



*The
Immaculate
Heart of Mary*



The Sword

June 25, 2025



I would like to begin with a reading from the Gospel of Luke; this is from the account of the Presentation:

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about Him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted, and you yourself a sword will pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon, a man filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied: a sword will pierce this young mother of a 40-day old Infant. A shadow is cast over this joyous occasion; it is a shadow in the shape of a cross.

Nobody but the parents of this Infant know his identity; Mary and Joseph **know** that He is

the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

And that

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

They **did not yet know** all of the details, that



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For our sake he [would be] crucified under Pontius Pilate,
[] suffer [] death and [be] buried.

But they **did know**, as the Archangel Gabriel told Mary, that this Child

Will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of David his father and He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:32)

And, as the angel told St. Joseph, that

It is through the Holy Spirit that this Child [had] been conceived in her. [That she would] bear a son and [they were] to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:20b-21)

They know this Child, the Son of God, came into the world to save us from our sin. All of their Scriptures, all of their history, tells them that this will entail suffering and the shedding of blood. Mary knows that she has agreed to give a human nature and a human body, capable of suffering, to the Son of God, who before the Incarnation was **incapable** of suffering. She has had nine months and 40 days to **ponder** what her role will be in all of this. Here Joseph learns that his role will be ended before the completion of this Child's mission. Here Mary learns that her mission will be intertwined with her Child's. From Simeon Mary hears what she has known in the secret recesses of her Immaculate Heart since the day of Incarnation, that she, too, would suffer.

This sword prophesied by Simeon is what we see in so many images of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. **The Immaculate Heart of Mary is a pierced Heart.**

We see it numerous times throughout the Gospels, with the culmination during the pinnacle act of Jesus' redeeming love.

Remember, Jesus **lets** Mary share in His suffering; He invites her, He lets her, share in the redemption of the world in a way befitting the Mother of the Savior and as foretold in the third chapter of Genesis. Her love mirrors His; her suffering and sorrow join His. These two are inseparable. 33 years earlier, 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's sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. 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. On Calvary Mary compassionates; she suffers **with** Jesus, she joins Him in ransoming sinners, freeing them 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.

There at the foot of the Cross Mary saw the horror of sin, she saw its just consequences, **and** as foretold, she takes part in the conquest of sin and the crushing of the serpent's head. In Genesis we read that God spoke thus to the serpent:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
They will strike at your head,
while you strike at **their** heel (Genesis 3:15).

To the very end of Jesus' earthly life, Mary's life's mission was intertwined with His.

God Himself, in a "wondrous divine decision" linked "forever the Son of God's human identity [and mission as Savior] with a woman," with Mary (Pope John Paul II, Theotokos, 244). Her Heart was definitively pierced as she stood there, joining her sacrifice with His, to redeem all mankind. So united were the Hearts of Jesus and Mary that the two Hearts were pierced with a single sword. The lance that pierced the silent and still Heart of Jesus, causing blood and water to flow, just as truly pierced the living, beating Heart of the Mother. No mother seeing her child suffer so terribly could remain unscathed.

Mary participated in the cost; she knows the price of our supernatural life.

Even now from heaven, 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 for her when that supernatural life, that grace so costly purchased, the merit of salvation so dearly wrought, **is rejected**. How sad it is. Even now, the sword pierces her each time one of her children rejects the graces and the salvation for which Jesus shed His Blood, a gift which is thought little of and rejected by many.

Though her Heart now rejoices in the resurrection of Her Son and in the glories of heaven, it is still sorrowful at the loss of souls. Each time one of her children reaches the end of their pilgrimage she rejoices as they enter into their heavenly glory. On the contrary, each time one of her children rejects the merits Jesus won for our salvation, she sorrows. Just as Jesus bears His wounds in heaven, so the Mother's Heart is still pierced and will be until all of her children are in heaven with her (St. John Vianney).

So, we have a glimpse, a clue, into the suffering, pierced Heart of Our Mother, a Heart that still weeps for her wayward children and still intercedes for them that they not reject the grace of their salvation. **That is good news**, for it means that there is a powerful intercessor in heaven for ourselves and for all the sinners in the world. She never tires of praying and interceding for us and for those in the most spiritual danger.

Here is some more good news ... we can help her. We, too, can intercede for sinners, sacrifice for them and make a difference in their lives and their eternal destiny.

It has been noted 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 their actions or lifestyles, to not recognize anything as wrong or sinful. But ...

Toleration is not a virtue. Toleration is not the answer, but charity is. Would you rather be tolerated or loved? We have been commanded to love as Jesus loves: freely, unconditionally, and personally ... even if the other does not want our love. When we love, we desire what is **good** for the one we love, not necessarily what they want, not necessarily what is pleasurable, exciting or fun, but what is for their good. There is a big difference between toleration and charity.

The devil has two primary tactics that he uses over and over again: first, he convinces us he isn't real and, secondly, that sin isn't real, that instead it is just a legitimate exercise of freedom.

Well, the devil is real and sin is real and souls are going to hell because no one is praying for them, no one is sacrificing for them. It is as old as the original fall of Adam and Eve. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because they wanted to be as God, **deciding** what was good and what was evil. That had, in fact, already been decided and written in the hearts of every human being.

Our Mother Mary won't stand by without trying to obtain for her wayward children the grace of conversion, and as their brothers and sisters we shouldn't either.

We **can** thwart the devil's efforts and assist souls in evading hell. We **can** help souls go to heaven. Why are we tolerating sinful ways, taking no action to eradicate them? We were all created to spend eternity in heaven with God and yet we would rather not risk offending anyone or risk being called phobic about something, so we let their eternal happiness slip through their fingers. Just because I know that some behavior is seriously displeasing to God **and**, ultimately, steals the joy of the sinner, doesn't make me a phobic. It means that I know there is a right and wrong and that living accordingly is the path to heaven.

St. James tells us in the last two verses of his letter, "My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth **and someone bring him back**, he should know that **whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins**" (James 5:19-20).

What St. James is describing here can be approached in two non-exclusive ways. The first has traditionally been referred to as a spiritual work of mercy, that is, to admonish the sinner. If we are in a position to do this, that is, if the one we are concerned for will receive it from us, we should try to give the other **the truth in love**. “The truth,” says Jesus, “will set you free” (Jn 8:32): free from slavery to sin, free from slavery to pride and pleasure, free to be happy, joyful and at peace, free to follow Jesus all the way to heaven.

If only those who commit habitual serious sin with no intention of amendment knew the glorious freedom of the sons of God (Romans 8:21), and how happy they would be even in this life if they would enter into a relationship with Him, and then out of love for Him, obey His law.

Realistically, often we are not in the position to approach hardened sinners and speak about the purpose and goal of life. Most often the more efficacious approach is for us to pray and sacrifice that their hearts be opened to the graces of repentance and conversion that Jesus **is already offering**.

So, we have three possible game plans: 1) either to lovingly correct the sinner, or 2) pray and sacrifice for them, or 3) **both!**

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?

God created us so that we might be with Him for all eternity in heaven. He did so because He loves us and wants us there with Him. It is really that simple; but life isn't that simple, when sin entered the world things got complicated.

With a fallen human nature – which we all have – knowing, loving, and serving God sometimes doesn't seem so attractive and when we call that into question, we also question the attractiveness of being happy with God for all eternity. Once the luring power of sin enters the picture, everything, all of a sudden, gets very complicated.

When one decides to pursue, or simply slides into default, seeking the passing pleasure of sin instead of the goodness, truth and beauty of God, one would rather forget the reality of hell and the existence of the devil, just as the devil prefers. However, just ignoring it or wishing it away or even claiming that God's mercy will not allow eternal punishment, does not make hell non-existent, it does not just disappear. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is clear: “The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity ...” (CCC 1035).

So, do we just let people wander away from the Lord and endanger their eternal salvation, frustrate their purpose of existence, and thus be unhappy both in this life

and the next? As their brothers and sisters in Christ, we can't just ignore them. We cannot be satisfied with minding only to our own salvation. Let us, through prayer and sacrifice, strive 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" (Father Joaquin Masmitja).

If we don't help them we are allowing souls to fall into hell without putting up a fight.

St. John, in his first letter, says, "If anyone sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, he should pray to God and He will give him life" (1 Jn 5:16). **Some** are called to evangelize and preach on street corners or in foreign lands – or even teach these eternal truths in classrooms – working for the conversion of sinners. Some are ... but **all** are obliged to assist others in doing or returning to what is right and just, to knowing, loving and serving God so that they can be happy with Him now and for all eternity in heaven.

Praying for the salvation of the souls of poor sinners, is loving them; it is part of the great commandment to love. We cannot idly let sinners go on their way, sadly seeking happiness and fulfillment apart from God. We are our brothers' keepers! We must pray for the salvation of souls, for the conversion of sinners, out of love for God, for the sake of the sinner and for our own sake.

I have already quoted the New Testament, but this injunction wasn't new with Jesus. Hear God speak to the prophet Ezekiel:

If I say to the wicked, You shall surely die—and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade the wicked from their evil conduct in order to save their lives—then they shall die for their sin, but I will hold you responsible for their blood. If, however, you warn the wicked and they still do not turn from their wickedness and evil conduct, they shall die for their sin, but you shall save your life. ... If, on the other hand, you warn [others] to avoid sin, and they do not sin, they will surely live because of the warning, and you in turn shall save your own life (Ezekiel 3:18-21).

Clearly, if we do not help others through our prayers and, when words are necessary and possible, with our loving correction, we endanger our **own** salvation. We need each other's help in this life and we need to help others. Eternal life is too precious to jeopardize it so lackadaisically.

Having cited now both the Old Testament and the New, I don't want you to think that heaven's insistence ended 2000 years ago. As recent as the beginning of the last century, God sent two more emissaries with the same message, with even more urgency: the Angel of Peace and Our Lady of Fatima. During the angels' visits, which preceded Mary's, his message to the three shepherd children is quite clear.

The Angel taught Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta the following prayer:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly and I offer You the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifferences by which He is offended. And by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, **I beg the conversion of poor sinners.**

The next Spring, that of 1917, when Mary appeared to them, revealing her Immaculate Heart, she made this the topic of three of her six visits:

During her first visit, on May 13, Mary asked the children, “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God, to endure all the sufferings He may be pleased to send you as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and **to ask for the conversion of sinners?**”

In July, before showing the children the vision of hell, she encouraged the children by saying, “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice, ‘O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the **conversion of sinners** and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” After she showed them hell she taught them the following prayer ... you all know this ... “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; and **lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of Your mercy.**” And she told them, “You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.”

Lastly, in August she reiterated, clearly, her request: “**Pray much and make sacrifices on behalf of sinners, for many souls go to hell because there is no one to make sacrifices and to pray for them.**”

Yes, that is what she said! Mary clearly says that there are **many souls going to hell because there is no one sacrificing and praying for them.** These words are crystal clear: we can make a difference! The eternal destiny of some souls is dependent upon our help, our sacrifices and prayers.

May these words of Our Lady, from this day forward, never be true again. Let us make sure that no one is going to hell on our watch, because we are not praying and sacrificing for them, because we are not standing at the foot of the Cross with Mary interceding for sinners.

Let’s go back to the beginning for just a second. Mary’s Pierced Heart, her Immaculate Heart, radiates and communicates her sinlessness. She suffers no effects of sin: her intellect is unclouded and her will is unweakened. She can see clearly the effects of sin in others, but most especially does she see the effects of

sin **on her Son**, He who became sin to free us from our sins (2 Cor 5:21). No sin hindered her; Her Immaculate Conception allowed her **full participation** in Jesus' redemptive act. No self-love, no pride, envy nor sloth, no anger, greed, gluttony nor lust neither clouded her intellect nor weakened her will. She tasted fully the suffering; she shared fully in His sorrow.

She was with Him. She heard the mockery of the Pharisees and the passers-by, the blasphemies of the crowd, the insults of the priestly clan. Mary at the foot of the Cross saw the spitting and the revilement. She shared the shame and debasement of the condemned criminal. She saw the mangled, torn body of her Son hanging on the Cross.

Yet, ultimately, the real cause of this suffering and sorrow was not the Passion and Crucifixion of her Son, but, in fact, our sins, and the sins of all mankind throughout the history of the world, the effects of which became visible on Calvary.

The sword of Mary's Heart, yes, is caused by the sufferings of her Son. But what causes the suffering of Her Son? Sin. Finally, then, the sword in Mary Heart is caused by sin, our own sin and the sins of the whole world. Our redemption from these sins, the salvation of souls, was purchased for us with the Precious Blood of Jesus on the Cross. When we – or anyone else – rejects that redemption, the sword pierces Mary's Heart again. **We can** lessen that, maybe even prevent that.

We must never be complacent and simply resign hardened sinners to their fate uncontended. Hell is eternal separation from God and we were created to be with Him forever in heaven. We have an obligation, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, to assist our brother and sisters in their Christian life.

Since sin is the real cause of the sword piercing Mary's Heart, we should, therefore, strive to console her by striving to eradicate our own sinful ways and by sacrificing, praying and working for the conversion of sinners and to prevent sinners from sinning. There could be no greater use of our time than to offer our work, our prayer, and our sacrifices in full participation with Jesus' mission, that is, for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls.

Why don't we end with a fervent "Hail, Mary" for the soul nearest death right now, at this moment, who is most in need of Divine Mercy.