

Our Lady of Sorrows

Yesterday we celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Mary, as we know, is always close to her son. Thus, today we celebrate Our Lady of Sorrows, or Mary's suffering at the foot of the Cross – the fulfillment of Simon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her heart.

Today's memorial highlights some beautiful spiritual principles for our own lives. For example, the more pure the nature, the more deeply you will suffer and the more deeper you will love. Mary was created without sin and never sinned. She has a pure human nature, or a human being at her best.

As such, she also has the capacity to suffer more greatly, but also love more greatly. The same is true for you. The closer you grow to Christ and in Christ, the more He will purify you, but the more you will suffer. That's the bad news. The good news is that the more you suffer, the greater capacity you have to love. Love and self-sacrifice or suffering go hand-in-hand. St. Therese says that love is nourished by self-sacrifice.

Second, notice that Mary's suffering produces *great* fruit. In John's Gospel, Jesus entrusts Mary to John, and John to Mary. "*Woman, behold your son.*" And looking at His disciple, Jesus said, "*Behold, your mother.*" (Jn 19:26-27) Notice the fruit of suffering! The beloved disciple is "born," i.e., his faith and love, from the suffering of Jesus and Mary.

John will care for Mary and in doing so, her suffering and love will bear tremendous fruit in him. Eventually, he will write an extremely beautiful gospel, giving us a window into the heart and divinity of Christ. In short, suffering bears much fruit! It is like rain that causes flowers in a meadow to blossom.

Finally, notice that in her suffering, Mary is not alone! Her Son Jesus is there, pouring His heart out in love to her. Mary, the wife of Clopas, his mother's sister, and John are all there. In other words, we never suffer alone. God sends us certain people and loves us *through* them. On our part, He invites us to be open to receiving His consolation and strength through them.

Today's memorial, then, reminds us that suffering and love go hand-in-hand, suffering bears much fruit, and we never suffer alone!