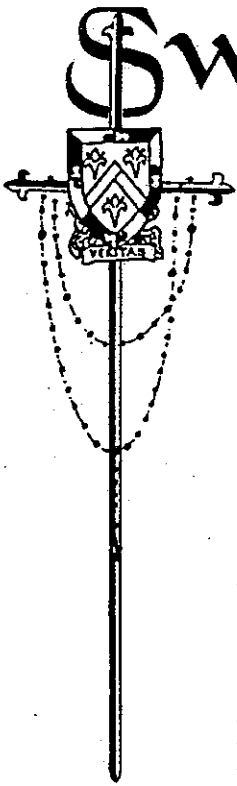


# Sword of Truth

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**Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed... He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be lead as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. Isaias 53**

**The Rosary and Lent** Lent is the season of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. While they do not replace the Joyful Mysteries, customary for Mondays and Thursdays, nor the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesdays and Saturdays, they are the proper Mysteries for the Sundays of Septuagesima and Lent. It is also fitting during this penitential season, when Holy Mother Church recounts the Passion and Death of Christ and by our Lenten penances would have us share more abundantly in His merits, that any extra Rosaries we say on a given day be devoted to the Sorrowful Mysteries. Nothing can better dispose us to having the mind of the Church as she compassionates in her liturgy the Man of Sorrows and the Victim for our sins. "I looked for one who would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none" (Ps. 68:21). Indeed, in the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary we offer the suffering Saviour the compassion of His own Mother, the Mother of Sorrows. **What greater can be given Him?** (Most Rev. R. McKenna, O.P.)

In our attempt to understand the Sorrowful Mysteries it should be of profit to consider sorrow and suffering in its relation to life in general and specifically in relation to the Mysteries of the Rosary. In our struggle with suffering the first question we always ask is: Why did it come to me instead of someone else? What does it all mean? In order to master sorrow, men may wrongfully adopt the assumption that sorrow and suffering do not belong to our existence at all, that they are weakness that must be eradicated at all cost.

If we collect all the passages in the Gospels in which Jesus directly or indirectly speaks of suffering, we will not be able to discover a single one which treats suffering as a "problem." Jesus permits the fact of suffering to stand as a mystery and, viewing a world filled with suffering, says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt 16:24).

**The Saints Our Models** (taken from *Why Must I Suffer?* by Rev. F.J. Remler, C.M.)

**The Holy Man Job** - A name that has become a synonym not only for human suffering in its worst form, but also for perfect patience and resignation to the adorable will of God amid the greatest afflictions, is that of the holy man Job. Sacred Scripture describes this great servant of God as a man who "was simple and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil." He had seven sons and three daughters, and was blessed with abundance of riches. But in the very midst of his prosperity it pleased God to put his virtue to a severe test admirably. Not a word of complaint or of murmuring against Divine Providence escaped his lips. His only comment was: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." And the sacred writer adds: "In all these things Job sinned not with his lips, nor spoke he anything foolish against God."

But these afflictions, great as they were, were by no means the full measure of his sufferings. God allowed Satan to "strike him with a very grievous ulcer from the sole of the foot to the top of the head; and he took a

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potsherd and scraped the corrupt matter, sitting on a dunghill." But even so great a misery as this could not provoke him to murmur against God. On the contrary, when his wife, less virtuous than he, ridiculed him for his immovable trust in God, he reprov'd her with these words: "Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?" In all these things Job sinned not with his lips.

In this way did holy Job become a model of unfaltering trust in God and of perfect patience and resignation to the decrees of Divine Providence for all future generations. What is still more remarkable about him is that he practiced this wonderful resignation though he had not before him, as we have, the example of Jesus Christ, the model Sufferer, and that he bore his afflictions in so heroic a manner though he had not at his disposal the special graces that we have in the Church, especially through the sacraments.

**Saint Lidwina** - Another example of perfect resignation and heroic patience under stress of prolonged sufferings is St. Lidwina. This saint was born in a little town of Holland in the year 1380. In her youth she was eagerly sought in marriage by several young men. But she, enlightened by grace, spurned the world with its false pleasures and resolved to dedicate herself exclusively to the service of God by embracing a life of virginity. That her natural beauty might not prove a danger to her virtue, she begged God to deprive her of it. Her prayer was heard.

In her 15<sup>th</sup> year while out skating one day in company with several companions, she fell on the rough ice in such a manner as to break a rib in her right side. This marked the beginning of a long train of sufferings which were to last without interruption for no less than 38 years. An abscess formed in her side which defied the skill of the best physicians, and in the course of time became the source of an infection which spread over her body.

For some years she was able to move about, though only with considerable difficulty and pain; but for the last 33 years of her life she was completely bedridden. Her sufferings increased as time went on. Gangrene appeared in the wound in her side and continued to spread. It was the source of intense pain, especially during the last 17 years of her life, for she was no longer able to move any part of her body except her head and one arm.

Nor was this the extent of her sufferings. Besides the pains caused by sickness, she had to endure the bitter pangs of great poverty, especially during the winter season. Moreover, she suffered greatly from calumny, false suspicions, and harsh treatment at the hands of those who considered her an imposter.

While in the beginning she experienced considerable difficulty in perfectly resigning herself to the Divine Will, she soon learned to suffer with the most perfect dispositions when at the advice of her confessor she made the bitter passion and death of our Saviour the constant subject of her meditation and received Holy Communion as often as her condition permitted. These two means enabled her to endure the pains of her long illness not only in a most patient manner but also with a wonderful joy and gladness.

After having thus been a victim of undeserved sufferings for the long space of 38 years - from the age of 15 to 53 - she died a happy and peaceful death in 1433. On March 14, 1890, Pope Leo XIII put the official sanction upon the veneration which had been given her by the faithful since the time of her death.

The Church knows full well that not all her children can rise to such lofty heights as to rejoice over the sufferings which afflict them. She is satisfied with less. In fact it would be more correct to say that she abstains from making any judgement. She knows that as far as sufferings are concerned, she can do no more than bring her children close to the Lord, from whom all strength and patience in suffering flows as from a mysterious, inexhaustible source.

Like mysterious rays, meditation on the passion of Jesus heals our innermost spiritual wounds. For many centuries the Church has experienced that the deepest, most serious wounds of the heart - lack of trust in God, interior hardness of heart, total exclusion of submission and love - are healed by nothing so speedily and frequently as by the meditation on the passion and death of Jesus. For this reason the Church continually places before the minds of the faithful the picture of the suffering Christ. She knows that through this means she reaches the hidden depths of men's hearts compassionating with their crucified Lord and Saviour. What better way for all who seek to enter deeply into the passion and death of Our Lord than the meditative recitation of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of Mary?

O all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.

Lamentations .1

**I**F THERE ever was a saint who was entitled to the privilege of perfect freedom from every form of suffering it was Mary Immaculate, the glorious Mother of the eternal Son of God. How should the universal law of suffering apply to her, since by a most singular favor she was perfectly free from the least taint of sin? Not only was she immaculate in her conception, but she was so enriched with the choicest graces of God that she possessed a great amount of these heavenly treasures in the beginning of her earthly life than the rest of the saints taken together possess at the end of theirs. Surely, no pain, no grief, no sorrow in any shape or form must ever approach this immaculate Virgin.

But how different are the thoughts of God from the thoughts of men! We abhor sufferings with our whole being, and think we are the favorites of God when we have nothing to give us pain; while God scatters sufferings lavishly among those whom He loves and calls as His friends. In fact, the more He loves them, the more does He make them suffer. Hence he ordained that she who of all His creatures was the most beloved, should also be made to endure the greatest sorrows that a human heart can endure. It was her destiny to become the Queen of Martyrs as well as to be the Mother of God. Her sorrow was to be boundless and vast as the broad expanse of the ocean.

Passing over the three and thirty years that she spent in the company of her Divine Son, during which time she had the vision of Calvary constantly before her eyes, let us briefly pass in review the sufferings she endured during the fearful hours that preceded His death on the cross. What inexpressible anguish must have wrung her loving heart at the news of her Son's arrest, by which she fully understood that the prophecies concerning His Passion were at last about to be accomplished. How oppressed she was with grief when she saw all the injuries, outrages and torments which His enemies inflicted on Him in the different stages of His passion. Her sorrow was in proportion to her love for her Son. But she loved Him not only as her child, but also as her God, with a love so perfect and so intense that it surpassed in an immeasurable degree the combined love of all the angels and saints in Heaven. Hence, the sufferings she endured during the lifetime of Our Lord, and especially during the hours of His passion, also surpassed in an immeasurable degree all the sufferings which the saints were called upon to endure for the sake of justice. So great was her anguish that but for a miraculous preservation of her life, she would have died of a broken heart long before her Son expired on the cross.

Besides being the Mother of God, she was also to be the mother of the saints. It was her special office to take a very intimate part on the redemption of sinners from the slavery of Satan, that they might become children of God. Hence the place assigned to her at the foot of the cross. Hence, too, the title of Co-Redemptrix, which the saints have applied to her. On Calvary, where she assisted her Divine Son in His last agony, she became our mother in the order of grace. There she brought us forth unto the supernatural life amidst unspeakable agonies of pain. And as mothers usually have a very tender love for those children at whose birth they suffered greatly, so also does our Heavenly Mother love us with a love that is second only to that which Jesus Christ Himself bears us.

*Oh Most Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Jesus, Our Lady of Fatima, inspire me to grieve sincerely for the sins that weigh heavily upon the souls of men. Sorrowfully I recall the bitter and harsh punishments heaped upon Thy Divine Son, when He was cruelly scourged at the pillar, unmercifully crowned with thorns. I recall His sad journey to Calvary, His Crucifixion, and ignominious death on the Cross. Yet, they were but the instruments of pain. It was my sins that really caused His Precious Blood to be shed. His excessive love willed that He should suffer for my salvation. Thus, I will give my little love to make amends and atone for a thoughtless and unappreciative world.*

*Oh Most Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, you who suffered, and shared with Him each pain caused and inflicted by our sins, intercede for us that we may be privileged to unite our hearts with yours in an effort to make reparation for our sins, and the sins of an ungrateful world. Amen.*