

Notes from the Liturgist...

Mary, Mater Dolorosa, pray for us...

In my previous article, I've shared with you about the Exultation of the Cross. This weekend, I'm going to share with you about the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. We celebrate this feast on September 15 after the Feast of the Holy Cross, to show the close connection between Jesus' Passion and Mary's Sorrows. The devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows has its origin in the Gospels of John 19:25 – Mary standing at the foot of the cross and Luke 2:35 – Simeon's prophecy that Mary's heart would be pierced with a sword.

The celebration and veneration of Mary's sorrows and compassion, based on the crucifixion scene goes back to the 4th and 5th centuries. Some of the saints who developed this devotion. It became particularly popular with the Franciscan and Servites in the 13th century.

The present form of the 7 Sorrows was popularized by John de Coudenberghe (1482):

1. The prophecy of Simeon (Lk. 2:34-35)
2. The flight into Egypt (Mt. 2:13-21)
3. The loss of Jesus for Three Days (Lk. 2:41-50)
4. The ascent to Calvary (Jn. 19:17)
5. The crucifixion and death of Jesus (Jn. 19: 18-30)
6. Jesus is taken down from the cross (Jn. 19:39-40)
7. Jesus is laid in the tomb (Jn.19:39-42)

If we go through the gospels, we find that Mary's sufferings are presented in a context of faith, hope, and love, and not in a context of sadness, anger, a lack of resolution, and ultimately without perceived hope. Therefore, she emerges not only as a pained, sorrowing mother, but as a faith-filled person.

Louis Cameli says that "The mystery of suffering is a mystery of connection and disconnection." The overall pattern of Mary emergent in our reflection is to link us with Jesus in his suffering and dying and rising, to link us with a larger world of concern. Mary comforts us primarily by being a sacrament of God's compassion, enduring, promising, and supporting.

Mary, Mater Dolorosa, you who are a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God, pray for us.