

THE SEVEN SORROWS OF OUR LADY

Celebrant: Greeting and Introduction.

Celebrant: O Mary a terrible sword has pierced your holy soul. Except for God, no one knows of your suffering. Your soul does not break; it is brave, because it is with Jesus. Sweet Mother, unite our souls to Jesus, because it is only then that we will be able to endure all trials and tribulations, and only in union with Jesus will our little sacrifices be pleasing to God. Brave and tender Mother, continue to teach us about the interior life. May the sword of suffering never break us. O pure Virgin, pour courage into our hearts and guard it.

The 1st Sorrow of Our Lady - The Prophecy of Simeon

Reader 1: In St. Luke's Gospel we read: 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." (Luke 2: 33-35)

Celebrant: When Mary's 40-day period of purification has almost ended, she goes to Jerusalem to fulfill the Mosaic Law and for the required offering to the Lord of every firstborn male. After the ceremony, imagine young Mary's amazement when Simeon takes Jesus from her arms and acknowledges him as the Messiah! Only through divine inspiration can Simeon know this. Simeon blesses them and says to Mary, "And you yourself a sword will pierce." We can imagine that Mary shudders and holds Jesus close to her breast, as Joseph gently leads her out of the temple. They return to Nazareth where Mary ponders these things in her heart.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 2nd Sorrow of Our Lady - The Flight into Egypt

Reader 2: In St. Matthew's Gospel we read: When [the wise men] 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. (Mt. 2:13-14)

Celebrant: Consider the sharp sorrow which Mary felt when, St. Joseph being warned by an angel, she had to flee by night in order to preserve her beloved Child from the slaughter decreed by Herod. We can only imagine the hardships that the Holy Family endured while in exile. One thing is certain: nothing can sway Mary's trust in God. She never questions. She ponders, letting the things she doesn't understand simply be there in her heart, in complete conformity to the divine plan. Mary is a model of cooperation with grace.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 3rd Sorrow of Our Lady - The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple

Reader 1: In St. Luke's Gospel we read: "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." (Luke 2: 41-45)

Celebrant: Terror seizes Mary's heart when she discovers that her son is missing. On the third day, while walking by the temple, the anxious mother hears the sweet sound of Jesus' voice. "Joseph, look! There he is among the teachers!" They run to Jesus' side, and Mary, with mingled joy and sorrow, speaks words of gentle reproach to her son.

Mary and Joseph realize they have a very special son—one who amazes even the teachers in the temple with his intelligence. Often, young Mary ponders these things in her heart while performing her daily tasks: grinding grain into flour to make bread, milking the goats, and spinning yarn and weaving it into clothing for her family.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 4th Sorrow of Our Lady - The Meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross

Reader 2: In St. Luke's Gospel we read: "A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him." - (Luke 23: 27)

Celebrant: Come, O you sinners, come and see if you can endure so sad a sight. This Mother, so tender and loving, meets her beloved Son, meets Him amid an impious rabble, who drag Him to a cruel death, wounded, torn by stripes, crowned with thorns, streaming with blood, bearing His heavy cross. Ah, consider, my soul, the grief of the blessed Virgin thus beholding her Son! Who would not weep at seeing this Mother's grief? Mary's heart breaks in unspeakable sorrow at the outrage committed against his precious body. She is powerless to minister to him, except by her presence. Their eyes meet and speak volumes of love in a frozen moment of anguished silence. "Trust, trust," Jesus' heart speaks to hers. His unspoken words echo in her hearing heart. With renewed strength, she walks the Way of her son.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 5th Sorrow of Our Lady - The Crucifixion

Reader 1: In St. John's Gospel we read: 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. (John 19: 25-27)

Celebrant: Finally they reach the hill of execution. The cruel soldiers stretch Jesus' battered body upon the cross and, with heavy hammer blows, drive the sharp spikes into his hands and feet. Mary's head pounds with each cruel blow. No one hears the silent scream that shatters her broken heart and echoes in the heart of God.

What now takes place is all according to God's plan. Her son, the Son of God, has to suffer and die. John, the beloved disciple, puts his arm around Mary, steadying her. "My precious child," she weeps, "heralded at Bethlehem, now suffering an ignominious and painful death!"

And then, through swollen, purple lips, Jesus speaks. Mary strains to hear his words. He looks tenderly upon his mother and, with great effort, says, "He is your son." He looks at the disciple and emphasizes, "She is your mother."

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 6th Sorrow of Our Lady - The Body of Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Reader 2: In St. Mark's Gospel we read: "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." (Mark 15: 43-46)

Celebrant: Saying, "It is finished," Jesus bows his head and dies. Jesus, her son, the Son of God, is dead. In her heart, Mary dies with him. Two broken hearts—one pierced with a spear, one pierced with sorrow—become one: Jesus and Mary forever united for the whole human family. Mary's sorrow is all the greater because of the greatness of her love. Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and placed in her arms. Mary embraces her son with a love beyond words, beyond grief itself. For now, it is the grief of a consummate sorrow. She, who had given birth to divinity, now presses the bloodied and battered remains of his humanity close to her sorrowful and shattered heart. "Let it be done according to thy will, Lord," she prays.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

The 7th Sorrow of Our Lady - The Burial of Jesus

Reader 1: In St. John's Gospel we read: "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." (John 19: 40-42)

Celebrant: Most sorrowful Virgin, sorrow again filled your heart when the sacred body of your Son was taken from your arms, and placed in a cold grave. Yet you did not doubt that He would rise again. Queen of Martyrs, let me join you in your sorrow, and grant me your own deep, trusting faith in the word of your Son. Let me trust that even in suffering, even when all seems lost, with Jesus there is always a way out. Obtain for me too, a sincere sorrow for all my sins, a burning love for my God, a tender devotion to you, so that one day, I may die in His grace and, with Him, rise to eternal life.

Together let us pray - Hail Mary . . .

Let us Pray

O most holy Virgin, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ: by the overwhelming grief you experienced when you witnessed the martyrdom, crucifixion, and death of your divine Son, look upon me kindly, and awaken in my heart a tender sympathy for Our Lord's sufferings. Grant me a sincere loathing of my sins, so that free from undue affection for the passing joys of earth; I may set my sights higher on the eternal joys of heaven. May all my thoughts and all my actions be directed towards this one great goal. Honor, glory, and love to our divine Lord Jesus, and to the holy and immaculate Mother of God. Amen