

Reflection Friday Week 23 Our Lady of Sorrows 2023

The devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows flourished in the Middle Ages, and the hymn *Stabat Mater* was composed for it. Although it is officially celebrated today, the day after the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, popular devotion in many parts of the Mediterranean celebrate it with processions on the Friday before Holy Week.

In celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, we are reminded that Mary also suffered alongside her Son in ways that we never truly understand. The *Stabat Mater* offers us some insight to her suffering:

*At the cross her station keeping
stood the mournful Mother weeping,
close to Jesus to the last;
through her heart, his sorrow sharing,
all his bitter anguish bearing,
now at length the sword had passed.*

Pope Francis:

Mary, Mother of Sorrows, remains at the foot the cross. She simply stands there. She does not run away, or try to save herself, or find ways to alleviate her grief. Here is the proof of true compassion: to remain standing beneath the cross. To stand there weeping, yet with the faith that knows that, in her Son, God transfigures pain and suffering and triumphs over death.

In contemplating the Sorrowful Mother, may we too open our hearts to a faith that becomes compassion, a faith that identifies with those who are hurting, suffering and forced to bear heavy crosses. A faith that does not remain abstract, but becomes incarnate in fellowship with those in need. A faith that imitates God's way of doing things, quietly relieves the suffering of our world and waters the soil of history with salvation.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord always preserve in you wonderment and gratitude for the great gift of faith! And may Mary Most Holy obtain for you the grace of a faith that ever sets out anew, is deeply prophetic and abounds in compassion.