

Welcome to our September First Saturday Mass for the World Apostolate of Fatima - Saginaw Division. Once again, we thank Deacon Roger for the use of the facilities. And I would like to thank my brother priests in attendance who assisted with confessions and are here concelebrating to show their love for Our Lady, and their desire to assist you in fulfilling the requirements of the Five First Saturdays.

Also, after Mass, we will have a brief ceremony for the Enrollment into the Confraternity of the Miraculous Medal. If you would like to take part in that, please wait until after the closing Hymn, and assemble in the pews near the front of the church building.

Finally, at the Offertory ... there will be a collection taken up to provide a stipend to be divided between the World Apostolate of Fatima and Holy Family, as well as provide a modest stipend to the ministers and such.

Oh, yes ... one more thing ... I know I'm preaching to the choir, but this is not a Sunday Mass. If you are looking to fulfill your Sunday obligation, come back at 4:00 pm for that Mass. This Mass is a Saturday "morning" Mass to honor the request of Our Lady made to Sr. Lucia of Fatima in reparation for sins committed against Our Lady and her Immaculate Heart.

Last month, I spoke on the devotion to the Seven Joys of Mary - not to be confused with the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary ... although there is some overlap. That feast was near the end of August.

This month, on September 15 - the day after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14 - is the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

In the Eastern Tradition, Our Lady of Sorrows is known as "Our Lady Who Softens Evil Hearts," and it is in her own sharing in the sorrows of life ... sorrows caused by the effects of sin ... sin in which she never participated ... in that sharing of what could be called our sorrow ... that Our Lady understands our needs. And in having dealt with the effects of sin, she is very much able to intercede for the softening of evil hearts.

If you want to begin a novena, today is the day. You can look for something online or in a book that might be more involved ... or else, you can pray seven Hail Mary's each day, and ask her powerful intercession to soften the hearts of anyone you might know who needs it ... or even ask for the softening of your own heart ... we can never be too open to the infinite graces of God.

Associated with Our Lady of Sorrows are what are called the "Seven Sorrows of Mary." Correlating, as I said before, to the Seven Joys.

These are:

1. The Prophecy of Simeon. (Luke 2:34-35) [or the Circumcision of Christ]
2. The Flight into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13)
3. The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple. (Luke 2:43-45)
4. Mary meets Jesus on the way to Calvary.
5. Jesus dies on the cross. (John 19:25)
6. Mary receives the body of Jesus in her arms. (Matthew 27:57-59)
7. The body of Jesus is placed in the tomb. (John 19:40-42)

The sixth Sorrow, "Mary receives the body of Jesus in her arms," is depicted in a beautiful reproduction of the art piece known as the "Pieta" by Michelangelo ... an exact replica can be found outside on the south side of the church building.

Perhaps if you choose to participate in the Novena to Our Lady of Sorrows, you might include making a visit to that statue to contemplate that beautiful artwork, while asking your petition of Our Lady.

In today's First Reading, we continue reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians. This pericope, which emphasizes that we are no longer alienated from God because of the redemption of Jesus Christ on the Cross ... admonishes us to persevere in faith, hope and love ... growing always in virtue ... and grounded in the truth of the Gospel.

It is too easy to grow discouraged in our world, as what appears to be madness ... insanity ... grips most of our culture. What is evil is now

fashionable. And on top of that our government is looking to send military aid to our enemies ... and those who would do harm to Christians ... and the Church in the Middle East.

I want to emphasize that the losers in this proposition are not the bad guys ... but rather are Catholics and Christians ... millions of whom are already fleeing the country for fear of what will happen should the current regime be destabilized.

The Middle East ... in what was called the “Arab Spring,” but perhaps may be remembered as the “Madness of 2013” ... has already resulted in the open persecution of Christians ... the burning and destruction of church buildings ... and countless Christian refugees fleeing the violence ... murder, mayhem, rape ... to what end?

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis has asked us to pray and fast today for peace in the Middle East ... especially Syria. Our news programs do not show us what is really happening, but I have spoken with Catholic Christians from the area ... and it is even now ... not looking good.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray that we might be drawn more closely into the embrace of Our Lady ... that she as Mediatrix of All Graces may pour out upon us the graces we need to truly repent. May we unite our sufferings with her sufferings ... and together united with the sufferings of Our Lord on the Cross ... may we offer reparation for the sins and evil in the world ... may our prayers and fasting today soften evil hearts so that our world, our country, our city, our families, and our hearts might know the Peace of Jesus Christ ... that we may all know and experience the Triumph of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart.

Amen.