

***“Christ above in torment hangs,/ She beneath beholds 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?”***

Today, the Church recognizes the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, as it does every year on the fifteenth of September. When this great feast happens to fall on a weekday, unfortunately it goes mostly unnoticed. My own personal connection to this feast notwithstanding (as it happens to bear the name of my own beloved parish), I believe it to be an incredibly valuable occasion for us all to mark closely, as it contains within itself one of the most poignant reflections on suffering to be found in the whole of Sacred Scripture.

The three lines from the *Stabat Mater* mentioned above paint quite the vivid image. Our Blessed Mother, in all her purity and innocence, stands at the foot of the cross, drowning in sorrow. The love of her life – Him for whom she had given her entire being; the infant she cradled in her arms; the toddler she soothed through countless ails; the boy she watched over as He played; the young man she witnessed turn water into wine – nailed to a tree, condemned to die like a common criminal. How

powerless, how sick at heart, how utterly abandoned she must have felt.

Unable to see the miraculous events of the near future, she undoubtedly questioned the validity of God's plan. Why is this happening? What purpose could this possibly serve? Why Him? What did he do to deserve this?

I'm sure that this line of questioning is all too familiar to us. Any time we encounter suffering – particularly the loss of a loved one – we tend to ask 'why'. The perception of a lack of justice drives us to demand an answer. Why, Lord? Why did I lose my job? Don't you know I have a family to support? Why did my spouse leave me? Can't you see that my children are devastated? Why was I diagnosed with this terrible disease? Haven't I been living my life to the best of my ability for you? What did I do wrong? Why are you punishing me? What did I do to deserve this?

It is in these defining moments that we must look to Our Lady's example to learn how to suffer well. In the midst of her great pain, burdened by answerless questions and intense emotional turmoil, she

stands at the foot of the cross, with her eyes fixed on her Son. She doesn't make demands. She doesn't try to intervene with what she must have known to be His will. She doesn't turn inward, and focus on her pain. She simply trusts. Her grief, while monumental, was not sufficient to destroy her confidence in the words of God delivered to her by the angel Gabriel; "...The Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1: 32-33) It is in this moment that our Blessed Mother is teaching us to endure...to lean on God when there seems as though all hope is lost...to give ourselves over to the will of the Father *as we suffer*, that we might deepen our faith through trial.

So too must we approach the many varied ways in which we might suffer in our daily lives. Like our mother, we must not allow ourselves to focus on our own misery; rather, we must fix our eyes on Jesus, trusting with our whole hearts that His will for us, whatever pain it might entail, will ultimately bring us closer to Him, the source and summit of our lives. *Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who*

Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows - Lectionary #444

Fr. Charles Deering

SJCC - Florence, AL - (09-15-2026)

have recourse to thee. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
the Holy Spirit, Amen!