**Hope Fulfilled in the Life of St Monica**

*Fr Louis Fowóyò̩*

This Sunday happens to fall on the feast of St Monica. The church does not amplify the celebration in the liturgy because Sunday, the day of the Lord, takes precedence over the memorials of saints.

* While obeying the liturgy of the church, I will like us to reflect a little about the impactful life of St Monica.
* What we know about St Monica and we are proud to recount all the time is that she spent many years (34 years) praying for the conversion of her son, St Augustine. It was at the close of her life that the Lord deigned to give a positive answer to her prayers.
* I will not pretend not to know that some of you, our dear grandparents and parents are in the same situation as St Monica was before the conversion of Augustine. You are waiting in hope that one or some of your children or grandchildren will come to know the Lord whom you have served all your life. You pray that they will come to a new dawn of change of heart accepting the Lord whom you introduced them to and raised them with while they were growing.
* At this moment, I share your pain. I share in your anxiety. I look forward with you in hope that one day, very soon, God will answer your prayers like St Monica.

John Paul II, in 1999, wrote a beautiful letter to the elderly. In it, he enumerated some of the things that can bring despair to people in their old age, especially when they look at how things are going and when they do not see any sign that tomorrow will be better.

* Let us take a look at how the great John Paul II encouraged elderly people to look forward in hope, trusting God, and relying on God that everything is not in vain.
* He knows that, looking at history, our life has registered lights and shadows. The many positive aspects have compensated the negative. This is a beneficial reaction for our collective consciousness.
* “Dear brothers and sisters, at our age it is natural to revisit the past in order to attempt a sort of assessment. This retrospective gaze makes possible a more serene and objective evaluation of persons and situations we have met along the way. The passage of time helps us to see our experiences in a clearer light and softens their painful side. Sadly, struggles and tribulations are very much a part of everyone's life. Sometimes it is a matter of problems and sufferings which can sorely test our mental and physical resistance, and perhaps even shake our faith. But experience teaches that daily difficulties, by God's grace, often contribute to people's growth and to the forging of their character.”
* In his letter, he counted some of the positive things that have come in our time that will make us not despair about the negative ones. There is always hope for the future.
* The Scripture maintains a very positive vision of the value of life. Man remains for ever made “in the image of God” (cf. *Gen* 1:26), and each stage of life has its own beauty and its own tasks.
* God brought good things in old age in the life of many people in the Bible, like: Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Tobit, Eleazer, Elizabeth and Zachariah, Simeon, Anna, Nicodemus, Peter and the many others.
* In spite of their age, they were found useful and they accomplished great things for God.
* Psalm 92: 13,15-16: “The just will flourish like the palm-tree, grow like a Lebanon cedar…, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green, to proclaim that the Lord is just”

The readings of today, give credence to the fact that there is always hope. Our hope is in the Lord who never fails in His promises. Ours is to trust.

* The first reading is a prophesy of the displacing of an evil leader to a good one. In your thoughts and aspiration, you will experience the joy of divine providence. The Lord will show to you and your adverse situation that peace comes not from any other means but from the God who is the creator of all.
* In the Gospel, St Peter made a confession of faith and the Lord Jesus entrusted him with the highest honor of leading His church. May you continue to be honored by God as you continue to profess the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah is the hope of the world.

John Paul II concluded with this prayer:

* *“Grant, O Lord of life, that we may be ever vividly aware of this and that we may savour every season of our lives as a gift filled with promise for the future.*

*Grant that we may lovingly accept your will, and place ourselves each day in your merciful hands.*

*And when the moment of our definitive “passage” comes, grant that we may face it with serenity, without regret for what we shall leave behind. For in meeting you, after having sought you for so long, we shall find once more every authentic good which we have known here on earth, in the company of all who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and hope.*

*Mary, Mother of pilgrim humanity, pray for us “now and at the hour of our death”. Keep us ever close to Jesus, your beloved Son and our brother, the Lord of life and glory.*

*Amen!*”