

September 15, 2021: Our Lady of Sorrows

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Standing near the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clops and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing beside her, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your Son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping close to her Son to the last. Her heart His sorrow sharing, all His bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed. O how sad and sore distressed was the mother, highly blest, of the sole-begotten One. Christ above in torment hangs, she beneath the pangs of her dying glorious Son. Is there one who would not weep, whelmed in miseries so deep, Christ's dear mother to behold. Can the human heart refrain from partaking in her pain, in that mother's pain untold? For the sins of His own nation, she saw Jesus wracked with torment, all with scourges rent. She beheld her tender Child, saw Him hang in desolation, till His spirit forth He sent.

The focus of this ancient hymn is on the spiritual and emotional bond which unites Mary and all Christians to the death of her Son on the cross.

The Gospels tell the story of the pain Mary lived through in her life: Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her soul because her Son would be rejected by many in Israel; the flight into Egypt as Mary and Joseph escaped from Herod; Jesus' arrest and judgment; and the dreadful pain she bore during Jesus' passion.

Today's Gospel reading focuses on the gift that Jesus gives from the cross – giving His mother to John and John to His mother saying, "Here is your Son." This action has been interpreted down through the years as John representing us – the Church, the People of God. Jesus was establishing not merely the specifics for His mother's care, but also for the principle that Jesus' followers, from this point forward, were to continue in their lives the life that Christ lived on the Earth. We are to hear and heed and act upon the very same call that Jesus posed to John. We are to continue the life of Jesus in the world. As John was to carry on the duties, responsibilities and life of the Son for Mary, we are to continue the very same thing for the world.

Our IHM Constitutions express this mission with these words: *"As Jesus' disciples we are inspired by Mary, the mother, the perfect servant of God, who by her life teaches us how to hear the word of God and act on in" (Chapter 1, verse 6). Using Isaiah's words Jesus announces His own redeeming mission: "The Spirit of God is upon me therefore God has anointed me. God has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor; to proclaim liberty of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners; to announce a year of favor from our God." As members of the Church and of this community, we continue Jesus' liberating mission. With Jesus we share the joys and hope, the griefs and anguish of all our sisters and brothers in the human family. With Him we hear the cry of all God's people, especially of the poor and abandoned, and, with the power of His spirit, we respond to their cry through a variety of ministries. (Chapter 2 verses 9 and 10)*

We live in a world of hurt, of unprecedented tragedies and heartbreaking disasters: earthquakes and hurricanes, global hunger, political instability, ecological devastations (out of control fires and floods, extreme heat) and the beat goes on and on and on...

And so I begin with one of the lines of the ancient poem: *She beheld her tender child, saw Him hang in desolation TILL HIS SPIRIT FORTH HE SENT*

And as one sent forth

I cite a brief section of Amanda Gorman's poem and the inauguration of Joe Biden:

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid if we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade but in the bridges we've made...the hill we climb...if only we dare. So once we're asked how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe? Now we assert, how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us? We will not march back to what was but move to what shall be. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave to be it.

And the people say

It's all because we have an ever watchful, loving, compassionate God in whose arms we rest and whose eye is on the sparrow and we know He watches over (us)