

OUR LADY OF SORROWS, PATRONESS OF HOLY CROSS

"There stood by the Cross of Jesus his mother Mary, who knew grief and was a Lady of Sorrows. She is our special patroness, a woman who bore much she could not understand and who stood fast. To her many sons and daughters, whose devotions ought to bring them often to her side, she tells much of this daily cross and its daily hope."

(Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross, 8:120)

When deciding on a patron for the Congregation of Holy Cross, founder Blessed Basil Moreau selected Our Lady of Sorrows.

Moreau's original vision was that the Congregation of Holy Cross be one community of priests, brothers and sisters living and working together in imitation of the Holy Family. He consecrated the priests to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the sisters to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the brothers to Saint Joseph, but he placed the entire Congregation under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Moreau often stressed the importance of conforming one's entire life to Christ, which Mary models through her Seven Sorrows. He said, "It is (in her sorrows) that we shall see to what extent she has loved us! She stood at the foot of the cross, among the executioners and soldiers, so close to her dying Son that no detail of his death could escape her. ... What did she do in this circumstance, so painful for her heart, being minister before the altar on which the sacrifice of our redemption was accomplished? Truly, she fulfills fully her part in the work of Christ, to 'fill up, in her own flesh, those things that are lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, which is the Church.'"

Mary suffered Seven Sorrows during her life, beginning with the prophecy of Simeon during Christ's presentation in the temple when Simeon said to Mary, "And you yourself a sword will pierce ..." (Luke 2:35) The Sorrows continued with the flight into Egypt and the loss of Jesus in the temple. They culminated with the events leading up to and including Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

The Holy Cross motto: "*Ave Crux, Spes Unica*" — "Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope" — reflects the idea of seeing ourselves standing at the foot of the cross alongside Our Sorrowful Mother. Seminararians are encouraged to foster a devotion to our Lady of Sorrows from the very beginning of their formation process for that reason.



"As apostolic religious, we realize that suffering is very real in our world and that many of those we serve experience heavy crosses each day. Sometimes we are in a position to alleviate this suffering and sometimes we are not. What we always have to offer, however, is hope. Mary is the perfect model of this hope. Even in the midst of her Seven Sorrows, she never despaired. Her faith endured through this suffering and so she shared in her Son's victory over death. We believe that her intercession and patronage can help us do the same," said Fr. Steve Lacroix, Director of the Old College Undergraduate Seminary.

The Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is September 15, the biggest feast day for Congregation of Holy Cross priests, brothers and sisters throughout the world. Each community honors the feast day differently, but members usually come together as a larger community for prayer and celebration.

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