

Welcome to our April First Saturday Devotions and Mass. I'd especially like to thank the priests who are concelebrating ... as well as ... who also helped with Confession before Mass. As always, we are indebted to Deacon Roger Pasioneck and Holy Family Parish for the use of this beautiful church.

This is the only First Saturday within the Holy Season of Lent. And providentially, we are on the cusp of the Fifth Week of Lent. During Lent, for devotees of Our Blessed Mother, special emphasis falls onto the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, which give us the opportunity to reflect prayerfully on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ by considering (1) His agony in the Garden of Gethsemani, (2) His scourging at the pillar, (3) His crowning with thorns, (4) His carrying of His own cross, (5) and His crucifixion and death.

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries are often associated with what can be considered as particular virtues or desires. The agony in the garden should stir in us a desire for true repentance for our sins. The scourging at the pillar should lead us to desire a spirit of mortification ... a sense of shame for our sins. The crowning with thorns should motivate us to pray for moral courage ... the courage to do what is right and avoid what is evil. The carrying of the Cross should lead us to desire patience ... even in great suffering. And the crucifixion should stir in us a desire for greater perseverance.

Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen spoke of the Rosary this way:

*The rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next.*

*The power of the rosary is beyond description.*

That last line bears repeating ... over and over again:

*The power of the rosary is beyond description.*

Another devotion we may be familiar with is the Seven Sorrows of Mary. The principal feast day of Our Lady of Sorrows falls in mid-September. However, there exists a hidden feast day - which in the most recent Missal is offered subtly as an option - on the Friday before Palm Sunday. That is, the upcoming Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent.

The Seven Sorrows of Our Lady are:

*I. The prophecy of Simeon*

*II. The Flight to Egypt*

*III. Loss of Child Jesus for 3 days, later found in His Father's House*

*IV. Witnessing Jesus carry his Cross*

*V. The Crucifixion of Jesus*

*VI. Taking Jesus Down from the Cross*

*VII. The Burial of Jesus*

In this we see that while, according to tradition, Our Lady did not suffer the pangs of childbirth ... she did experience sorrow, as only a mother can, throughout Our Savior's earthly existence.

A particular devotion to Our Lady of Sorrow is the recitation of one Our Father and seven Hail Marys for each of the Seven Sorrows ... while reflecting on them. You could also Google search for additional prayers associated with this devotion as well.

The readings and prayers we are using this afternoon are taken from the mid-September feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, with an eye toward this Friday's hidden commemoration as well as this being the Holy Season of Lent.

I would like to briefly offer a summary of a reflection of Blessed Pope John Paul II regarding the Gospel reading we just heard.

The late Holy Father referred to this scene from St. John's Gospel as the moment of Entrustment. And it is a two-fold entrustment ... the entrustment of St. John to Our Lady ... and the entrustment of Our Lady to St. John.

Now, there are always Scripture scholars of questionable generosity, who prefer to minimize any deeper meaning that may have arisen in the text. That sort of theologian sees this scene as merely a legal

transaction between Jesus and John so that Our Lord might not be guilty of a violation Fourth Commandment to honor one's father and mother.

Yet, Blessed John Paul gives us a deeper sense of what is happening in this scene.

Our Lord speaks first to His Blessed Mother, and entrusts to her, the disciple whom He loved. In this sense, Jesus is giving each one of us to Mary. But also, in this particular event, Jesus is opening the heart of His Mother to be the Mother of the Redeemed ... to be Mother of all of His disciples.

And then, He turns to John and entrusts Mary to him. Again, John Paul states that here Our Lord is, in turn, opening the heart of not only this disciple, but of all disciples to receive His Blessed Mother as their mother.

Shortly thereafter, as anyone who knows the details of Our Lord's crucifixion ... after His death, a centurion opens His Sacred Heart with a lance ... and out of it pours blood and water.

When we truly allow ourselves to be entrusted to Mary ... and when we truly receive Our Lady into our lives as our mother ... this act of the will requires an opening of our hearts ... and when we are faithful to this command of Our Lord ... our hearts can function in imitation of His Sacred Heart ... and be able to unite in some way with His mother's Immaculate Heart.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... we will be asked to "Lift up [our] hearts ... to the Lord." Let us pray, also, for the grace to allow our hearts to be opened to His love ... and to unite with the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Our Blessed Mother.

May we, by our surrender to the Holy Will of God, be part of ... and behold ... the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.

May the heart of Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection, at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.