

Meditations: September 15, Our Lady of Sorrows

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

- Interior martyrdom of Mary
- Our Lady's tears
- A heart filled with compassion

THE CHURCH invites us to turn our eyes towards the final moments of our Lord's life, when He wanted to have his Mother's company. Viewed from a simply human perspective, this scene could seem quite bleak: a

condemned man about to die, in the presence of his own mother. Nevertheless, faith brings light to this picture and helps us see the brightness beyond the shadows: “Blessed are you, O Virgin Mary; without dying you won the martyr's crown beneath the Cross of the Lord.”^[1]

Why can we say that our Lady was blessed to be next to her Son's Cross? Certainly, this can only be understood in the light of our Lord's Resurrection. Mary's interior martyrdom, all that real pain, was overcome by a special, immense participation in the joy of Jesus' Resurrection. Contemplating our Lady's sorrows reminds us that, in Christ, suffering does not have the last word: we can always find in it something much greater, the effort to save all men and women.

Today's Mass concludes by saying: "Having received the Sacrament of eternal redemption, we humbly ask, O Lord, that, honoring how the Blessed Virgin Mary suffered with her Son, we may complete in ourselves for the Church's sake what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ."^[2] Our Lady experienced in a very special way this mystery of the union of suffering with the Cross of Jesus. Mary shows us that suffering, whether small annoyances or great trials, shouldn't make us close in on ourselves. Knowing that it leads to the Resurrection, it can be a path for staying closer to Jesus and to others.

SAINT JOSEMARÍA imagined the meeting of Jesus with his Mother on the way to Calvary in this way: "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.”^[3]

Mothers often try to rise above their own suffering in order to ease that of their children. Our Lady seems to do the same: she opens her heart to Jesus’ sorrow, in order to try to bring Him a bit of relief.

Christian art down through the centuries has preserved for us the tears that our Lady shed at the foot of the Cross. But those tears of Mary “were transformed by the grace of Christ; her entire life, her entire being, everything in Mary is transfigured in perfect union with her Son, with the mystery of salvation. Hence our Lady’s tears are a sign of the compassion of a God who always forgives us; they are a sign of Christ’s sorrow for our sins and for the evil that afflicts humanity, especially children and the innocent.”^[4]

In our life too we will encounter crosses, both big and small. Our Lady of Sorrows reminds us that we are never alone at the moment of trial. Mary fulfills the commission she received from the dying Jesus and watches over us with a mother's love. We can be sure that there is always someone who is concerned about our suffering, who sincerely sympathizes with us. In Mary Most Holy we can always find comfort and strength.

TODAY'S FEAST invites us to fill our heart too with compassion. No one who begins to grasp Mary's immense sorrow can fail to be deeply moved: "Is there one who would not weep, / 'whelmed in miseries so deep, / Christ's dear Mother to behold?"^[5] These words from the *Stabat Mater* seek to spur us to conversion. Our

heart aches on beholding the suffering of the mother of the man who has been unjustly condemned. Seeing all the consequences of evil in society today, we Christians are called to not pass by with indifference, but to have the same compassionate heart as our Lady.

Witnesses testify that the founder of Opus Dei, especially in his later years, “prayed with great intensity while watching the news on television. He entrusted to God the events being talked about and asked for peace in the world.”^[6] We too can ask Mary for the same sensitivity to the suffering we see every day, whether on the streets or in the media.

“Let me mingle tears with you,” the *Stabat Mater* continues, “mourning him who mourned for me, / all the days that I may live. / By the cross with you to stay, / there with you to

weep and pray, / is all I ask of you to give.”^[7] A compassionate attitude is not a weak attitude. Our Lady, at the foot of the Cross, shows us the strength of mercy, which is capable of lifting up the afflicted and sowing peace to those around us. “Marvel at Mary's courage: at the foot of the Cross, with the greatest of human sorrows (there is no sorrow like her sorrow), filled with fortitude. And ask her for that same strength, so that you too can remain beside the Cross.”^[8]

^[1] Roman Missal, *September 15. Our Lady of Sorrows*, Gospel acclamation.

^[2] Ibid., Prayer after Communion.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Fourth Station.

^[4] Francis, Audience, 23 April 2022.

^[5] *Stabat Mater* Sequence.

[6] Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *40 Years with a Saint*.

[7] *Stabat Mater* Sequence.

[8] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 508.

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