



September 15—Our Lady of Sorrows

When Jesus Christ wished to express the great love of His Father for us, He said that God the Father loved us so much that He had delivered His only Son up to death. This is what Saint Paul referred to as the excess of divine love for human beings. Now, the heart of Mary was capable of this same excess because she gave her only Son, the adorable child of her womb, for the redemption of the world. The suffering of Jesus caused deep and bitter suffering to the Virgin, such that we will never be able to find suitable expression to give an accurate idea of the martyrdom she suffered. This martyrdom did not begin on Calvary, but at the very moment when she was visited by the archangel. That we may better understand this, let us remember that Mary's heart was the tenderest and most loving heart imaginable, after the heart of the Savior Himself.

—Basil Moreau

A mother's love is foundational to the human experience of love. A mother carries her child in her womb, almost as if mother and child were one being. A mother gives birth in suffering, but forgets her pain in the joy of giving birth. A mother watches and encourages the many steps of transformation from infancy into maturity, but no matter how old her child becomes, a mother's love never ends.

We need to remember this basic human reality whenever we contemplate the role of Mary in the story of our salvation in Christ. Mary was the first to believe in Jesus and the first to receive him into her life. Born of her womb, his face most closely resembled hers. At Cana, Jesus worked his first miracle, revealing his identity as the Son of God, at her confident request. Yet on Good Friday, both her faith and her *fiat* were tested beyond measure when the prophecies of Simeon were at last fulfilled—this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be rejected. Then speaking directly to her, he had predicted—a sword of sorrow will pierce your heart.

What terrible anxiety Mary must have known when she heard that her Son had been arrested, beaten, and judged by the priesthood of her people and then scourged, mocked, and condemned by the pagans. How immense her suffering must have been when her eyes met his as he carried his Cross. What indescribable agony she felt when she heard the nails being hammered into his hands and feet. She watched the soldiers gamble for the clothing that with such love and care she had woven for her Son. She heard her Son's words of forgiveness, his words to her and to the beloved disciple, his prayer of desolation, his cry of thirst, and his final words—"It is finished." When they took him down from the Cross, his few faithful friends laid his tortured body into the same embrace that once had comforted him as a child. How inconsolably she cried out. How deeply she prayed. How many her tears. No human ever loved Jesus as much as Mary or shared more in his suffering. In the beginning of his life, Mary held in her heart all those things that she did not understand. Now at the end, a sword of sorrow pierced that same loving and immaculate heart.

In the religious family named for the Cross of Christ, our saintly founder Fr. Moreau chose as our patroness the same Mother of Sorrows. From its very inception, our congregation was inspired to see Jesus and his holy Cross through the luminous eyes of Mary. Taught by Fr. Moreau, the religious of Holy Cross strive to imitate Mary's unshakable fidelity and find strength in her maternal love. It is in imitation of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, that all of us who follow her Son might come to know the Cross as our only hope. Then it may be said of us, as has been sung of Mary—by the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last.

Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.