

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the Sorrowful Mysteries, much of what we focus on is the *physical* pain that Jesus went through. Yet, there are pains deeper and harder to handle than the physical. This is why there are young people who cut themselves – because they find the emotional pain too difficult and the physical pain is easier to handle. Jesus experienced extreme physical pain, but the emotional, mental and, above all, spiritual pain were far, far worse.

The first Sorrowful Mystery is Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus feels immense suffering – this agony of the knowledge of what is about to happen to Him, as well as the internal struggle of the temptation to say “No” to His Abba. This pain, anxiety and fear are so deep, He actually sweats blood. In the midst of this, He also experiences the deep pain of loneliness: His closest friends, who were supposed to be with Him, supporting Him in prayer, have fallen asleep. In this meditation on the agonized face of Christ, I see it is my responsibility to be with Him in His agony, gently wiping the blood from His face, showing Him that He is not alone. **Mary:** give me the strength of love to be with Jesus in the loneliness of His agony.

The second Sorrowful Mystery is the scourging at the pillar. In the Diary of St. Faustina, Faustina sees the suffering Christ, in torment in the scourging. But Jesus speaks to her and says that this is not the worst of it. It is when His loved ones, His chosen ones choose sins of impurity that causes Him the most agony, for this wound of betrayal is much deeper. We see in the scourging the hatred Satan has for the Incarnation – the enfleshment of God. He strives to rip the flesh, the humanity, off Jesus. And this is what impurity does – it removes the humanity of another person, or of ourselves, as we use others, or even ourselves – even in our minds – as a way for pleasure and power. **Mary:** give me the grace to see the face of Christ in each person, the dignity that they have as a human, as a beloved child of God, and may I never use anyone, including myself!

The third Sorrowful Mystery is the crowning with thorns. Yes, it is true that this caused immense pain, as the thorns ripped into Jesus' skull, eyebrows, ears, and other fleshy tissue of the head. Some mystics have declared that the thorns actually gave Jesus three mortal wounds – enough to kill Him had He not made it to the cross. Yet, in the midst of this, I feel the loneliness of Christ yet again. The Roman guards, mock He who is God, who is truly the king. They refuse to recognize His royal dignity. If this were not enough, they parade Him in front of the Jews – Jesus' own beloved people. Pilate says, “Behold the man,” and “Behold, your King!” and in both cases they cry out to crucify Jesus (John 19:5-6, 14-15). He came to His own, He is their King, our King, yet He is derided and ignored, hated and despised. No one is aware of the incredible love Jesus is pouring out here, and so they reject that love and refuse to love in return. **Mary:** Help me to recognize Jesus as King of my whole life, and to love Him even in the moments of trial.

The fourth Sorrowful Mystery is the way of the cross. Jesus takes up His cross, He falls several times. He meets His mother as well as and some weeping women along the way. It is to Simon and Veronica that I want to look. Simon is dragged in to help Jesus carry the cross. Most likely, he was a most unwilling helper. I can imagine him trying to stay as far away from Jesus as possible, holding Him at arm's length. How often to people need my help, and I help unwillingly? How often do I refuse to see the sacred dignity of the person in front of me and so keep them at arm's length? What pain that must have caused Jesus; what pain it must still cause Him. Veronica comes, though, and wipes the face of Jesus. She cares for Him, recognizes His dignity, and shows Him a love He has not experienced during the Passion. She reaches out to show Jesus that He is not alone. **Mary:** help me to reach out with true love to Jesus through the people around me; may I not be afraid to get my hands dirty!

The fifth Sorrowful Mystery is the crucifixion. Seven times Jesus makes the supreme effort to speak while on the cross: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” “This day you will be with me in Paradise,” “Woman, behold your son... behold your mother,” “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” “I Thirst,” “It is finished,” “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” What pain, what suffering. He feels the agony of separation from His Abba, which is what Hell is (note: while He *feels* separated from God, the reality is that God does not abandon Him. He experiences it because *we* experience it). The suffering and lonely face of Christ begs us to spend time with Him, to be with Him in this suffering... and when we do, He gives us His mother as our own. **Mary:** May I accept you as the parting gift of Jesus to me, and may you help me love Him.