

THE BLACK MADONNA OF EINSIEDELN

Since the early Middle Ages, the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln has attracted huge numbers of pilgrims and made the beautiful cathedral in central Switzerland, where it is housed, into one of the most visited shrines in Europe.

It is indeed impressive to see how often, still nowadays, the many people praying or just being in front of her are quieted by being in this space. They are brought back to themselves and become centered again.

There is a feeling of deep stillness and calm around her chapel, and thousands of people continue to this day to gather in front of her to regain orientation, hope and trust. Interestingly enough, the Einsiedler Madonna acts silently as a very effective ecumenical force, not concerned with any confessional categories or boundaries. Transcending confinements, this black image became a gathering focus for so many ethnic groups in the recent present - from Alevitic Kurds to Muslim Africans, from Hindu Tamils to Buddhist Tibetans. She is perceived and experienced again and again as a true Image of Grace, gifting visitors from any creed with an experience of deep recognition and regeneration.

by Elena Hinshaw-Fischli