



CONSECRATION
TO THE
Sacred Heart of Jesus
AND THE
Immaculate Heart of Mary



June 2, 2018

The Sorrowful Heart of Mary

I am so glad I am Catholic; I am so grateful, grateful beyond words, beyond description, that I am Catholic. To enumerate the reasons would almost be to limit them, to indicate that the list is definitive and exclusive. So, I won't do that ... but, one of the reasons stands out, now, during the novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; the reason that is coming into focus right now, is our ability as Catholics to say both/and, and not only either/or.

As a Catholic I can say we both fast and feast, not just either fast like Puritans or feast like pagans and hedonists.

We, as Catholics, see the beauty and truth in both revelation and science, because God is the author of both; I don't have to choose between either Scripture as a fundamentalist or science as a rationalist.

As a Catholic, I have the freedom and the ability to say both/and.

Now, why did this particular reality come into focus during the novena to the Immaculate heart of Mary? Because her Heart is both Immaculate and Sorrowful; she is both the Cause of our Joy and Our Lady of Sorrows. These are not exclusive realities. As both Immaculate and Sorrowful, as both the Cause of Our Joy and Our Lady of Sorrows, she is our mother.

If you are a parent, do you not experience joy and sorrow simultaneously because of your children? Both joyful, perhaps, because your child is living the faith and becoming on her own accord a faithful practicing Catholic and yet at the same time, sorrowful because she is more independent and autonomous? Both joyful that another is successful in his career and sorrowful because that same career is taking him half way across the country? Both joyful that one is following her vocation, and sorrowful in the sacrifice that entails on your own part?

If you are not a parent, you have parents. Could you not, at times, see both joy and sorrow in the eyes of your parents? Mothers specialize in this.

Mary, the perfect mother, experienced it often:

1. At the Annunciation: she is the first to know that the redeemer is coming, that God is becoming man; she is also the first to know that He is coming to suffer
2. At the Presentation: she joyfully presents her first-born Son in the Temple; Simeon tells her that her will be a sign of contradiction and that a sword will pierce her own heart.
3. At the Visit of the Magi: she sees her Son recognized and adored by the wise men of the East; and then she learns that Herod is trying to take that same Son's life.

On and on and on ... culminating in the pinnacle act of Jesus' redeeming love. At the foot of the Cross Mary is both joyful knowing that salvation for all has been merited and sorrowful, gazing upon the brutal reality of its price.

As Mary stood at the foot of the Cross she saw the horror of sin and she saw its just rewards. She heard the excruciating words her Son uttered, she treasured each one. And then she heard Him say, "Woman, behold your Son." Again, both sorrow and joy. Sorrow because Jesus was exchanging Himself with asinful

man, the perfect for the imperfect, God for fallen creature, the joy and light of her life for someone else's son.

And yet joy because now she is the mother of all and can love, assist and guide all to her Son.

Immediately following the words, "Woman, behold you son." Jesus adds, looking at John and at us: "Behold your mother." She is de facto our mother. No doubt each one of us brings her sorrow and joy. No doubt she has a personal love for each of us; no doubt, a vested interest.

She knows what our supernatural life costs. How joyful she is as she helps us and witnesses our growth in the spiritual life, in virtue, in holiness, in closeness to her Son. How saddening it is when that supernatural life, that grace so costly won, the merit of salvation that costs so dearly, the ransom price beyond measure, is rejected.

Yes, she is our mother -- both joyful and sorrowful -- and because she is our mother we have every right and the privilege to approach her as such: approach her with our concerns and worries, asking for her assistance and guidance, seeking her protection and intercession.

With every right and privilege there comes a duty. If we seek her assistance we must accept it; if we pray for her guidance, we must follow her; if we implore her protection, we must heed her warnings and accept her maternal care. If we beseech her intercession, we must lovingly and faithfully accept God's answer to our prayer, joining our will to His.

Not ignoring the joyful aspect of Mary's motherhood and not trying to replace the Immaculate with the Sorrowful -- again, both/and -- I would like to address more specifically, what causes Mary's on-going sorrow and what we can do, as her children, to lessen it.

One of the primary devotions of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Father Founder, Father Joaquin Masmitja, combined his family's devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows with the very popular devotion of the mid-19th century to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Her

Immaculate Heart is her Sorrowful Heart. Mary has only one heart. The badge we wear of the Immaculate Heart of Mary depicts it as pierced by the sword prophesied by Simeon at the Presentation in the Temple of the 40-day old Infant Jesus.

The question is not always verbalized, but we can often see it in the facial expression of others: Why would anyone be devoted to sorrows? In that vein, the question could be asked regarding the Stations of the Cross or the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. But these popular devotions need no defense. Devotion to Our Lady's Sorrows, to Our Lady of Sorrows, is complementary to our prayerful consideration of Our Lord's Passion and Death.

Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows recognizes, honors and reveres the compassionate role Our Lady, Loving Mother of Our Savior, fulfilled in the redemption of the world. Like any authentic devotion, however, it moves past this recognition and progresses to imitation. True devotion is to be life changing, it is striving to be like the one to whom you are devoted.

Contemplating the Passion of the Lord, we are reminded that Jesus lets Mary share in His suffering; He cannot let her carry His Cross, that will be for Simon of Cyrene, but she need not. He invites her, He lets her, share in the redemption of the world in a way befitting the Mother of the Savior. Her love mirrors His; her suffering and sorrow join His. These two are inseparable. 33 years before, Mary gave Him His Precious Blood to be poured out for us; during the Passion she sees it to fulfillment.

At the foot of the Cross, knowing the will of the Father that the sins of mankind be expiated, Mary stands and offers the sacrifice of her Son with the Father. Mary stood, in keeping with the divine plan. Standing, she endured with her Son the intensity of His sufferings, associating herself with His sacrifice and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim who was born of her.

It is not impossible for Mary both to rejoice at the redemption of the world and, at the same time, to share in the suffering of the holocaust's victim. And so, she stands, bespeaking her interior disposition, united with the will of God that mankind be redeemed. She cooperates and participates in the sacrifice which freed us from slavery to the devil. She is active on Calvary! With the Heavenly Father, she is sacrificing her only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world.

On Calvary Mary compassionates; she suffers with Jesus, she joins in ransoming sinners. If true devotion is imitation, then how can we, truly devoted to the Sorrowful Mother, imitate this? How can we stand with Mary as she participates in Jesus' mission, compassionating, at the foot of the Cross and helping save sinners? At the Mass, by participating fully and attentively at the un-bloody sacrifice of Calvary; it is here that we stand with Our Lady of Sorrows and intercede most efficaciously for sinners. Here every day we climb Calvary and are at the foot of the Cross. Here, standing in participation, we too are making our sacrifice, joining our sacrifice to His efficacious sacrifice and as Mary in her compassion suffered and prayed for all of us sinners, we most perfectly at Mass bring sinners to Him through our prayers and our intentions. There is no more powerful prayer for sinners.

For me to grow in my devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, I need to grow in devotion to the Mass, in my attentive participation in the Mass, in my intercessory prayer during the Mass. As Mary offered her Son to the Father she saw the redemption of the world, and she willed that all sinners be saved. Obviously, her willing it did not make it so. She is not infinite like her Son so she could not know and name all who would be saved nor could she name or know all that would reject the merits won through this loving act, but she willed that none be lost, she wanted all to be redeemed.

At Mass, I need to conscientiously stand with Mary on Calvary, the place of the Skull, where she and her Off-Spring definitively crush the head, the skull, of the serpent, of satan. By generously taking our place with her we can carry the spiritually paralyzed, the spiritually blind, the spiritual leper to Him and, seeing our

faith and the faith of Our Mother, the Crucified One will offer them paradise, the ultimate of all healing. What a privilege for us.

A second aspect of this devotion, is simply that of accompaniment, of being a loving, praying presence. Probably 99% of the time when someone shares with us their trials, their sufferings, there is absolutely NO physical, tangible action I can take to relieve them of their sufferings. NONE. I can't force another human being with free will to lay aside a sinful lifestyle and return to the faith-filled practice of the faith, to a loving, healing relationship with the Lord. I can't. I can't take away someone's cancer or effects of a stroke. I can't cure someone of an addiction or a life of crime.

The act of compassion is primarily an interior one... So much does it reside in the mind rather than in the performance [of deeds] that sometimes compassion does not have to show itself outwardly at all. It is simply there, waiting. ... It is at the ready, wanting to help in any way at all or in no way at all. ... Compassion is co-suffering: constant willingness to share in the sufferings of others. (Hubert van Zeller, Approach to Calvary, 35)

There is little enough that anyone can do, but the word *passio* does not mean doing, it means suffering. (Hubert van Zeller, Approach to Calvary, 40)

I can stand with the other in their sufferings. I can offer my moral, prayerful support. I can strengthen the one suffering. I can encourage, give heart to, the one suffering.

Mary could do nothing to alleviate the suffering of Jesus. Nothing. There was no relief for Him. Even when she met Him as He carried His cross, she could not step in and carry it with Him as did Simon the Cyrene. But she was there. She would not let Him be alone to suffer the physical torture, the emotional suffering from the abandonment of His apostles and disciples, the psychological suffering of being rejected by of His own.

But she could be with Him. She would compassionate. How many people just need to share their sufferings with us and for us to listen with an open heart? We promise our prayers but we cannot take it away. God will use the suffering to a good end, so we do not try to take it away as Mary did not try to take Jesus down from the Cross. But we stand with them.

Compassion is “yielding to another’s cross as though it were one’s own. It is making that other’s cross one’s own.” (Hubert van Zeller, *Approach to Calvary*, 35-36) And most assuredly, we can take them to the Mass.

One of the most beautiful realities with this accompaniment is that it doesn’t even require physical proximity, a physical presence. Love unites. Love, compassion, and this sense of presence is in the moral sense. I don’t need to be standing right next to them to love them in this way. Love is not weakened by distance, in fact, love effects union even despite physical separation. This is one of the profound beauties of the Mystical Body.

Truly, to practice this devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows is to imitate her as she stands with Jesus. She is a presence for Him. She is accompanying Him. We can be companions with the suffering by standing with them in their suffering, not trying to fix anything, but by listening, loving, praying and sacrificing for them... By standing at the foot of their Cross, silently and prayerfully.

Until the end of time, the Cross will be present. Our Lady did not shun the Cross, she was not repulsed by the shame her Son suffered. There is no other road to reach our goal than the Way of the Cross, joyfully trod. The joy is being with Jesus, Who accepted His Cross and all of its suffering with love and with joy.

There is yet another way to grow in devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. It is our privilege to promote the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. Very similar to the Rosary itself, this Rosary of the Seven Sorrows is a school of love; by praying this Rosary we meditate on the Seven Sorrows of Mary from the Presentation in

the Temple to the Burial of Jesus. We see the work of our redemption and Mary's participation. These sorrows are easily relatable to our lives and help us grow in our comprehension of Jesus' loving sacrifice ... how much He wants us in Heaven and everything He is willing to do so that we can be there with Him for all eternity. By meditating on these Seven Sorrows of Mary we can begin to form within ourselves a heart like unto hers.

Devotion to the Sorrows of Our Lady, to Our Lady of Sorrows, honors Mary's participation in our redemption; it recognizes and values her role in our salvation. This devotion is not a mere remembrance of her sorrows. A real devotion changes lives.

Most importantly, this devotion consists in a heartfelt and sincere sorrow for our sins and the sins of others. Sin is the real cause of her sorrows; we should, therefore, strive to console her by striving to eradicate our sinful ways and by sacrificing, praying and working for the conversion of sinners.

It has been noted just recently that praying for the conversion of sinners is somewhat of a lost art; it is rare that the general public hears this injunction or is encouraged to undertake this practice. Upon a little reflection that shouldn't be surprising. We have lost our impetus to pray for the conversion of sinners because our culture, our society, teaches us to "tolerate" others, to not judge the actions and lifestyles of others, to not see anything as wrong or sinful. Please ... don't tolerate me! Instead, love me! Help me to be good and holy. Don't be afraid to hurt my feelings; don't enable me to continue sinning!

The devil has two primary tricks that he uses over and over again:

1. To make people think he isn't real
2. To make people think sin isn't real

Well, the devil is real and sin is real.

Souls are going to hell because no one is praying for them, no is one sacrificing for them. We can prevent souls from going to hell. We can help souls go to heaven. Why are we tolerating sinful ways to merely avoid hurting someone's feelings when their eternal salvation is at stake? We were all created to spend eternity in heaven with God and yet we would rather not step on anyone's toes, so we let eternal happiness slip through their fingers. Our Mother Mary won't stand by without trying to obtain for them the grace of conversion, and as their brothers and sisters we shouldn't either.

Just think, someday we will all meet Jesus face to face. Wouldn't it be a wonderful sight to see, with Him, all those we helped attain heaven through our sacrifices and prayers?

On Calvary we look upon Our Redeemer on the Cross with sincere and deep sorrow and regret, but also with joy, with contrition and with gratitude. Here we see our redemption, our hope. These sufferings which caused Mary great suffering also cause great joy. Christ has taken on the punishment for the sins of all who have ever lived, who are living now, and who will ever live. The forgiveness and mercy displayed in the ultimate act of love are immeasurable, innumerable, gratuitous and available for all. We have been ransomed, redeemed, and now it is possible to spend eternity in Heaven with Father, Son and Spirit ... and with our Most Compassionate and Loving Mother.

Here we have a glimpse into Mary's Sorrowful Heart.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned our Father Founder and his role in joining devotion to the Immaculate Heart with devotion to the Sorrowful Heart. His own prayer brought him to a unique insight; when meditating on the seven sorrows of Our Mother -- Mary's participation in Jesus' redeeming act -- Fr. Masmitja realized that there is yet another piercing sorrow for Our Lady: an eighth sword, so speak. This eighth sword, like the sword of Damocles, is imminent and ever-present. What could it be? What sorrow could be threatening Mary; what sorrow could affect her at all, after the brutal passion of Her Son?

He knew, as we all do, that everyone would not, nor will in the future, accept the graces and forgiveness won through of Jesus' redemptive act. Think of the sorrow of the parent who has a wayward son or daughter. Mary sorrows, too, since there will be those who will choose to live their life on earth for their own gratification and with only themselves in mind. Unfortunately, this will lead these souls along the downward path, the wide path that leads away from God and ultimately to hell.

Our Father Founder wanted his new congregation of Sisters to act as a shield to protect the Heart of Our Lady against this suffering, against this eighth sword that would pierce Our Mother's Heart each time someone rejected the Lord's forgiveness and mercy. To accomplish this, he instructed us to pray and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners, not merely to pray in reparation for sin, but to pray, so to speak, to prevent sin, to hold that eighth sword at bay, to guard Our Lady's Most Pure Heart, the Heart of Our Most Loving Mother, from further suffering.

Father Masmijtja wrote in the Forward of our Rule of Life

This Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart meditates on the cruel sword of sorrow that pierces this Heart at the sight of sinners renewing the passion and death of her Son and despising the merits of the blood shed for them with so much love. It seeks especially, through prayer and other pious practices, to obtain from the Divine Mercy an interior grace for sinners, so that, abandoning the state of sin, they will turn to God, the center of all happiness.

To this end, we have decided to promote this devotion to the Sorrows of Our Lady particularly for the intention of vocations to our community. We are asking Our Lady of Sorrows to send more young women to be Sisters of the Immaculate heart of Mary: strong, dedicated, persevering and holy ... so there will be more of us to pray for the conversion of sinners, more of us to shield her Heart from an eighth sword of suffering.

Also, we ask you to please join us in shielding the Heart of Mary from this eighth sword, by praying and sacrificing for the conversion of sinners.

As we ourselves grow in this devotion, as we offer it to others, we can't help but think of the reward promised in the beatitudes to those who sorrow: they will be consoled, that is, they will be with Jesus. This is the greatest of all rewards and there is no other way to this reward than the path of Our Lady, the perfect disciple, who will never rest until all her children are in heaven.