

# Seven Sorrows of Our Lady

September 15th is the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, when following an ancient tradition in the Church we venerate the "seven sorrows of Our Lady." Perfectly united to her Son's sacrifice on the Cross, Mary lovingly shares in Jesus' self-giving for our redemption.

09/14/2021

We offer below some texts from Saint Josemaria on each of the seven sorrows of our Lady.

## **First sorrow: Simeon's prophecy**

*And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

*“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant  
depart in peace,*

*according to thy word;*

*for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*

*which thou hast prepared in the  
presence of all peoples,*

*a light for revelation to the Gentiles,*

*and for glory to thy people Israel.”*

*And his father and his mother  
marveled at what was said about him;  
and Simeon blessed them and said to  
Mary his mother,*

*“Behold, this child is set for the  
fall and rising of many in Israel,*

*and for a sign that is spoken against*

*(and a sword will pierce through  
your own soul also),*

that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed” (*Lk 2:22-35*).

Mary teaches us to have charity. Remember the scene of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. An old man, Simeon, 'said to his mother Mary, Behold, this child is destined to bring about the fall of many and the rise of many in Israel; and to be a sign which men will refuse to acknowledge; and so the thoughts of many hearts shall be made manifest; as for your own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it.' So great is Mary's love for all mankind that she, too, fulfilled Christ's words when he affirmed: 'Greater love has no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends.'

It is with good reason that the Popes have called Mary Co-Redemptrix. 'So fully, in union with her suffering and dying Son, did she suffer and nearly die; so fully, for the sake of the

salvation of men, did she abdicate her mother's rights over her Son, and immolate him, insofar as it was in her power, to satisfy the justice of God, that it can rightly be said that she redeemed mankind together with Christ' (Benedict XV, Letter *Inter sodalicia*, 22 March 1918). This gives us a deeper understanding of that moment in the Passion of Our Lord, which we shall never tire of meditating: *Stabat autem iuxta crucem Iesu mater eius*, 'there, standing by the cross of Jesus, was his Mother.'

*Friends of God*, 287

## **Second sorrow: Flight into Egypt**

*Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose*

*and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Mt 2:13-15).*

Mary teaches us to have faith. 'Blessed art thou for thy believing,' were the words of greeting uttered by her cousin Elizabeth when Our Lady went up into the hill country to visit her. Mary's act of faith had been a wonderful one, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.' When her Son was born she contemplated the greatness of God on earth: a choir of angels was present, and not only the shepherds, but also important men of this world came to adore the Child. Afterwards, however, the Holy Family had to flee to Egypt, to escape Herod's murderous intent. Then, silence;

thirty long years of simple, ordinary life, just like that of any other home in a small village in Galilee.

In a few brief words, the Holy Gospel points the way for us to understand our Mother's example: 'Mary treasured up all these sayings, and reflected on them in her heart.' Let us try to imitate her, talking to Our Lord, conversing like two people in love about everything that happens to us, even the most insignificant incidents. Nor should we forget that we have to weigh them, consider their value, and see them with the eyes of faith, in order to discover the Will of God.

If our faith is weak, we should turn to Mary. St John tells us that it was because of the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana, which Christ performed at his Mother's request, that 'his disciples learned to believe in him'. Our Mother is always

interceding with her Son so that he may attend to our needs and show himself to us in such a way that we can cry out, 'You are the Son of God.'

*Friends of God, 284-285*

### **Third sorrow: Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple**

*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were*

*amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them (Lk 2:41-50).*

Where is Jesus? —The Child, my Lady!... where is He?

Mary is crying. —In vain you and I have run from group to group, from caravan to caravan: no one has seen Him. —Joseph, after useless attempts to keep from crying, cries too... And You... And I.

Being a common little servant, I cry my eyes out and wail to heaven and earth... to make up for those times when I lost Him through my own fault and did not cry.

Jesus: may I never lose Thee again...  
Then you and I are united in  
misfortune and grief, as we were  
united in sin. And from the depth of  
our being come moans of heartfelt  
sorrow and burning phrases that the  
pen cannot and should not record.

And, as we are consoled by the joy of  
finding Jesus —three days He was  
gone!— debating with the doctors of  
Israel (Luke 2:46), your soul and  
mine will be left deeply impressed by  
the duty to leave our home and  
family to serve our heavenly Father.

*Holy Rosary, Fifth Joyful Mystery*

**Fourth sorrow: Mary meets Christ  
on the way to Calvary**

*(not in the Gospels)*

No sooner has Jesus risen from his  
first fall than he meets his Blessed  
Mother, standing by the wayside  
where He is passing.

With immense love Mary looks at Jesus, and Jesus at his Mother. Their eyes meet, and each heart pours into the other its own deep sorrow. Mary's soul is steeped in bitter grief, the grief of Jesus Christ.

O all you that pass by the way, look and see, was there ever a sorrow to compare with my sorrow! (Lam 1:12).

But no one notices, no one pays attention; only Jesus.

Simeon's prophecy has been fulfilled: thy own soul a sword shall pierce (Luke 2:35).

In the dark loneliness of the Passion, Our Lady offers her Son a comforting balm of tenderness, of union, of faithfulness; a 'yes' to the divine will.

Hand in hand with Mary, you and I also want to console Jesus, by

accepting always and in everything  
the Will of his Father, of our Father.

Only thus will we taste the sweetness  
of Christ 's Cross, and come to  
embrace it with all the strength of  
Love, carrying it in triumph along  
the ways of the earth.

*The Way of the Cross, Fourth Station*

### **Fifth sorrow: Jesus dies on the Cross**

*But standing by the cross of Jesus  
were his mother, and his mother's  
sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and  
Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his  
mother, and the disciple whom he  
loved standing near, he said to his  
mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"  
Then he said to the disciple, "Behold,  
your mother!" And from that hour the  
disciple took her to his own  
home. After this Jesus, knowing that  
all was now finished, said (to fulfil the  
scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of*

*vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (Jn 19:25-30).*

But when it comes to the scandal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, Mary is there, hearing with sadness how 'the passers-by blasphemed against him, tossing their heads, Come now, they said, you would destroy the temple and build it up in three days, rescue yourself; come down from that cross, if you are the Son of God.' Our Lady is there listening to the words of her Son, united to him in his suffering, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' What could she do? She united herself fully with the redemptive love of her Son, and offered to the Father her immense sorrow, which pierced her pure Heart like a sharp edged sword.

Jesus is comforted anew by the quiet, loving presence of his Mother. Mary does not shout; she does not run about frantically. Stabat: she is there, standing next to her Son. It is then that Jesus looks at her, and then turning his gaze to John he exclaims, 'Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, This is thy Mother.' In the person of John, Christ is entrusting all men to his Mother, and especially his disciples: those who were to believe in him.

*Felix culpa*, the Church sings. Happy fault, that has brought us so great and wonderful a Redeemer. Happy fault, we could add, which has merited that we should receive Mary as our Mother. Now we are safe. Nothing should worry us now, because Our Lady, the crowned Queen of heaven and earth, is omnipotent in her supplication before our Father God. Jesus cannot

deny anything to Mary, nor to us,  
who are children of his own Mother

*Friends of God, 288*

**Sixth sorrow: Jesus is taken down  
from the Cross and placed in his  
Mother's arms**

*And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a*

*stone against the door of the tomb*  
(Mk 15:42-46).

Take a look now at Calvary. Jesus has died and there is as yet no sign of his glorious triumph. It is a good time to examine how much we really want to live as Christians, to be holy. Here is our chance to react against our weaknesses with an act of faith. We can trust in God and resolve to put love into the things we do each day. The experience of sin should lead us to sorrow. We should make a more mature and deeper decision to be faithful and truly identify ourselves with Christ, persevering, no matter what it costs, in the priestly mission that he has given every single one of his disciples. That mission should spur us on to be the salt and light of the world.

*Christ is Passing By, 96*

**Seventh sorrow: Body of Jesus is Buried**

*After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there (Jn 19:38-42).*

Let us now ask Our Lord, as we finish these moments of conversation with him, to enable us to say with St Paul, 'in all this we are conquerors, through him who has granted us his love. Of this I am fully persuaded:

neither death nor life, nor angels or principalities or powers, neither what is present nor what is to come, no force whatever, neither the height above us nor the depth beneath us, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which comes to us in Christ Jesus Our Lord' (*Rom 8:37-39*).

Scripture sings the praises of this love with burning words: 'Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it' (*Song 8:7*). So thoroughly did this love fill Mary's Heart that it enriched her to the point of making her a Mother for all mankind. In the Virgin Mary, her love of God is one with her concern for all her children. Her most sweet Heart, which was sensitive to the smallest details—'they have no wine'—must have suffered immensely on seeing the collective cruelty and the ferocity of the executioners that led to the Passion

and Death of Jesus. Mary, however, does not speak. Like her Son, she loves, keeps silent and forgives. Here we see the strength of love!

*Friends of God, 237*

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(07/15/2025)