

THE SEVEN sorrows of mary

Mary's faith and fortitude can help us reflect on our own Gospel call to serve those who are suffering and in need.

THE FIRST SORROW OF MARY

The Prophecy of Simeon

(Luke 2:25-35)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

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.**"

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Simeon's prophecy revealed to Mary that she would not be able to hold onto her son forever. The day would come when she would need to let him go, let him serve the wider world for the good of many. And she learned that this would be terribly painful.

Serving the common good is not always easy, but Mary's example shows us that perseverance, faith and reliance on God can reveal our unique roles in God's family.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. Is it hard for me to put myself in service of the common good? How do I find Jesus when I'm faced with hardships?
2. When have I walked with my neighbors in their struggles? How does love of our neighbors serve the common good?

Pray: *Our Father... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE SECOND SORROW OF MARY

The Flight Into Egypt

(Matthew 2:13-15)

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him. **Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.** He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophets might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Mary is forced to leave her home to travel with her family to a foreign land, fearful of persecution. We hear Jesus' voice: "I was ... a stranger, and you welcomed me."

So many people and families around the world follow in Mary's footsteps, fleeing war, disaster and persecution, seeking opportunities to work and live with dignity.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. When have I been a stranger in need of welcome?
2. When have I had the opportunity to welcome a stranger? How did I respond?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE THIRD SORROW OF MARY

The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple

(Luke 2:41-50)

Each year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

But they did not understand what he said to them.

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Anxious and worried, Mary did not stop seeking Jesus. She looked among friends, family and strangers alike. And though she found him, she did not understand his words.

We, too, seek Jesus—and seek to do his work in our world. Often, like Mary, we are anxious and worried about building up God's kingdom, and we may not understand challenges that come our way. Let us follow her example, trusting that Christ calls us where we are most needed, to do that work that only we can do.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. When have I felt anxious—as Mary did—in my efforts to do God's work in the world? How did I work through those feelings?
2. Sometimes I am called to plant seeds of peace and justice that others will water and still others will see bloom. How do I respond, even if I am uncertain of my own role?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE FOURTH SORROW OF MARY

The Meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross

(the Fourth Station of the Cross)

Mary meets Jesus on his way to Calvary. Her son is mocked and jeered at, his body bruised and broken, crushed under the weight of the cross he bears. What quiet word does she have for him? What does he say to her? She knows he goes to his death, that her time with him is nearing an end. Yet, she does not abandon her son. She does not waver in her resolve to be with him until the end.

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Mary put herself in a dangerous place. In order to be present to her son—a condemned criminal—in his most dire moment, she had to put herself in physical danger, surrounded by a crowd of bloodthirsty men and women. But, bolstered by faith and fortitude, her love never wavered.

In Mary, we see ourselves being present to people society has marginalized, condemned, cast out. Through Mary, we are encouraged to be present to those who are the poorest of the poor.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. How does Mary's example in the face of human suffering fortify me in my efforts to build God's kingdom of justice and peace?
2. What do I think Mary felt in this moment of encounter? Have I experienced similar moments in my own life?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE FIFTH SORROW OF MARY

The Crucifixion

(John 19:17-30)

And carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Was this a hopeless moment for Mary? Did she feel like God had abandoned her? In Mary, we see a woman who is present to suffering to the very end. We see a woman who, though she herself has been hurt, does not fail to reach out to others in their suffering.

Jesus, through Mary, invites us to reflect on the importance of community, even in moments of great darkness.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. Do I make myself available to others, even if I am suffering?
2. What role can my community play in moments of challenge and suffering?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE SIXTH SORROW OF MARY

Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

(Mark 15:42-46)

When it was already evening, since it was the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was amazed that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had already died. And when he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.

Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb.

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

Never leaving her son's side, even after his death, Mary reveals to us the importance of death with dignity. Jesus' body is not left on the cross, but brought down to be buried.

In our world today, many of our brothers and sisters are left upon their own crosses: crosses of hunger, homelessness, war and persecution.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. Who around me is left upon a cross? How can I help bring him or her down?
2. How do I promote the dignity of those around me—both near and far—throughout their entire lives? Have I provided care with dignity to someone in need, perhaps at the end of their earthly life?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

THE SEVENTH SORROW OF MARY

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

(John 19:38–42)

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.

MARY, MOTHER AND DISCIPLE:

We know how the story ends—in 3 days, Jesus is raised from the dead, bringing salvation for all. Yet, Mary did not know, and she persevered anyway. She buried her son and then went about his work, comforting his friends, despite her sadness.

Mary is an example of faith-filled hope, the kind of hope we must cultivate in our own lives as we wait and work for God's kingdom.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

1. When has God surprised me, taking what I considered a failure and turning it into a great success?
2. How can Mary's example be an inspiration for my own work, especially as I seek to build God's kingdom on earth?

Pray: *Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory be ...*

The CANTICLE OF MARY

(Luke 1:46-55)

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior
For he has looked with favor on His lowly servant.*

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me,
And holy is his Name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear him
In every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
And has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel
For he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers,
To Abraham and his children forever.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.*

*As it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever.*

Amen

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful God, as I meditate over the Seven Sorrows of Mary, I encounter your son Jesus, and I try to better understand the suffering of my brothers and sisters in need. May this encounter cultivate in me a heart of conversion filled with solidarity, so that I may take compassionate action in the face of human suffering. As I walk with Mary, our mother and example, may my faith be strengthened to be a witness, disciple and co-creator of your Kingdom. **Amen.**