

Christians meditate more and more frequently upon the mysteries of the Rosary. These are the mysteries of Jesus' life. Amongst the themes that make up the Rosary, we tend to pray with the ones that speak the most to the heart. Many pray with the Sorrowful Mysteries because perhaps they are closest to what we experience and go through in our lives. We are sometimes moved to the very depths of ourselves by the evocation of Jesus' sufferings. It is also the occasion for us to ask for forgiveness.

We do not always think to ask God, our Father, for forgiveness; He whom we hurt so deeply when we refuse his love. The Lord shed tears for each of us because He became incarnate in a man's body, in our body by taking on all our obligations. Thus, because of us, Jesus felt all our suffering and he was cold, hungry and thirsty, was tempted, misunderstood, scorned and insulted in order to save us.

We do not always think to ask Jesus for forgiveness; He who in order to fully accomplish the work of our redemption, humbled himself completely to the Father's will and "became obedient to death – even death on a cross."

We do not think of asking Jesus for forgiveness, but also we do not think about asking all those whom we have hurt for forgiveness.

Entrusting our difficulties, suffering and all our pain to the Lord demands a sense of humility that we do not always possess. Entrusting to others what hurts us is sometimes easier... So let us not hesitate to entrust our sorrow to the Intercessors, so that they take it on in their hearts and prayers in order to offer it to the Lord.

Behind this window, someone is praying and interceding for couples, for marriage, families, priests.... Life...!

Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty

SPIRITUAL LETTER

The Sorrowful Mysteries

"The agony, flagellation, crowning with thorns, carrying the cross and death of Jesus," these are five stages, just like a way of the cross, in order to accompany the Lord towards the total gift of himself for our salvation... by recognising the Virgin Mary, by seeing with her eyes of faith.

It is indeed faith that must lead us. Of course, the scenes to be meditated upon move us. The Lord's agony can awaken in us those moments where everything seemed to collapse within us. The flagellation can make us relive terrible ordeals. The crowning of thorns can remind us of all the humiliations we have undergone. Jesus' death pierces our heart. Yes, the sorrowful mysteries meditated upon before the Lord are also a meditation upon our sorrowful mysteries.

Yet, another experience—more often—is possible. Of course we look at our sorrows but also at Christ's. St Francis of Assisi summed up what the Lord's greatest sorrow was, "Love is not loved." And yet, he loved us "to the end" and above everything else! (Jn 13:1) Therefore our comprehension of the Lord's suffering out to be done with the eyes of faith, because Jesus gave himself up for us out of love. We too can give ourselves up, because we are born and carried by him. Sorrowful mystery, mystery of love.

This is why we talk about 'mysteries', meaning that which is sorrowful must be seen, received, admired and contemplated in faith. In it God reveals his love through the gift of his only Son. We can be carried away by this gift and give of ourselves, because with the Virgin Mary, we see the world with its disasters and hopes. We see humanity with its sins and its yearning for peace. In faith, we give of ourselves for all of them... "Mysteries": faith sees everything with accuracy.

Many icons represent the Virgin Mary with a look that appears grave and serious. Mary carries her child, who has his eyes upon her. She looks at our world, with her son... Our look is similar: there is a certain gravity but we have the presence of the Son of God within us, who opens us up to the reality of the mystery, that love is stronger than death. It's the victory of life!

*Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors*

The Agony in the Garden

A short meditation on the event

Mark 14:34, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay here and keep watch".

Jesus took Peter, James and John, the three disciples who were present with Him at the Transfiguration, to a place called Gethsemane. A mortal anguish took hold of Him at the thought of the torture He must go through as did an unfathomable grief: the sadness of a betrayed friend, of an abandoned Master, and of a rejected Messiah; the horror of sin and infamies committed by humanity; sorrow for the ingratitude that people repaid Him with for His love and grief for the loss of the souls who rejected Him. During this ordeal, Jesus turned towards His Father with humility and confidence. He prayed apart and then returned to the three Apostles who had fallen asleep. He sadly reproached Peter and urged him to "Keep watch and pray..." For a second, and then a third time, Jesus went away to pray. When, finally, He came back to His disciples, He was ready for the battle. His persistent praying had been answered. Fortified by grace, Jesus accepted the chalice of the Passion.

(Rosary, Miraculous Medal Paris, website)

Henri Caffarel and the Sorrowful Mystery of the Couple

It is not the first time that we see the Lord give himself up so imprudently to men... As in the Eucharist, he is at our mercy, exposed to indifference, and to outrage as well as to adoration. The sacrament of marriage sort of reveals Him to each couple. What happens to him in the couple that ignores him? ...

(...) Often, He is the ignored, misunderstood, painfully solitary husband... In other couples, He is ridiculed, betrayed and mocked by his wife, while He suffers and remains faithful to her.

And us, to whom the grace to receive such a gift from God is given so freely, with what love ought we not to surround our Lord! It is up to each of our couples to be the skilful wife who

dresses her husband's wounds, eager to offer him at last the peace of true understanding, and attentive submission; to give Him in a way, by dint of tenderness, the strength that He might lack, that He will lack in the Garden of Gethsamene when the sins of marriage overwhelm Him in his Agony.

Ah! If we have not yet understood well enough the love of the One who united himself with our couple, time still remains to make our marriage with Him—which perhaps was only a marriage of convenience —the most beautiful marriage of love.

Henri Caffarel, Letter to Young Couples, October 1942

The Scourging at the Pillar

A short meditation on the event

John 19:1, "*Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged.*"

Jesus was flogged. This is a historical fact that was related by the four Evangelists as a significant episode of His Passion. After Jesus had appeared before the priest Caiaphas, He was brought to Pilate, who submitted Jesus to the torturer even before he pronounced the death sentence. In fact, embarrassed by the situation, Pilate proposed an amnesty, but the Jews preferred to free a famous prisoner called Barabbas. Pilate still hoped to appease Jesus' enemies by just having him flogged. The Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothes, tied Him to a pillar and lashed Him with their whips made out of two or three lashes at the end of which were tied a sheep's knucklebone or two metal balls. With the Jews, torture was limited to 49 strokes, while the Roman flogging was especially brutal. Experts found approximately 120 marks on the shroud of Turin.

(Rosary, Miraculous Medal Paris, website)

Henri Caffarel and the Rosary

About twenty years ago, a nun in Africa had the hunch one day that prayer could transfigure the life of her lepers. By trial and error, she figured it out and proposed to those who wished to recite the Rosary with her. And then, subsequently, to recite it by themselves. She invited them to spend this hour (this was roughly the amount of time they spent reciting) calmly, as if they were at Mary's side, with their attention totally focussed like her on Jesus Christ, one of whose mysteries they evoked every decade of the rosary. The Joyful Mysteries (Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Finding of Jesus in the Temple), the Sorrowful Mysteries (Agony in the Garden, Scourging at the Pillar, Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion and Death of Jesus), the Glorious Mysteries (Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption, Crowning of the Virgin Mary). She explained to me that she invited them not so much to reflect on these mysteries as to contemplate them. The lepers, it appears, are predisposed through their extraordinary ability to contemplate, for long moments, the beauty of nature, the waves of the sea, the starry night... They are unaware of the Westerners' illness that is the perpetual agitation of a mind unable to stay still. Incidentally, she told me, if necessary, the interminable recitation of the Aves appeases the brain, eliminates worries, anxieties and obsessions and the heart finds itself completely bathed in Christ's peace.

Henri Caffarel, Prayer Notebooks, n° 156, Nov-Dec 1977, pages 173-175

The Crowning of Thorns

John 19:2, "*The soldiers twisted thorny branches together as a crown and placed it onto His brow (...)*"

When the torturers were tired of hitting Jesus, they untied Him, threw a purple coat on His bloodied shoulders and forced on his head a crown of long thorns, which cut into His head and forehead. They sniggered and bowed down before Him to make fun of His royal claims, then slapped Him across the face. The royalty of Christ, King of Heaven and earth was scoffed at, but despite this desperate humiliation, the crowning with thorns foreshadows a certain triumph of Christ the King. The crown of thorns, object of Christian veneration, was placed in the Cathedral of Paris in a grand ceremony by Saint Louis, King of France, who then had the *Sainte Chapelle* built in 1246 in order to conserve it. The crown of thorns is venerated at Notre Dame on the first Friday of the month and on Fridays during Lent. (Rosary, Miraculous Medal Paris, website)

Jean-Jacques Bourgois' Testimonial on the Cross Carried by Young People

My role as an educator therefore consists of loving these young people who did not get their fill of love and I realise that with my limited means, I cannot fill this emptiness, this thirst. I also think that I cannot do it alone. The Lord can do it, through me, on condition that I allow myself be transformed by his action during my private prayer. I also realise that the situations of deep distress or aggressiveness, which is the same thing, that I encounter with these young people, are less heavy to bear when I entrust them to the Lord. It is his cross that He continues to bear in the hearts of these young people. It is the contempt that He encountered many times right up to the crowning with thorns and his death, that these young people encounter in many ways. That is why I try at the very moment of meeting them to descend deep into my heart in order to let God love these young people with his father's heart.

Henri Caffarel, Interior Prayer, 5th conference on Prayer

The Carrying of the Cross

A short meditation on the event

John 19:17, "*Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).*"

According to the rules, the convicted person had to carry the heavy cross beam, to which he would be nailed or attached, right up to the place where he would be executed. In this ancient quarry, outside the walls of Jerusalem, there was a rock about 4 metres high. Three stakes stood out on the hillock called Golgotha. Little by little, the memory of the path along which the gloomy procession proceeded has become increasingly the object of Christian devotion. In the 18th century, devotion to the 14 stations of the cross spread and there was one in the Colosseum in Rome. Every year on Holy Friday, the Pope prays along this way of the cross. (Rosary, Miraculous Medal Paris, website)

Prayer said by Pope Francis during the Stations of the Cross, March 25th, 2016

Eternal Father,
through the Passion of your beloved Son,
you wished to reveal to us your heart
and bestow upon us your mercy.
In union with Mary, his Mother and ours,
may we know how to always welcome and protect the gift of love.
May she, the Mother of Mercy,
present you with the prayers

we raise for ourselves and for all humanity,
so that the grace of this Way of the Cross
may reach every human heart
and fill them with new hope,
that unfailing hope
which radiates from the cross of Jesus.
Who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit
for ever and ever. Amen.

Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

A short meditation on the event

John 19:26-27, *“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”*

It was three o’clock in the afternoon. At this tragic hour, the Son of God died, executed by men. It is without resistance that the Master of Heaven and Earth bore the agony of the crucifixion. How torn was the heart of His mother, who followed him up to Calvary and stood at the foot of the Cross! As an eyewitness to Jesus’, John wrote down his account. Four women were also close to the cross. To this group, Jesus declared his supreme desire: he entrusted His mother to His beloved disciple, and through him His church and the whole of humanity; and on earth, John would be the one to shelter, nourish and love the Mother of Jesus after the death of her Son. After His death, a last revelation of Jesus’ love was shown by a final act charged with symbolism: His heart was pierced with a lance from which flowed blood and water. (Rosary, Miraculous Medal Paris, website)

Henri Caffarel, The Prayer of Substitution

Yes, the highest form of intercession is indeed that prayer that I would like to call the prayer of substitution. Is this not the explanation of the passion of those who are stigmatised? I knew a priest who, unknown to everyone, experienced the Passion, the agony and the crucifixion of Christ in his soul and flesh. I always wondered if he had not said that same prayer so madly imprudent and heroic. And I would happily believe that, in today’s world, there are unknown souls who experience with Jesus Christ this formidable and admirable mystery of the prayer of substitution.

Henri Caffarel, Prayer Notebook, n° 125, Sept-Oct 1972

GENERAL INTENTION

Lord, we offer up our prayers for the intentions of our world so filled with pain.

May the Spirit of Mercy help us rediscover the meaning of the Sorrowful Mysteries as a pathway towards peace.

May the Sorrowful Mysteries experienced in a spirit of love for God and our neighbour help us to repel evil, indifference, selfishness and individualism.

Lord, help us to pray for all those who live their marriage in pain and sorrow, that they may find peace and live fully in the spirit of love.

INDIVIDUAL INTENTION

We thank all those who can help with the development of the Intercessors by making a financial contribution. By giving generously, you help us distribute the letter, make up posters, and pay for the publicity materials needed in other countries.