

Holy Week with Mary

Come and See if There Be Any Sorrow Like Unto My Sorrow!



*Sacred Heart Convent
Vadstena-Omberg, Sweden*

The beauty of Jesus is inexhaustible. ... He is beautiful always, beautiful everywhere, in the disfigurement of the Passion as well as in the splendor of the Resurrection, amid the horrors of the Scourging as well as amid the indescribable attractions of Bethlehem. But above all things our Blessed Lord is beautiful in His Mother. If we love Him we must love her. We must know her in order to know Him. As there is no true devotion to His Sacred Humanity, which is not mindful of His Divinity, so there is no adequate love of the Son, which disjoins Him from His Mother, and lays her aside as a mere instrument, whom God chose as He might choose an inanimate thing, without regard to its sanctity or moral fitness. ... Unerring experience has told us that we never advance more rapidly in love of the Son than when we travel by the Mother, and that what we have built most solidly in Jesus has been built with Mary. There is no time lost in seeking Him, if we go at once to Mary; for He is always there, always at home. The darkness in His mysteries become light when we hold it to her light, which is His light as well. She is the short road to Him. She has the “grand entry” to Him. She is His Esther, and speedy and full are the answers to the petitions which her hand presents.

Frederick William Faber, D.D., *THE FOOT OF THE CROSS, or SORROWS OF MARY*, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc, Rockford, IL 61105, Chapter 1, “The Martyrdom of Mary, Pgs. 11-12.

On February 11, 1958, Our Lady spoke these words to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, visionary of the Our Lady of America® apparitions.

“I am the Mother of the sacred humanity, and it is my special work as co-redemptrix of the human race to help souls reach the sanctity of the Father in eternal union by showing them how to put on Christ, to imbibe His Spirit, and thus become one with Him.

But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth.

... My sweet child, the Father will never recognize a soul as His own unless He sees in it the likeness of His beloved Son. Souls must attain to the perfection of the Father through the Spirit of the Son. ... My heart, my Immaculate Heart, is the channel through which the graces of the Sacred Heart are given to men."

Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, February 3, 11th, and August 22, 1957, Pgs. 16, 23, 18, 24.)

Father Faber speaks of **the law of the Incarnation as a law of suffering, of expiation**, for Jesus was the man of sorrows, the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, **the only one ever born precisely to die**, for by His suffering He would redeem the world. His suffering began the moment He laid aside the glory of His divinity and His dwelling place in Trinitarian Love to take flesh in Mary's womb, assuming the wretched nature of our sinful humanity. So humbling a state was it that we cannot even begin to imagine the enormity of the stoop from the incomprehensible glory of the divine to the deep, dark abyss of our broken humanity. So great was that humiliation that theologians tell us that the brilliant minds of the angels of heaven, under Lucifer, the angel of light, rebelled at the thought of worshipping a God who would stoop so low as to assume a human nature, a nature so inferior to their angelic brilliance closest to God's, that they refused to serve such a Lord. Each moment Jesus lived, with His humanity increasingly being informed by His divinity as to His divine purpose and end, He began already, by way of anticipation, to experience His agony and His terrible Passion.

We are reminded of the **icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help** which has been attributed to St. Luke, portrayed most assuredly on firsthand reports from Mary herself, depicting the child Jesus, so frightened at the sight of two angels bearing the instruments of His eventual torture that he ran in such haste to His Mother's arms for comfort that He lost one sandal and the other hung loosely from His foot. Can we fathom the illuminations from the Spirit, her Divine Spouse, that must have constantly prepared and enlarged Mary's heart to enter daily more deeply into the abyss of sorrow, and joy, that would be hers as she pondered in the depths of her soul the meaning of Simeon's prophetic word -- that a sword would pierce her heart through so that the thoughts of many might be revealed. From the moment the Incarnation took place at the word of the angel Gabriel, **a martyrdom of love beyond human definition or imagination began to unfold**—the love of this Mother for her divine Son and of the Son of God for His Mother and for all of us, and each for the Father's will, a Father who loved His children of creation so much He would ask His Only Begotten Son to bear a passion of unthinkable proportion—the Creator crucified by the creature—in order to reconcile us to Himself and adopt us into His Trinitarian home. And that torture upon the Son would likewise be asked of and laid upon the Mother who had given Him birth in

her blood so that she might give birth now to us, in His blood. **Oh how the blood of her maternal compassion mingled with the Blood of His redeeming Passion there on Calvary!** Surely Mary must have longed to die with Jesus rather than live without Him; and just as surely must a great part of her truly have died with Him that terrible Friday even though she continued to live on to do His bidding in building up the Body of His Mystical Self. The events on Calvary were simply the end of their lifelong passions, but Mary's passion would continue on for at least fourteen more years.

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich describes the death of the Virgin Mary in her visions about the life of Mary. She speaks of John, the Beloved disciple who took Mary into his home, the saint of the Sacred Heart, as the one who can take us into the depths of Mary's broken heart, for it was he who stood at the foot of the cross with her; it was he who took Mary back to Jerusalem several times to walk that dolorous way of the cross, revisiting the holy sites and stations where Jesus had prayed and walked, suffered and died, rose and ascended into heaven, without her. **Blessed Anne tells how Mary built her own private stations of the cross behind the home near Ephesus, each indelible sorrow made present and marked with stones to bear witness to Christ's passion, and hers.** Daily she would walk that dolorous path and ponder anew the blows, the curses, the spittle, the torn flesh, the dripping blood that fell from her beautiful Son's disfigured face and pain wracked body, and feel it all over again as though it were done to her, for her heart and His were joined by blood as one. Who? Who can know the immensity of her sorrows? Blessed Anne speaks of the last years of Mary's life as an endless, agonizing yearning to be completely united, body and soul, with her beloved Son, so much so that her flesh seemed to waste away without signs of aging while her face became increasingly transparent and transfigured with her longing for Jesus.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Words of Jesus, Mark 10:37.)

This same law of suffering, which belongs to Jesus, touches all who come nigh Him, and in proportion to their holiness envelops them, and claims them wholly for itself. [We see that suffering in the Holy Innocents, the martyrs, the Apostles, the saints, all the elect, but nowhere is it so clear as in Mary, for none is as close to Jesus as she, nor is any other life as bound up in His work of redemption as hers.] It can plainly be no wonder, if she shall suffer more than anyone but Himself. The immensity of her sorrows will neither be a distress nor a surprise to us, but rather the obvious conclusion from all we know of the grand mystery of the Incarnation. The amount of her sufferings will be the index of the magnificence of His love for her. The depth of her pains will come the nearest of all things to fathom the abyss of her love for Him. Her far-rolling sea of sorrow will measure the grandeur of her holiness. The loftiness of her divine Maternity will raise her dolours close up to His gracious Passion. Her sinlessness will almost seem to enclose it within the same life-giving law of expiation. Her union with Him will render her Compassion inseparable from His Passion, even while for a thousand reasons it is so manifestly distinguishable from it. The Woman clothed with the Sun will be wrapped round and round with

the bright darkness of that same terrible destiny, which he vouchsafed first to appoint and then to accept as the great law of His Incarnation. We must be prepared to find Mary's dolors beyond the reach of our imagination, above the possibility of our descriptions. (Faber, Pgs. 14-15.)

Mary understood better than any other creature this law of suffering so necessary for mankind's redemption. She understood better than any other creature how every life and all creation is bound up in the awesome and eternal mystery of her Son's Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection. We must be prepared, as she was, to suffer with The Christ, the Anointed One, sharing in His Passion in the measure of the holiness to which we are each called. **Sister Mildred Neuzil was called to share in that Passion and that holiness to a very high degree.** Our Lady spoke thus to her.

"My child, nothing is accomplished without pain. Prepare to suffer much. You see the sword in the Heart of your Mother. Suffering completed the work of divine grace in my soul. He who refuses to suffer will never abide in the Spirit of Christ, will never be formed into His image. ...

Beloved daughter, you wonder at the sword and the deep wound it has made in my Heart. It is the sword of grief plunged therein by my children who refuse to let me teach them the true way. There is only one true way to the Father, my child, only one way to eternal union. It is the way of the divine humanity. It is through my Son, the Only-begotten of the Father, that souls attain perfect union with the Divinity, as perfect as human nature is capable of, aided by divine grace. But my children will not heed; they will not listen. Every other way they will take, but not this one." (Diary, Pg. 23.)

"Oh, penance, penance! How little my children understand it! They give me many words, but sacrifice themselves they will not. It is not me they love but themselves. Oh, what blindness, sweet child, what blindness! How it pierces my heart.

See, I weep, but my children show me no compassion. They behold the sword in my heart but will make no move to withdraw it. I give them love; they give me only ingratitude. Weep, then, dear child, weep with your Mother over the sins of men. Intercede with me before the throne of mercy, for sin is over-whelming the world and punishment is not far away." (Diary, Pg. 34.)

Can we comprehend what must have been and is the most cruel torture in the Passion of Jesus and that of His Mother? Surely it is to have endured such ignominy, shame and despicable atrocity and yet to see so many souls still refuse to accept this awesome grace won for them at so costly a price, to see souls fall into the abyss of hell when heaven was won for them and is free for the taking. The absurdity of it all!

It is fitting that we meditate again on Sister Mildred's invitation from Jesus to share His cross and His crown of thorns. She describes this encounter in an August 6, 1956 letter to her spiritual director, Father Paul F. Leibold.

Jesus came to me holding a large cross and a crown of thorns. He said to me smiling, as though He knew what the answer would be (He did of course). "I come with My cross and My crown of thorns, will you accept Me My spouse?" You know the only answer I could give Father. Who could refuse Jesus anything? During the night I awoke and Jesus said to me, and He said it with a profound emphasis: "I have placed you upon the Altar of Sacrifice."

On June 14th, anniversary of my perpetual union with Jesus, He asked me again: "Bride of My Heart, do you still wish to suffer all things to give Me to souls?" I answered: "Yes, yes dear Lord, I am poor and wretched, and unworthy, but you know what is in my heart." He said, "My little white dove, will you then continue to wear the Crown of Thorns, and permit yourself to be nailed to the Cross?" I told him in the best way I could, how much I desired Him to do with me just as He desired. So in this way my desires are wholly united to His.

It is the same cross that Jesus offers us with His invitation: **"If you will be my disciples, pick up your cross and follow Me."**

Who can fathom the pain of their "fiats" or understand the profound communion in that meeting of Jesus with His Mother on the way to Calvary as their eyes met in mingled compassion for each other's burden? Can we grasp the treasure of meaning hidden in Jesus' words to the holy women who followed His treacherous path, weeping for Him? **"Weep not for Me, but for yourselves and your children!"** Oh if we could only understand that our salvation is tied up in those terrible words of the mob who yelled to Pilate, **"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"** And as Pilate washed his hands of the innocent blood of this Man they cried so loudly: **"Let His Blood be upon us and upon our children!"** Oh yes, unless that Precious Blood wash over us, drip from that cross and that Broken Heart and touch our own, we will never be saved. The very words that crucified Him saved us! Such paradox in the mystery of God's ways!

"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" That is the question the hymn we know well asks of us. Yes! Yes, we were all there, all of us, for it was not merely the spiritually blind and hypocritical Pharisees that ordered Christ's death out of jealousy and expediency that one man be sacrificed for the many; nor was it the Roman soldiers, noted for their cruelty and torture, who drove the nails into that infinitely pure and holy, and therefore superbly sensitive flesh as they nailed Jesus to the tree. Nor was it Judas' kiss alone that betrayed Him that first Maundy Thursday night! Nor was it Peter alone who denied Him three times after swearing undying allegiance. Nor was it

His apostles alone who abandoned Him in His hour of need. Our sins, each and every one of them, were laid upon Jesus' shoulders that day, and were whipped across His Sacred Body as surely as the metal laden lashes the Roman soldiers vented unwittingly upon their God. Our sins of spiritual blindness ordered His death as surely as the hypocrisy of the Pharisees did. Our sins of pride and jealousy, anger, hatred, unforgiveness and revenge, vented their torture upon that Sacred Flesh as surely as Satan's rage and pride filled the executioners and the mob with despicable cruelty and mockery. How many times have we laid a Judas kiss upon that Holy Face hidden in another's in a betrayal of His command to love one another as He has loved us? **Oh yes, we were there!** May that most Precious Blood be upon us to cover and save us. And may it be upon our children, and upon each and every soul, for our redemption and eternal salvation!

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”(Luke 23:34.)

“Dear child, evil is so insidious that it often passes for good. The simple and pure of heart alone can detect the difference. Many good works and many a good person or persons are thwarted and destroyed by apparently good people who are manipulated by the powers of evil because they do not possess that finer sense of being able to detect a false spirit from a true one.” (Words of Our Lady to Sister, Holy Saturday, April 18, 1981, Diary, Pg. 40.)

“My dearest one, many false doctrines are being taught and for many the true Christ is never made known. The false prophets and self-proclaimed Messiahs are drawing many away from Me, the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the true Messiah who was sent and the only one proclaimed as such by My Father. Seek Me for I only am truth, I only am the Christ.” (Words of Our Lord, July 13, 1981, Diary, Pg. 40.)

“At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother, weeping, close to Jesus to the last.” (Stabat Mater hymn.)

Where do we stand? Will we allow this awesome mystery of our redemption to rend our hearts, transform our lives, and change us from “executioners” to “beloved disciples,” repentant “Magdalens,” standing there with His Mother, and ours? Or will we allow His Blood and her tears to be in vain, for ourselves, and others? If not, then **let us cry out to heaven with our Mother, with her tears cupped in our hands of pleading, that every soul upon this earth be covered in that Precious Blood, placed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and under her mantle of mercy, and that not another soul be lost forever, from this day forward, until the end of time!**



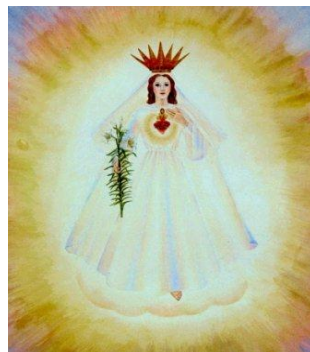
Our Lady of Hope, La Macarena, Spain

“Behold, O my children, the tears of your Mother! Shall I weep in vain?... My Immaculate Heart desires with great desire to see the kingdom of Jesus my Son established in all hearts. How I have pleaded with my children to open their hearts to Him, but most are cold and indifferent. Has ever a mother shown more love and interest in her children’s welfare than I have done? ... Be my faithful children as I have been your faithful Mother.” (Diary, Pgs. 12,17.)

In a letter to her spiritual director, Father Paul F. Leibold, dated February 5, 1957, Sister Mildred Neuzil speaks of Our Lady’s appearance as “Mother of Mercy,” our hope of salvation, our way of wiping away Mary’s tears and of being her faithful children.

Our Lady showed herself to me today as the Mother of Mercy. With her arms extended, her blue mantle affording a safe refuge for the sinner, she said, “I am the Mother of Mercy. Under my mantle I will hide my children. The justice of God will not reach them if they seek refuge [be]neath the protection of my mercy. My Son gives to me all those souls who come to me with confidence, calling upon my aid. Their salvation is in my hands. I will obtain for them the necessary graces to save their souls.

Come to me, poor, suffering and frightened ones. I am your Mother. Never will I forsake you. Only come to me with a wholehearted and loving trust. Place your souls into my keeping. I am that faithful Mother who never forsakes her children. Honor me by your confidence and love. This I desire and ask of you, my poor children. Do not deny the wishes of your Mother.



Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin®

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