

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Simeon said to Mary; this child is destined to be a sign which men will reject; he is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel; and your own soul a sword shall Pierce.

I sat in church in my usual seat. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar and I quietly tried to become aware of Jesus' presence. My usual place is below a window which gives me more natural light and makes it easier to read my prayer book but I was not reading nor even saying prayers. I was just listening. My eyes were drawn upwards to look at the window. It is a beautiful stained-glass depiction of Mary and St. John. They are walking away from Calvary and St. John is supporting Mary who looks so stressed and overwhelmed with sorrow, she seems hardly able to stand upright.

They had stood for hours at the foot of the cross where Jesus hung in agony, his life slowly ebbing away. Before he died, he turned to Mary and said, "Behold your son" and to John, "behold your mother". Mary must have been truly heartbroken, not because Jesus had died for, she knew who he really was, the Son of God, but because of the cruel way the soldiers had tortured and humiliated him. He hadn't deserved this. He had never spoken against Caesar. In fact, Jesus had saved the life of one of the Roman centurions' family. Even Pilate could find no fault in him, but the mob, encouraged by the religious leaders, demanded his crucifixion. Jesus had done nothing but good. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf hear and the lame walk and cast out evil spirits. She had always known that this day would come but could not have imagined how terrible it would be. Simeon had predicted that a sword would pierce her soul but this was like a thousand swords. Her beautiful son taken away from her in such a horrific way. How could she bear it?

John was the youngest of the twelve but also the bravest, He did not deny Jesus nor did he run away and hide. He had the courage to stand there at the foot of the cross with Mary and the other women. He was not afraid to be seen as a disciple of Jesus. He found it hard to understand what was happening but he trusted Jesus for hadn't he told them that his enemies would have him put to death but this was so hard, he loved Jesus so much. What were they going to do now, he and his brothers? How were they going to carry on without Jesus? Jesus had said he would be with them until the end time but how could this be? When Jesus died, the world went dark, the thunder shook and the lightning struck the temple. Was this the end of the world?

Dear Saint John, you were so brave and courageous, so faithful and strong, help us to be like you. Help us to stand firm and upright in the face of our difficulties.

O Mother of Sorrows, with strength from above you stood by the cross, sharing the suffering of Jesus and with tender care you bore him in your arms, mourning and weeping.

We praise you for your faith, which accepted the life God planned for you. We praise you for your hope, which trusted that God would do great things in you. We praise you for your love in bearing with Jesus the sorrows of his passion.

Holy Mary, may we follow your example and stand by all your children who need comfort and love.

Mother of God, stand by us in our trials and care for us in our many needs. Pray for us now and at the hour of our death