

September - The Seven Sorrows of Mary

“Mary was the Queen of Martyrs, for her martyrdom was longer and greater than that of all the martyrs.”
(Excerpt from “The Seven Dolours of Our Lady” by St. Alphonsus Ligouri.)

The month of September is traditionally dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Mary. The devotion dates back to the twelfth century and was vigorously promoted by the Cistercians and Servites until it became widespread in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Benedict XIII included the feast in the Roman Calendar in 1727. Pius VII extended the feast to the universal Church in 1817 and Pius X fixed the current feast day in 1913.

In the liturgical calendar the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows falls on 15th September 2007. The devotion recalls the chief sorrows of Mary’s life and they have scriptural and Christological foundation. The first relates how Simeon foretold the piercing of Mary’s soul and this prophecy was fulfilled when the Blessed Mother stood at the foot of the cross that bore her Divine Son.

The Seven Sorrows focus especially on Our Lady’s own suffering during the Passion and Death of Jesus. Mary’s sorrows are a reminder of her spiritual martyrdom and her association with the redemptive suffering of Christ. As the Mother of the Redeemer Mary was the person most intimately connected with the Son of God’s trials in sacrifice for our sins. This devotion encourages the faithful to make reparation for sins that so wound the Sacred Heart and Mary’s Immaculate Heart.

Traditionally the Seven Sorrows of Mary have found visual expression in the image of seven swords piercing her heart.

The Seven Sorrows of Mary

1. The prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:25-35)
2. The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)
3. The loss of the Child Jesus for 3 days (Luke 2:41-50)
4. Mary meets Jesus on His way to Calvary (Luke 23:27-31; John 19:17)
5. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (John 19:25-30)
6. The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross (Psalm 130; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:31-37)
7. The burial of Jesus (Isaiah 53: 8; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; Mark 15:40-47)

Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

A thirteenth century devotion honouring the Sorrows endured by the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Litany of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows

Prayer composed by Pius VII.

Mary has role in Jesus’ saving Mission

Catechesis by Pope John Paul II at his General Audience of 18th December 1996.