

Mary at the Cross (John 19: 25-30)

John 19: 25-30 ²⁵ Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

²⁸ After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." ²⁹ There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Read John 19:25-30, which gives the account of Mary's presence standing at the foot of the Cross at Jesus' death. For further connection with this scene of the Crucifixion, begin reading from the start of Chapter 19.

Standing at the Cross of Jesus (John 19:25)

1. Mary only appears twice in John's Gospel. She is first mentioned in conjunction with Jesus' miracle at the wedding at Cana: "the first of his signs," in which he reveals his glory publicly for the first time and when his disciples come to believe in him. This is the start of Jesus' public ministry. The next occasion is in John 19:25-30, where she appears at Jesus' death on the Cross. Think About It: What is significant about the fact that John records her presence at just these two events?

2. a. Read the following verses and answer the questions to better understand Mary's role as she stands at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

Matthew 16:21: What does Jesus say will happen to him in Jerusalem?

Matthew 16:24: What does Jesus say his disciples must do?

John 16:32: While at the Last Supper, what does Jesus predict the apostles will do in the hour of his passion?

Matthew 26:56: What do the disciples do when Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane?

John 19:25: What are Mary and the other women doing in this verse?

b. What might this tell us about Mary?

c. Think back over the things you have learned about Mary so far. What might be going through Mary's mind as she stands there watching Jesus die? And what might give her the strength and grace needed to be the exemplary disciple who follows him to the Cross?

3. In John 16:20-22, Jesus uses the analogy of a woman giving birth to help the disciples understand that although they will experience sorrow at his suffering and death, the sorrow will turn to joy when they are reunited with him in his resurrection. Read John 19:25-27 together with John 16:20-22, looking for similar words and themes. How does John describe Mary at the Cross in ways that recall the allegory of the woman in labor - revealing her as a model, faithful disciple participating in Christ's passion?

Mary and the Beloved Disciple

4. Read John 19:25-27. What might Jesus' entrusting of his mother to his Beloved Disciple's care tell us about the relationship Jesus has with Mary?

5. Let us now consider how this action might also point to a profound spiritual reality.

a. John's Gospel often uses individual characters to represent larger groups. For example, the Samaritan woman at the well is also seen as a representative of all Samaritans who will come to believe in Jesus. And Nicodemus, the Pharisee in John 3, represents all the Pharisees who will fail to understand Jesus and instead will oppose him. Similarly, the "Beloved Disciple" is traditionally recognized as the apostle John, but in the fourth Gospel, he also represents a larger group of people. Read the following verses in which the Beloved Disciple appears, and record what John's Gospel says about him.

John 13:25:

John 19:26:

John 20:8:

John 21:7:

b. What does this tell us about those the Beloved Disciple might represent?

c. Now read John 19:26-27 again. Mary has been looking on as her only son dies before her - eyes. What does he say to her and to the Beloved Disciple?

d. Considering what you learned in 5.a. and 5.b., how do these words expand the relationship between Jesus and Mary into something far greater? See also CCC 501 and 2674.

CCC 501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love."

CCC 2674 Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties." Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (hodigitria), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West.

The Woman and the Hour

6. Mary's important role in God's plan of salvation also can be seen in light of the theme of "the hour" in John's Gospel. The hour of Jesus, first mentioned at the wedding at Cana when Jesus says his "hour has not yet come," reaches its climax in his passion.

a. Read the following verses and note what "the hour" describes.

John 5:25-28:

John 7:30:

John 12:23-24:

John 12:27, 31-33:

b. Now review Genesis 3:15. What is the relationship between this prophecy and Jesus' hour as described in John 12:31?

c. In light of this theme of the hour, what do you think is the meaning of Jesus calling his mother "woman" in the "hour" of his passion? See also CCC 2618.

CCC 2618 2618 The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. At Cana, the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast - that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living."

7. Old Testament Connection: The book of 2 Maccabees recalls the forced Hellenization of Jews in Palestine under the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes. The resulting persecution led to courageous resistance by many of the faithful. Read 2 Maccabees 7:1-39. In what ways might the mother in this story prefigure Mary at the Cross?

D. Application

Reflect

Put yourself into the scene, and prayerfully imagine what Mary is going through on-Calvary, watching her son die on the Cross. We have seen that throughout her life, Mary is open to God's Word (Luke 1:29), consents to his will (Luke 1:38), and keeps and ponders the mysteries of her son's life as they unfold before her (Luke 2:19; 2:51). Now she is invited to take one more step of trust and surrender and experience the greatest sacrifice any mother could face—the killing of her own son. Here, we see Mary give up everything, even her own son, trusting that this supreme sacrifice is all a part of God's plan. Perhaps you have experienced a great suffering or loss—if so, how might you be able to relate to Mary's sorrows?

Commit

Prayerfully consider if God is asking you to surrender an area of your life to him—to give up something, to make a change, to die more to yourself and live more sacrificially for him and the people he has placed in your life. What is he asking? What one thing can you commit to do this week to follow Mary, our model of total surrender?

Pray

Are you hurting? Mary wants to be with you in your suffering. Ask her to pray for you that God might comfort and strengthen you as he did for her on Good Friday. Do you find it difficult to surrender? Ask Mary to pray for you so that you might be more like her in not holding anything back from the Lord and living your whole life for him.

Prayer to the Mother of Sorrows

Most holy Virgin and Mother, whose soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the passion of thy divine Son, and who in his glorious resurrection was filled with never-ending joy at his triumph; obtain for us who call upon thee, so to be partakers in the adversities of Holy Church and the sorrows of the Sovereign Pontiff, as to be found worthy to rejoice with them in the consolation for which we pray, in the charity and peace of the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or: Consider praying a decade of the Rosary, focusing on the Sorrowful Mysteries.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

"The meaning, origin and fulfillment of man is to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love 'even unto death, death on a cross' (Philippians 2:8). The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary, to enter with her into the depths of God's love for man and to experience all its life-giving power." - Blessed John Paul II, Rosarium Virginis Mariae 22

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden
The Scourging at the Pillar
The Crowning with Thorns
The Carrying of the Cross
The Crucifixion

Mary most sorrowful, Mother of Christians, pray for us.