

The Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady

Simeon blessed them
and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is destined
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be contradicted
and you yourself a sword will pierce
so that the thoughts of many hearts
may be revealed."

(Luke 2:34-35)

Meditations composed by Most Rev. Scott McCaig, CC, Bishop of the Military Ordinariate of Canada and former General Superior of the Companions of the Cross Society of Apostolic Life.

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This booklet was originally published in celebration of the Year for Priests (*Anno Sacerdotale*) from June 2009 to June 2010. Pope Benedict XVI highlighted the "necessary, indeed indispensable, aspiration to moral perfection that must dwell in every authentically priestly heart."

We encourage those who embrace this devotion to pray that all priests strive for "spiritual perfection, on which, above all, the effectiveness of their ministry depends" (*Address to the Congregation for the Clergy*, 16 March 2009).

HISTORY

This devotion to Our Sorrowful Mother originated in the thirteenth century. It recalls the Sorrows the Virgin Mother of God endured in compassion for the suffering and death of her divine Son.

The Litany of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady found at the end of this booklet was composed by Pope Pius VII (1740-1823) while held in captivity during the Napoleonic Wars.

These devotions are particularly appropriate for the spiritual children of Fr. Bob Bedard, CC, founder of the Companions of the Cross.

We cultivate a profound devotion to the Cross of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to Our Lady, who at Calvary became the first companion of the Cross.

PROMISES

St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) reported that Our Lady promised to grant seven graces to those who honour her and draw near to her and her Son every day by meditating on her *dolors* (sorrows):

1. I will grant peace to their families.
2. They will be enlightened about the divine Mysteries.
3. I will console them in their pains and will accompany them in their work.
4. I will give them as much as they ask for as long as it does not oppose the adorable will of my divine Son or the sanctification of their souls.
5. I will defend them in their spiritual battles with the infernal enemy and I will protect them at every instant of their lives.
6. I will visibly help them at the moment of their death; they will see the face of their Mother.
7. I have obtained this grace from my divine Son: that those who propagate this devotion to my tears and sorrows will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness, since all their sins will be forgiven and my Son will be their eternal consolation and joy.

How to Pray the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows

1. Pray the Introductory Prayers (on the medal or cross).
2. Announce the First Sorrow; then pray the *Our Father*.
3. Pray seven *Hail Marys* while meditating on the Sorrow.
4. At the conclusion of each Sorrow, pray "Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour."
5. Repeat steps 2 - 4 for all Seven Sorrows.
6. Pray three *Hail Marys* in honour of the tears of Our Sorrowful Mother (on the three final beads).
7. Pray the Closing Prayers.
8. You may also wish to pray the Litany of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

INTRODUCTORY PRAYERS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My God, I offer you this rosary for your glory. I want to honour your Holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin, by meditating upon and sharing in her suffering.

O my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, trusting in your infinite love I turn to you for forgiveness and mercy. I am truly sorry for the pains you suffered in your most bitter Passion because of my sins. For love of you, and before your holy presence, I utterly renounce and forsake all the sins of my whole life. I ask pardon of you with all my heart. I firmly resolve to amend my life and would rather die than offend you again.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, you are our tender Mother and the Refuge of Sinners. I run to you with confidence and love. Hide me under your mantle of love and protection. As I meditate upon the swords of sorrow that pierced your Immaculate Heart, obtain for me the forgiveness of my sins and the grace to live a life of heroic holiness.

O Blessed Mother, I unite my heart to yours and offer this rosary for priests: for their growth in holiness, obedience to the Magisterium, boldness in the proclamation of the Gospel, and a profound love for the people of God. May all priests humbly lead the souls entrusted to their care into an intimate relationship with the Lord.

[I also pray for the following particular intentions...]

V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

R. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the Earth.

The First Sword of Sorrow

Simeon announces
the suffering destiny of Jesus

(Luke 2:34-35)

O Mother of Sorrows, how deeply your heart was pierced with sorrow when Simeon announced that Jesus, your beloved Child, was to be a sign that would be rejected. Your heart knew that he was to be the suffering Messiah the prophets had foretold, the man of sorrows, who would carry all our sins and heal us by his wounds. Through this bitter sorrow obtain for us the grace never to reject Jesus or refuse him anything. Help us to completely surrender our lives to him and to live according to his most holy will in everything.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Second Sword of Sorrow

Mary escapes into Egypt
with Jesus and Joseph

(Matt 2:13-15)

O Mother of Sorrows, what pain filled your heart as you fled your home and country knowing that the tyrant Herod was intent on murdering your little Child whom you loved above all else. The hardships of travel, the long journey, and life as a refugee was nothing compared to the torment of such demonic malice directed toward Jesus. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace never to risk the life of Jesus in our souls through deliberate sin.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Third Sword of Sorrow

Mary seeks Jesus lost in Jerusalem

(Luke 2:41-51)

O Mother of Sorrows, what grief filled your heart as you and Joseph searched desperately for Jesus when you could not find him among your relatives and friends returning home from Jerusalem. When your Son replied that he must be about his Father's business, you accepted that he had begun the mission that would lead to his sacrificial death. The sorrow of those three days of separation prepared you for the three days of suffering you endured while his body lay lifeless in the tomb. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace to accept the ways of Divine Providence even when we do not understand them.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Fourth Sword of Sorrow

Mary meets Jesus as he carries
his Cross to Calvary

(cf. Luke 23:26-31)

O Mother of Sorrows, how it must have wounded your tender maternal heart to see your beloved Son Jesus carrying his Cross to Calvary, the place of execution! How it must have pained you to see him so bloodied, beaten, and reviled as he strained to fulfill his deepest desire: to give his life as a ransom for us. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace to deny ourselves, pick up our crosses, and follow Jesus with perseverance and love.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Fifth Sword of Sorrow

Mary stands near the Cross
of her Son Jesus

(John 19:25-27)

O Mother of Sorrows, here the prophecy of Simeon comes to its ultimate fulfillment: the sword of sorrow impales your heart as you stand beneath the Cross of your Son. Crucified spiritually with your crucified Son, you offered him to the Father and united yourself completely to his self-offering and sacrificial death. We simply cannot fathom the pain of your offering or the depth of love that inspired it. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace to unite all our sufferings to our crucified Lord with unselfish generosity and love.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Sixth Sword of Sorrow

Mary receives into her arms
the body of Jesus
taken down from the Cross

(cf. John 19:38)

O Mother of Sorrows, your heart was drowned in grief as you embraced the lifeless corpse of your Son. He who was your very life was now dead. Your light in this life was extinguished. Yet you accepted this sorrow with love knowing that it was all part of the Father's plan of salvation. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace to accept with patience and love the sorrows that befall us in this vale of tears, firmly believing that God works all things to the good for those who love him.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

The Seventh Sword of Sorrow

Mary helps place the body of Jesus
in the tomb

(cf. John 19:39-42)

O Mother of Sorrows, who could express the cruel anguish of this moment? The same Child that you once wrapped in swaddling clothes amidst unspeakable joy, you now wrap silently in his burial shroud. Your tears mingle with the blood and dirt that covers his broken body. But even in this moment your trust in his promise did not die. Your mourning was not without hope, for you knew that he would rise again from this grave just as he promised. Through this bitter sword of sorrow obtain for us the grace to believe with unshakable hope in the victory of Our Lord even in the darkest moments of life.

Our Father & seven Hail Marys

Holy Mother hear my prayers, and renew in my heart each wound of Jesus my Saviour.

Pray three Hail Marys in honour of the tears of Our Sorrowful Mother.

Closing Prayers

O Mary, you truly became the Queen of All Martyrs as these seven bitter swords of sorrow pierced your Immaculate Heart! By the merits of your tearful distress obtain for us and for all sinners the graces of perfect contrition and conversion. Help us always, dear Mother, to imitate you by taking up our crosses and following Jesus with limitless love and generosity. Amen.

Mary, who was conceived without sin and who suffered for us, pray for us. *(Say three times)*

Litany of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows

by Pope Pius VII

V. Lord, have mercy on us.
R. *Christ, have mercy on us.*
V. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us.
R. *Christ, graciously hear us.*
God, the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*
God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, Mother of God, *pray for us.*
Holy Virgin of virgins, *pray for us.*
Mother of the Crucified, [*etc.*]
Sorrowful Mother
Mournful Mother
Sighing Mother
Afflicted Mother
Forsaken Mother
Desolate Mother
Mother most sad
Mother set around with anguish
Mother overwhelmed by grief
Mother transfixed by a sword
Mother crucified in your heart
Mother bereaved of your Son
Sighing Dove

Mother of Sorrows
Fount of tears
Sea of bitterness
Field of tribulation
Mass of suffering
Mirror of patience
Rock of constancy
Remedy in perplexity
Joy of the afflicted
Ark of the desolate
Refuge of the abandoned
Shield of the oppressed
Conqueror of the incredulous
Solace of the wretched
Medicine of the sick
Help of the faint
Strength of the weak
Protectress of those who fight
Haven of the shipwrecked
Calmer of tempests
Companion of the sorrowful
Retreat of those who groan
Terror of the treacherous
Standard-bearer of the Martyrs
Treasure of the Faithful
Light of Confessors
Pearl of Virgins
Comfort of Widows

Joy of all Saints
Queen of your Servants
Holy Mary, who alone are beyond compare

V. Pray for us, most Sorrowful Virgin,
R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray.

O God, in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of grief pierced through the most sweet soul of thy glorious Blessed Virgin Mother Mary: grant that we, who celebrate the memory of her Seven Sorrows, may obtain the happy effect of your Passion, who lives and reigns world without end. *Amen.*



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