recovered. Monica wrestled with the Lord in prayer and in her spiritual exertions her husband Patritius converted from paganism and himself finally agreed to be baptised. He died a short time after his baptism. Meanwhile Augustine had been sent to Carthage in North Africa to continue his education but took on the Manichean heresy of dualism despising the Incarnation and flesh and claiming gnostic spiritual enlightenment. Augustine fell into grievous sin and debauchery. He continued his education in Milan, Italy.

St. Monica pursued her wayward son to Milan where she found Bishop St. Ambrose of Milan, the founder of the Ambrosian Catholic Rite catechising and ministering. Augustine came to Milan in 384 and was immediately impressed by the preaching of Bishop Ambrose. At first attending sermons to admire his rhetorical skill, Augustine was eventually moved by the message and converted to Catholic Christianity. Finally after Augustine's 3 years in Milan, and 17 years of St. Monica's supplication, she had the joy of seeing her son convert to Christianity at the hands of this Church Father, St. Ambrose. Augustine was baptised by St. Ambrose in the Milan Church of St. John the Baptist on Holy Saturday night, the Easter Vigil, in 387. Thus in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic faith handed on to us by life and witness, one Church Father Ambrose baptised another Church Father, St. Augustine. The 8-sided octagonal immersion baptistery is under the piazza of Milan Cathedral. I know because I stood there in tears in February, 20119 witnessing to that faith, our faith. In our Christian symbolism, the number eight represents eternity and rebirth, because the world was created in seven days and Christ rose from the dead creating the *eighth day*. *Most Early Christian baptisteries, as well as the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) in Jerusalem, were therefore octagonal in plan: as are our baptismal fonts at St. Joseph's East Maitland, Immaculate Conception, Morpeth and Sacred Heart Campbell's Hill.*

Subsequently the widowed St. Monica accompanied her son Augustine down to Rome and they set sail back to North Africa. They left the then port of Rome at Civit  Vecchia and subsequently at [Ostia Antiqua](#) where St. Monica died and was buried. In a modern world where so many of our children and grandchildren refuse even to be baptised to receive the Light of Christ, the perseverance of Monica, yet respecting the free will of each soul is a consoling example. It is good to lead out of ignorance and into light whilst always retaining charity to love. If we retain the composure and leave the final work to God then those we seek to convert will, please God see our respect and good works and become more teachable themselves as a result—and receive the Christian message with joy. St. Monica's son went on to be Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, write Magisterially as a Doctor of the Church on the Blessed Trinity, *Deus Trinitas*, and write of St. Monica his mother in his book "*The Confessions*". *But that's tomorrow's Mass. This is our Faith, we are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.*