

## **Homily For the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows - Year I**

**St. Peter's 8:30 AM/7:00 PM Masses for Wednesday, Sept 15, 2021**

**Hebrews 5:7-9** "Jesus learned obedience through suffering, became salvation for all who obey him."

**Psalms 31:1-5,14-15,19** "Into your hand I commit my spirit. My times are in your hands."

**Luke 2:33-35** "And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

### **Perfect Son - Perfect Disciple**

#### **Introduction**

Maybe the Protestants are right? We have so many Marian feasts and so much emphasis on Mary, the mother of Jesus, that we lose sight of Jesus the Saviour of the world. Those protestants were not right, but we always need to make sure we are crystal clear about the order of things in the Christian faith and Christian life. Today is a wonderful memorial for our understanding of the relationship between Mary and Jesus.

#### **Hebrews.**

Let's begin with Jesus. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews provides us with three key insights into his identity and why he is the master. Those three insights are: The prayer life of Jesus; The obedience of Jesus; The perfection of Jesus.

First is his prayer life: I think that the biggest problem with my own prayer life, besides my lack of consistency and a lot of other things. But the biggest problem is the intensity. Jesus prayed with tears, and loud cries and supplications. Our prayer needs to take in more of ourselves, including our deepest sighs and longings and emotions. There is a famous interaction between the fourth century bishop, Ambrose, and Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. She prayed so intensely for her son. Whenever I think of her I realize I need to do that for my son. St. Ambrose said to Monica: The son of so many tears will surely not be lost. In the same way, Jesus cries out from the depths of his human heart in such a deep way that we might not be lost.

Second is the obedience of Jesus. It is strange to think of Christ, the perfect Son of God, having to learn anything, let alone obedience to the Father, with whom, in his divinity, he is already in perfect and loving communion from all eternity. However, this is why it is so important that we understand the union of his humanity and divinity. For his human nature to have any meaning for us, we have to see him go through the same process as any of us do to conform his will to the Father's. That is why it is so powerful to hear him say in the garden: "Not my will but yours."

Finally, the perfection of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews tells us, takes place through his suffering. We know that suffering can make us bitter. But, united to the suffering of Christ, it can also bring about perfection in our lives. So many of the saints tell us that this is the only path to holiness and, if you don't have suffering in your life, you should ask for it.

### **Mary's Total Unity With Her Son**

Now let us consider Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows.

When I was in Grade 9, I went into a classroom where the teacher had used every part of the blackboard to write on in the previous class. He tossed the eraser brush to a student and, with an authoritative voice I can still hear, told him: Erase the blackboards 'in totality' Well, I had never heard that word before, but I could tell what it meant. It was an order to be perfect with that task. Don't miss anything.

That word came back to me as I was reflecting on Our Lady of Sorrows. She is the one who follows Jesus 'in totality', in the same three ways as Jesus does.

Through her prayer life: Everything she heard from Simeon's lips, she treasured in her heart. Everything we hear about her experience of watching her son hated, betrayed, scourged and crucified tells us that her prayer came from the depth of her heart and soul. That's what Simeon means when he says that her heart would be pierced.

Through her obedience: Of course, we remember Mary's yes to the angel: "Let it be done to me according to your word." But Mary's journey of obedience had only just begun at that point. At no point along the way do we have the sense that Mary tried to talk Jesus out of the path he would follow. In fact, there is every reason to believe that she and Joseph are the ones who taught Jesus obedience by their own witness. Ultimately, as a mother, she is the one who experiences the totality of unity with all of the things that Jesus suffered.

Through her perfection: Mary's sorrows are referred to as her martyrdom, because the suffering of the soul is even greater than that of the body. Jesus is the perfect image of the father. Mary is the perfect disciple, made so through intense prayer, made so by obedience, made so by suffering. Jesus became the perfection of the Son of God as his humanity conformed and shaped itself to the perfection of his divinity. Mary, through her perfect unity with the totality of the suffering of Jesus, became the perfect disciple.

This path would be impossible for us if we were walking on our own, or if we were forging some new path. It is only because Jesus has walked the path of perfect obedience, learned through suffering, that we can do the same. But Mary is first among disciples, because she walks every step with Jesus.

### **Call To Action**

Now we are called to pick up our crosses and follow Jesus. We don't need to go looking for crosses. If we follow in Mary's footsteps, who follows intimately closely in the footsteps of her Son, the crosses will come. We can, of course, try to offload those crosses, we can numb ourselves. Our culture is outstanding at providing ways for us to avoid, ignore or numb the pain. But today, on this feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, let us resolve to allow Mary to lead us, with totality, into the deepest intensity of prayer we can muster. Let us allow her to show us obedience to God in our own sorrows. And let us follow the way of perfection Mary shows us, the way to salvation. It may be a path of sorrow, but it is also the Good News. In Christ, we are not alone. With Mary, we walk a sure path.

## **Key Scripture Passages Today**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Simeon said to Mary: Behold, this child is destined for the ruin and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign of contradiction, and your own soul a sword will pierce.*

**Collect:** *O God, grant that your Church, participating with the Virgin Mary in the Passion of Christ, may merit a share in his resurrection.*

**Hebrews:** *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And, having been made perfect, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

**Psalm:** *In you, O Lord, I seek refuge. Do not let me ever be put to shame. You are indeed my rock and my fortress. Into your hand I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God My times are in your hands. Deliver me from the hand of my persecutors.*

**Luke:** *Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed, and a sword will pierce your own soul too."*