

The Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows

September 15, 2016

Hebrews 5:7–9

Psalm 31:2, 3b–6, 15–16, 20

Luke 2:33–35

Today's Feast has been celebrated since 1668 and in 1912, Pius X declared September 15th to be the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

The theme for this Feast is captured in our readings with such clarity. We are told that Jesus, in his earthly life, learned obedience through what he suffered. His desire was to always do the will of the Father and of course such obedience found its clearest expression in the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed "not my will, but yours be done."

Mary is told by Simeon that a sword would pierce her own soul and that as the one who prayed with her son "Be it done unto me according to your word" also learned obedience through suffering. The Seven Sorrows of Mary are:

1. Simeon's Prophecy, as read in today's Gospel
2. The Flight into Egypt
3. Jesus' disappearance at the age of 12
4. The Road to Calvary
5. The Crucifixion
6. The removal from the Cross
7. The Entombment.

The Blessed Virgin exemplifies for us the co-redemptive meaning of our own pains and sufferings.

This Feast reminds us that the more a person loves, the more he or she identifies with the pain of the beloved.

A brother's death is more upsetting than a pet's. A son's dying is more trying than a friend's. A spouse's death can cause deep sorrow and grief. To get a grasp of Mary's grief at the crucifixion we need somehow to appreciate the great extent of her love for her Son

One of the paradox's of the Faith is the more we love Jesus the more we will suffer because we are deepening the joining of our lives with Jesus in his suffering. At the same time our suffering becomes meaningful because we know that it was through suffering that Jesus and Mary came to share in the Resurrection.

Think of our own suffering. It often consists in small daily reverses. Extended periods of waiting, sudden changes of plans, and projects that do not turn out as we expected are all common examples. At times setbacks come in the form of reduced circumstances. Perhaps at a given moment we even lack necessities such as a job to support our family. Practising the virtue of detachment well during such moments will be a great means for us to imitate and unite ourselves to Christ. Mary is there when her Son is stripped even of his tunic. Suffering will at times include significant illness and will for all of us include death.

St. Jose Maria comments and then asks:

Herein lies sanctity. Let us always bear the cross with love. Are you suffering some great tribulation? Do you have setbacks? Say very slowly, as if savouring the words, this powerful and manly prayer:

‘May the most just and most lovable will of God be done.’

He goes on to write:

Invoke the Heart of Mary. Have the purpose and determination of uniting yourself to her sorrow in reparation for your sins and the sins of all people. Pray to her – for every soul – that her sorrow may increase in us our aversion from sin, and that we may be able to love the physical or moral suffering of each day as a means of cleansing of sin and growth in holiness.

With her as our model we will find consolation and the energy to strive forward with peace and serenity as we learn obedience through suffering and so one day attain to perfection.