

## Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

September 15th

I Tim 4:12-16  
Ps 111:7-8, 9, 10  
Jn 19:25-27  
or  
Lk 2:33-35

Nicholas F. Martorano, O.S.A.

I'm sure that you are familiar with the anxiety associated with hearing your telephone ring in the middle of the night. You hesitate to answer because your feeling is that it must be "bad news". Our rectory phone rang the other night at 3:10 A.M. Startled from sleep, I went to answer the telephone with hesitation. Before I could even say a word, the voice on the other end was frantically yelling, "Father, you have to come right away. It's my son." After calming the mother, I attempted to get more information from her. I found out that her son was found dead in bed. "I'll be right there."

Here was a mother overcome with sorrow for her dead son. A woman who was crying out in pain because her 17 year old son, to whom she gave birth, nurtured, loved and raised, was now gone from her embrace. There was deep hurt in her voice and sorrow in her life.

Think of all the sorrowful moments and experiences you have had in your life in which you have felt lonely, lost and full of pain. How, you thought, would you ever be able to cope with them and even attempt to be healed from the effects of these terrible experiences? Often, the only thing that could be helpful in your suffering and sorrow is the support of another who has experienced similar suffering and sorrow in their life.

Surely, the listening ear of one of your relatives or friends to whom you can turn and pour out your heartfelt pain and sorrow is appreciated. Yet, there is still another woman to whom you can pray and seek support and consolation. This woman is Our Mother Mary, the Mother of God, who is given the title of Our Lady of Sorrows. She too in her life experienced deep pain that brought much sorrow into her peaceful life.

Tradition gives to Mary, seven episodes in her life, in which she experienced profound sorrow:

1. The Prophecy of Simeon. "...and a sword shall pierce your heart."
2. The flight into Egypt
3. The loss of the child Jesus for 3 days in the Temple of Jerusalem
4. Meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary
5. The crucifixion and death of her Son, Jesus
6. Jesus is taken down from the Cross
7. Jesus is laid in the Tomb

These occasions from the life of Jesus and Mary are all found in the Scripture and can become for the sorrowing great opportunities in which to find strength and hope by meditating on Mary's sorrows. What great inspiration we find when we see how Mary, full of compassion and faith, endured the same sorrow and turmoil so many experience in their lives journey. We

can gain much in our spiritual life by uniting our sorrow with her sorrow. For example:

Anyone who has ever received news of a future turmoil or hardship—terminal illness, loss of a needed job, a coming confrontation—can turn to Mary because she knew this same sorrow when Simeon foretold her coming pain.

Anyone who ever had to make a quick decision to abandon or leave a harmful or destructive relationship or situation—separation from an abusive spouse, a stressful job, a relationship with temptation to sin—can seek out Mary because she too had to flee into Egypt to save her Son from a future harm.

Anyone who has had the pain of losing a valuable and loving relationship—a child to drugs, a parent to Alzheimer's disease, a brother to a destructive disagreement—can call on Mary because she lost her son and frantically searched for him in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Anyone who has experienced the pain of a loved one who carries a heavy burden or cross—a crippled grandchild, a neighbor with an incapacitated wife, a parent with a special needs child—can relate to Mary who saw her Son struggle with His cross to Calvary.

Anyone who has had to stand by a dying parent, child, relative or friend and has felt helpless not being able to change the situation, can use Mary's strength as she stood beneath the Cross of her Son Jesus and watched helplessly as He was dying.

Anyone who has stood in tears and grief over the grave of someone they love as that person is laid in the tomb can join their pain with Mary because she too stood by as her son Jesus was laid in the tomb after a horrible death.

As we celebrate this Memorial of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, we see how Mary, although hurting and confused, met her sorrows with the strength that comes only from faith; a faith that she had as a daughter of God and the Mother of God's son. Mary's sorrows were endured as part of her vocation as the Mother of the Redeemer. There is no one closer to Christ than His mother, consequently, no one has ever participated more intimately in the redemptive suffering of Christ than His Mother, Mary. She is indeed a source of encouragement and solace for anyone who unites their sorrow with her sorrow and seeks her loving intercession.

The Eucharist is also a great source of strength and nourishment for us in our sorrows. Mary gave us God's Son in birth, now that same Jesus is given to us on the Altar because of God's intimate love and care for each one of us.