

Episode: The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

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The first Sorrowful Mystery is the Agony in the Garden. Jesus' agony in Gethsemane initiates his experience of intense pain and suffering, which culminates his life here on earth. Gethsemane is a locale on the Mount of Olives that faces Jerusalem, a place that Jesus would frequently have recourse to, to pray, to live a certain fellowship with his followers. And within that hill, that Mount of Olives, is a rock where the Lord prayed and prayed for strength, contemplated the sufferings he would go through, out of love for us, revealing in a more poignant way his humanity, petitioning God the Father, to change the plan. But he strongly asserts not my will, but your will be done. It's one of the few words never translated into any other language. He says, *Abba*, Father, which means Dad, never doubted the love his Father had for him and the support his Father gave to him in his suffering, obviously, in his humanity. And it's the only time during his own personal prayer that Jesus invites us, with a certain sense of urgency, almost appealing to our own mercy towards him. *Watch and pray, be there with me*. It's a typical human reaction when someone is suffering and afraid, they want their loved ones near them, for support for consolation for reassurance, the Lord has that similar attitude. It's an extremely painful experience for him. Medically speaking, he is so agitated, and he is breaking out into a sweat. And that sweat is so intense that it gets mixed up with blood from his capillaries that diffuse into his sweat pores. And physicians have stated that under certain extreme psychological dread, the blood from the capillaries can mix in with the sweat as the sweat rushes out. And I would say that the main source of this bloody sweat and mixed with tears, I'm sure, is the possibility and perhaps the reality of individuals not accepting what he won in his suffering: everlasting happiness, consolation, forgiveness, freedom, salvation. And because of his infinite love that is expressed in his humanity, he is plastered to the ground, and for the first and only time, he says that he is sorrowful unto death. And the person is God. He's not two persons. He's the Divine Son. And he asks us, in spite of the distance of more than 2000 years, to accompany him in this very special difficult prayer, for consolation, so that we ourselves are empowered to join him as he suffers. Though he will shoulder a significant portion of our own suffering, we don't want to leave the Son of God made man alone at this time.

The second Sorrowful Mystery is the Scourging at the Pillar. Perhaps I could speak for everyone who saw that celebrated movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. We were all very much put on edge during that major segment that depicted Jesus' scourging. That depiction was quite accurate. The producers definitely did their homework. Because the Romans would scourge their victims, those who would be executed, and they would do it in a savage way. Just to give it perspective, in the Jewish law, the scourging would be much lighter. I'm not justifying it. It was 40 minus one where the Romans gave it all the hand with sharp metals in knots, in pieces of stone, at the end of the branches of the whip, whip of cords. And they would scourge until they were exhausted. And at times, those victims did not survive. They would have different kinds of whipping chords. One kind would tear into your muscles down to the bone. And we can imagine Jesus undergoing indescribable suffering, thinking of

all of us. There was no hint of resentment in him. Popular devotion tells us, and I'm thinking of Blessed Catherine Emmerich, in her private revelations, states that he was groaning and praying the whole time. Jesus gives us meaning in our own physical pain, that he understands us and that his own scourging is meant to alleviate our pain. And his own scourging is another translation of his sentiments of love for us. We make acts of reparation because pure goodness and innocence has undergone that merciless torture on our account. We have to always remember the man tied to the column, in terrible pain, in his divinity, he is our God that deserves infinite homage and praise.

The third Sorrowful Mystery, the Crowning with Thorns, the Lord enters into another phase of suffering. Not that there is any intermission. But now these cruel soldiers mock him, laugh at him, as he is totally covered with welts and gashes. He's in indescribable pain, head to toe. And we ourselves, given our weak condition, even with a cold or some discomfort from indigestion, we can become irritable because we're uncomfortable. It could even be often a traffic jam that could set us off. And they are spitting in his face. They mock him. They dress him up as a mock king. They are demonically laughing uncontrollably at him. He looks pathetic. And they keep intensifying their ridicule toward him. And they crown him, as if the scourging were not enough. They crown him with thorns that pierce his most Sacred Head as the hymn goes. And not a word of resentment. Not a word of rebuke. But silent prayer for these individuals who sinfully mock the Son of God made man. We could be morally certain that he is praying for these people, that these individuals. Because Jesus loves every single person in his divinity he created them, those individuals whom he is suffering for, are adding to his intense pain, humiliation, degradation. As we contemplate this painful scene, we resolve with the grace of God to identify any humiliation we may experience. It could be an omission, it could be a slight, it could be a comment with an edge or bona fide insult. Let's always remember who it was, who was spit upon, laughed at ridiculed slapped. Let us remember that he was being abused and taunted. And Jesus tells us, I understand your humiliation. I could understand if you're a victim of mistreatment because my experience of that abuse is the payment of for your salvation. We resolve to identify any kind of humiliation with his undeserved experience, ridicule, and scorn.

The fourth Sorrowful Mystery is the Carrying of the Cross. After his painful, horrific ordeal of the trial, of the blows to his face, especially the scourging that seemed to be endless, the crowning of thorns, being blinded by his own blood pouring down his eyes, he is now forced to carry the instrument of his execution to the destination of his crucifixion. I was fortunate enough to have walked through the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross, in Jerusalem. It's a narrow alleyway in the heart of the city. And he was led under the guard of the Roman soldiers, could have been 100 soldiers, we don't know the exact figure, and people were milling about. It was crowded and he worked his way through that pathway to outside of the walls of Jerusalem at that time to Calvary. And it was quite an experience of painful exhaustion. He had no energy. He was thirsty. He his body was in shock. And the Cross beam, they say, probably weighed about 30 pounds. And so he was carrying that. Tradition tells us, he fell three times. Tradition tells us that he met his mom on the way. Simon of Cyrene is revealed, was forced to help him bring that instrument of execution to Mount Calvary. He fell a third time. He was so exhausted, he could not get up and probably was dragged to the place of execution. Holy women shed tears and wept upon seeing their Master, their Savior, in so much pain. His mother was brokenhearted, that prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled, as she gazed at her son, met his eyes as he carried his cross and gave himself to the very last drop. And he teaches us personally the lesson, that part of our union with him, in union with his self-denial, union with his embracing the cross is that in very ordinary ways, we also give of ourselves whether it's with someone, whether it's in our work, whether it's in our acts of piety, that we also give ourselves completely union with his total heroic self-giving.

The fifth Sorrowful Mystery, Jesus is Crucified and Dies on the Cross. His life of sacrifice and self-giving reaches its climax. As he is nailed, his hands and his feet to the cross, he is, first his hands on the cross beam probably lifted up and then nailed to the vertical beam. Details of this torturous death was revealed in the Psalms. To be more precise, it was the first prophecy made by God himself, that the evil one's head would be crushed, but he

would strike at his heel. Read that in Book of Genesis, as the Lord admonishes our first parents and informs the evil one represented by the serpent, that he will be defeated by this mysterious hope of the world, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And his Mother will give birth to that Savior. She is included in that prophecy. And we contemplate his last sentiments, he didn't, he remained silent for most of his passion. And now he says out loud his inner attitude, his inner sentiments. He's being insulted. He's nailed to the cross, the pain cannot be imagined, it's touching nerves in his arms and the shooting pain is all over his torso, his feet, the thirst, the crowning, the shame, being stripped of his garments. He quotes Psalm 22, it begins with "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But his very first words are "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." And it's a wonderful revelation of the sheer goodness. The love that God has for us translated in Jesus' humanity and clearly translated as he hangs on the cross. He tastes that concoction that is raised to his mouth to ease the pain, tasted as a gesture of appreciation, but does not swallow it in order not to alleviate his sacrificial pain he offers for all of us. These last words include moving words to his own Mother, and reveals that his Mother will be shared, that his Mother is our Mother. And St. John the Evangelist is the only apostle there with Mary and he represents all of us. It's incredible, the sheer goodness of our Savior. One Gospel says that he was being taunted and reviled by the criminals. There was one on his right and one on his left. But during that painful time where he hung on the Cross as a criminal. In the in between the these two criminals, one of them traditionally called Dimas, begged for mercy. He befriended Dismas, and Dismas, even under those painful conditions where you can't focus on anything, he contemplates that love that will never be experienced by anybody else but by someone who actually runs into Jesus Christ. Obviously, the person who just have the gospel, experience that same love, but he experienced uniquely the love of Christ, the friendship of Christ when he was on the cross. and Jesus in his last visible gesture of mercy, "you will be with me," he says, "remember me when you enter into your kingdom." And he assures this poor criminal, "Tomorrow, you'll be... Today, you will be with me in Paradise." And we see those sentiments of love translated in this crescendo of sacrifice, of painful sacrifice. And, again, that prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled in total clarity. Poor Mary, her heart has been pierced by a sword. Her suffering is indescribable even though her faith did not falter. But seeing her Son, under those conditions, those painful conditions, even conversing with him, we can imagine the pain she experienced. And tradition has it that after he was removed from the cross, he was laid in the arms of his Mother. And we console her and thank her for her love, for her Son's love for us in redeeming us in this sort of way to reveal how much we are worth to God himself expressed in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.