

# Monastir, Jewel of the Mediterranean

Sat, Jan 23 2010

Monday and Beyond: Monastir, jewel of the Mediterranean

Thanks so much for your faithful prayers for Tunisia...the breakthrough is drawing nearer! Your participation in filling the bowls in heaven with prayers for this nation is much appreciated. Today we send you information about the city of Monastir--some would say the jewel of the nation. If you don't have an opinion, you need to visit and see for yourself! Or--if you've seen "Jesus of Nazareth" by Zifferelli or the "Life of Brian" by Monty Python, then you have indeed caught a glimpse of the setting, at least.

The walaya of Monastir (name base: monastery) has been called a microcosm of Tunisia, with it's variety of industries--fishing, farming, factories (mostly textile), and tourism. Along with these, the local universities (mainly focused on the sciences) are a strong draw for migratory population from rural parts of Tunisia and also Algeria. The region is quite densely populated, with many hopefuls coming for education or employment. During the summers, the city empties of students and fills with tourists, both from Europe and other parts of North Africa. At the city center, the prominent "Ribat" (fortress) recalls the less peaceful era of with the fear of invasion and hostility by Christian crusaders.

The very pleasant sea-breeze-fresh climate along with the close proximity to the Muslim holy city of Kairouan, made Monastir a popular destination for retired Muslim scholars in past centuries. A trend of being buried in the cemetery at the town center, overlooking the sea, resulted in a tradition of bringing famous leaders here for burial. A few cults have developed around these tombs, in keeping with the practices of Folk Islam which are strong in this region. The Sidi Mazri shrine, as an example, is named for a Muslim scholar from Kairuoan, and hosts an annual festival involving animal sacrifice in prayer for fertility needs or illness during pregnancy. Several places in Monastir are named after this famous expert in Islamic law, now considered a saint.

A visit to Monastir is incomplete without a mention of the most recent hero of the town. President Habib Bourguiba, who led the nation to independence from French imperialism in 1956, was both born and buried here. He remained president from 1957 until 1987 when he was impeached on medical grounds, and replaced with the current president. He is best known for his reforms in education and women's rights among many positive social reforms, and is well-loved by the general population. His death in the year 2000, at the age of 96, is recent and well-remembered history.

**As you pray for this city, with a rich history of leadership as well as its current position of influence in the nation, ask the Father to build a new identity in this place. Pray for the "jewels" of the city to be in the hearts of the people as they hear the news of Jesus the Messiah, and understand his relevance to their lives. Pray that truth and understanding will bless this city, and be laid as a foundation for the House of God to come into fullness here.**

Isaiah 54:11-13 (Today's New International Version)

11 "Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli.

12 I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

13 All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace.

Isaiah 61:10

"I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

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