

Our Sorrowful Mother
Homily for September 15, 2022

Mary's Crosses:

How beautiful that the Church gives us the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows immediately following the Exaltation of the Cross. On this day, we can commemorate the seven sorrows of Mary as given to St. Bridget of Sweden in the thirteenth century:

1. The prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:25-35);
2. The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15);
3. Loss of the Child Jesus for three days (Luke 2:41-50);
4. Mary meeting Jesus on his way to Calvary (Luke 23:27-31; John 19:17);
5. Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (John 19:25-30);
6. The body of Jesus being taken from the Cross (Psalm 130; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:31-37);
7. The burial of Jesus (Isaiah 53:8; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; Mark 15:40-47).

She endured each of these sorrows with perfect love, and Our Lady has promised many graces to anyone who meditates on these seven sorrows.

Mary Knew Sorrow:

Today's Gospel for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows brings us right to the cross. There we see Mary grieving as her son suffers a slow and torturous death. We see her grappling with unthinkable anguish of heart and mind. But notice, she was not alone. She was with her "sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" and, of course, the disciple John (John 19:25-26).

Mary's sorrow cut to the deepest, most private part of her heart. Still, she welcomed these friends and family members into her pain. And she shared their pain too. Together they struggled to trust God in the face of their grief. Together they brought what comfort they could to one another. Mary's open generosity on her darkest of days reveals to us the mercy of having other people standing with us in our sorrow. With them, we can give and receive comfort, consolation, and protection.¹

Our Sorrowful Mother:

As Jesus used his last breaths to bequeath his mother to John, this Son of God and son of Mary gave his mother to every Christian. St. John Paul II said,

"On the cross, Jesus did not formally proclaim Mary's universal motherhood, but established a concrete maternal relationship between her and the beloved disciple. In the Lord's choice, we can

¹ <https://wau.org/meditations/2022/09/15/489018/>

see his concern that this motherhood should not be interpreted vaguely, but should point to Mary's intense, personal relationship with individual Christians.”

Mary a mother for us in our sorrow.

None of us are strangers to sorrow, but Our Lady teaches us that even—maybe especially—in our deepest sadness, we need one another. God designed us to share our lives with one another, and those relationships can sustain us and help us navigate our most challenging times.

Sorrow is complex, and each person faces grief differently. But another caring human being can make a world of difference in helping us know that we are loved and that we don't have to travel this path alone. Fr. Henri Nouwen put it this way:

“The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, . . . that is the friend who cares.”

We all need that kind of friend. We can all be that type of friend. And Mary herself is that ultimate friend for us. In her presence, we can pour out everything that is on our hearts. Her comfort and intercession can be a source of great consolation. She has walked this path of sorrow before us with deep faith and grace, and she will stand beside us and teach us to do the same.²

How blessed we are to have such a compassionate Mother and perfect intercessor to care for our souls and the souls of those we love. Mother Mary, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

² Ibid