

σωτήρ

[sōtēr - saviour]

Via Matris

[way of the mother]

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart” (Lq 2: 19). In the Gospels, Mary is presented to us as the guardian of the memory of God made Man. Mary is the one who beholds the mystery of Christ through a mother’s eyes: the life that is being generated within her is not her exclusive property to be kept for herself, but it is a life that she is to give birth to, a life that she donates to the world. Mary rears this life so that it grows, matures and reaches the fullness of its being and potential, thereby becoming a source of life for us all, and life in abundance.

Thus, with our beloved Mother, we are starting this journey where we behold the mystery of Christ through her eyes. As we proceed through the revered, living memories of the life of Christ, let us allow Mary to look into our own lives with the same Mother’s eyes. Let us allow her to penetrate the high, protective walls with which we have surrounded ourselves. We allow her to enter because we trust her. We are confident that she comes to cleanse us in preparation for the Spirit of God who uplifts us. We are aware that she does not come to wound us but to restore us: to heal our memory, to cleanse past wounds with the salt of God’s mercy which, though stinging, is required in order to expose the wounds that we have become so adept at hiding, so skillful at forgetting. Through our efforts to ignore them, these wounds have become festered, but God, in his mercy, exposes these wounds and heals them, thereby restoring our true freedom.

Hence, let us walk along this way with Mary who will acquaint us with her seven sorrows. As the sword that pierced her soul became a fount of salvation for the whole world, so will our sufferings, united to the sufferings of Her Son Jesus and her own, as she stands beneath the cross, become for us the means through which our redemption is brought to completion as we are transformed into witnesses of this life that arose from death for the restoration of our lives.

I

The Prophecy of Simeon

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (2: 25, 27-35)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, ... he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

(brief silent pause)

For Mary and Joseph, this was a special morning. Despite all the complications and the uncertainty preceding the birth of Jesus, their hearts were full of joy at this child's arrival in their lives. Although they probably were not yet comprehending how, they were aware that this joy was not merely for them, but for the whole world. They had already experienced this with the shepherd's invasion of Jesus' birthing place. They had heard the narrations regarding the appearance of the angel and how he had said, "Fear not", and about the multitude of celestial beings that had joined him in God's praises.

Simeon's joy in the temple on taking the child in his arms confirmed all this. However, upon returning to Nazareth, their home village in Galilee, the gladness of the memory was surely tarnished by the prophecy that the old man had uttered and by the consequent questions and sorrow.

Mary, every joy in this life is marked with sorrow and every sorrow contains a spark of joy. Thus, we offer to you our memories. We pray that they will not be merely recollections but a resource for present renewal. We pray also that our good memories will bring us hope of eternal joy during dark moments, when we see no ray of light, and that they will remind us that dawn always follows the night. During our more joyous moments, we pray that we keep our steadfast gaze on the enduring joy made accessible to us through the death and resurrection of your Son.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Mary, remind us of God's faithfulness.**

When after a succession of woes we feel worn out. **R/.**

When life brings us joy and sorrow simultaneously. **R/.**

When we feel so discouraged that we fail to comprehend how joy could even be possible. **R/.**

When life's past pace overwhelms us and we become distracted. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

II

Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus escape to Egypt

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (2: 13–15)

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

(brief silent pause)

Many people, like the Holy Family, flee from their countries because of war and conflict; they have to abandon their homes because of privation and natural disasters. Many are rejected and turned down. They bear memories which they would rather forget but cannot and they remember those whom they left behind or lost during the journey. The journey is long and dangerous with no guarantee of a positive outcome and too often hopes are shattered.

Mary, we pray that you may heal the memory of those fleeing their countries and of those who receive them. Heal our outlook on these people, so that we will start viewing them, not as enemies, but as human beings, created in God’s image, sharing the same right to life as ourselves. We pray that our love may heal the wounds caused by human tragedy and solitude; that it may manifest to them the Father’s unconditional love who always desires to welcome his children with open arms.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. pray for us.**

Mary, consolation of the exiled. **R/.**

Mary, refuge of those who are fleeing. **R/.**

Mary, journey’s guide. **R/.**

Mary, Mother of the Way. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

III

Mary loses her Son and, after three days of sorrow, finds him in the temple

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (2: 46–52)

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

(brief silent pause)

Adolescence: that stage in our lives when we discover new strengths, new emotions, as we slowly start to discover and understand who we are and our place in this world, our life mission. It is a time of adventure but also an anxious time, just like the moment when a butterfly struggles with the chrysalis to gain its freedom and fly away. However, during this process, at times we are wounded especially through words spoken to us which continue to echo inside our heads while breaking us and holding us back; past voices of those who never understood who we were and, consciously or unintentionally, caused, and may still be causing, much damage in us.

Mary, like all parents, you had to go through the turmoil of allowing your Son to be who he was. You bore the anxiety brought about by this circumstance especially when confronted by choices which cannot quite be understood. In your eyes and in the eyes of Joseph, the loss of your Son in the temple—but also all your hidden life in Nazareth—was a mystery that begged constant questioning, as he constantly slipped out of your control to grow into being the Son of God made Man. We pray that you subdue those damaging voices which still live inside us so that even through their din we can hear the beloved voice of the Father who calls us by name and ceaselessly creates us anew with the words, “Come into being”. We pray that, with the Father, you may protect and lead our personal mystery to its fruition.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Mary, watch over them**

We bring to you all children, especially those who are neglected. **R/.**

We bring to you all adolescents, especially those who feel lost. **R/.**

We bring to you all youths, as they take responsibility for their lives. **R/.**

We bring to you all those who are suffering the consequences of their own ill-conceived choices. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

IV

The encounter with Her Son as He was carrying the cross on the road to Calvary

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (23: 26–31)

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

(brief silent pause)

Although, for Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross that was the instrument of our redemption, even if for a brief moment, was a great privilege, he still felt humiliated by the fact that he was carrying the cross of a man condemned to death, a death which the Jews considered to be a curse. Simon is humiliated by the yoke of foreign rule. And the women too remind us of a people who had to bear all this subjugation and feel lost and powerless.

Mary, we pray that you fill the void created within us by all kinds of humiliation: the humiliation we feel when we are mocked, when we are forced to act against our will or when we have to endure injustice; the humiliation of defeat and failure, when we do not succeed and we lose face; humiliations which not only wound our ego but also strip us of our dignity and make us want to hide in shame. Do not abandon us lost, weeping and cast aside. We pray that our tears of shame be transformed into tears of gratitude for the healing and forgiveness received.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Mary walk with us.**

When life's journey becomes too arduous. **R/.**

When we are ridiculed for our faith in your Son. **R/.**

When we experience failures and fall to the ground. **R/.**

When we feel defeated by the world. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

V

Mary witnessing the crucifixion, the three hours of agony and the death of her Son

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (19: 25–27)

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

(brief silent pause)

In spite of the comforting presence of Jesus' Mother and of his friends, at Golgotha, the complicated bond between Jesus and his people is made manifest. The soldiers represent the tyrannical ruler who is willing to kill and destroy lest his authority is threatened. The leaders of the people, till the very end, reject Jesus as God's anointed for two reasons; he was not the kind of Messiah that they were expecting and his attitude and teachings put them in an uncomfortable position. At his side, one of the condemned, desperate about the outcome of his life, fails to take responsibility and instead continues to blame others. At times, our own relation with the people of God, the Church, feels complicated as well. So many old wounds that, for many reasons, fail to heal. So many hurts caused by conflicts and scandals in this day.

Mary, purify the way we see the Church. The Church is not only the institution we see, or the people who represent it. She is also who your Son sees: his Bride; the humanity he desires to save and who, in his unfailing love, he always sees as "without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Ephes 5, 27)—even if flesh and blood, human beings always remain sinners. Teach us to truly desire, to truly try to live, as God's family on earth: the family where love overcomes all obstacles and consoles the broken hearted. Teach us, above all, to stop thinking that the Church is something other than us, external to us, but rather to realise that *we* are the Church, you and me, all of us together, who carry the responsibility to imitate you, by standing under the cross, where, with the Beloved Disciple, you witnessed how Jesus' Blood and Water rebirths the Church as truly Holy.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Mother of the Church, hear us.**

Assist all the Shepherds of the Church that their hearts may truly resemble that of the Good Shepherd. **R/.**

Heal old wounds in the Church, the public hurts as well as those concealed in our hearts. **R/.**

Heal the wounds of division among the People of God. **R/.**

May our communities truly welcome and show love toward each person. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

VI

Mary receives the dead body of her Son, Jesus

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (27: 50–58)

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.

(brief silent pause)

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you” (Gen 22:2). That’s how Our Mother must have felt as she followed her son on his way to Calvary. But even if Isaac was spared as his father’s—Abraham’s faith—shone and pleased God, Mary’s Son was not spared—notwithstanding her extraordinary trust. And now, as a Mother, devastated, her heart broken, while holding her dead and crucified son in her arms, she must continue trusting, knowing full well, that this is also what she was asked to give—together with her Son—with her original “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Mary, we often feel as if our faith is useless. When life challenges us, we often do not understand God’s plan and what he wants from us. We often groan that same “Why?” as your Son on the cross. That same “why” that must have echoed inside your heart. When life’s events test our faith, and we have to surrender our dreams, our plans, our will, our very own lives, we pray that our faith may not be found lacking but that it may keep on striving and struggling to give everything till the end.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Mary, intercede for us.**

In moments of darkness and anguish. **R/.**

In our darkest times. **R/.**

When we do not understand God’s will for us. **R/.**

When our faith is tested. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

VII

Mary assists in the burial of her Son, Jesus

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (19: 38–42)

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

(brief silent pause)

Death is the greatest mystery of life, it is the ultimate limit. Questions arise when confronted by the mystery of death. We all, at one time or another, in one way or another, have to grieve because of death. Death separates and creates solitude. We also have a natural fear of our own personal death. Hence, the fear of death is not something we just experience at the end of life, but it pervades our whole life. We experience some form of death every day. Some dreams die in us before they are born. At times, our enthusiasm wanes and is replaced by apathy due to life's hardships. With the passing of time, we bear many losses, we lose our health; our physical and mental abilities decline.

On the other hand, we must live this death in hope. It is a hope that neither despairs nor escapes. It does not try to avoid death at all costs, as if it were a blessing for man to live forever in this world.

Mary, when death in its various forms takes hold of our feelings and our thoughts, revive hope in us. Give us a share of the hope you had when you faced the sealed tomb of your Son, Jesus: a hope that does not attempt to eliminate death, but a hope that moves beyond death and brings us to life.

After every invocation we respond: **R/. Reveal that you are our Mother.**

To us, who are mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. **R/.**

To us, when we feel dead inside. **R/.**

To us, who are weighed down by the deaths of our loved ones. **R/.**

To us, in the hour of our death. **R/.**

Our Father, Ten Hail Mary, Glory be

σωτήρ

[sōtēr - saviour]

Salve Regina

For the intentions of the Holy Father: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

For the souls of the faithful departed: Our Father, Hail Mary, Eternal rest grant unto them....

Litany of Our Lady of Sorrows

Lord, **have mercy on us.**
Christ, **have mercy on us.**
Lord, **have mercy on us.**
Christ, **hear us.**
Christ, **graciously hear us.**
God, the Father of heaven, **Have mercy on us.**
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **Have mercy on us.**
God the Holy Ghost, **Have mercy on us.**
Holy Mary, Mother of God, **pray for us.**
Holy Virgin of virgins, **pray for us.**
Mother of the Crucified, **pray for us.**
Sorrowful Mother, **pray for us.**
Mournful Mother, **pray for us.**
Sighing Mother, **pray for us.**
Afflicted Mother, **pray for us.**
Forsaken Mother, **pray for us.**
Desolate Mother, **pray for us.**
Mother most sad, **pray for us.**
Mother set around with anguish, **pray for us.**
Mother overwhelmed by grief, **pray for us.**
Mother transfixed by a sword, **pray for us.**
Mother crucified in thy heart, **pray for us.**
Mother bereaved of thy Son, **pray for us.**
Sighing Dove, **pray for us.**
Mother of Sorrows, **pray for us.**
Fount of tears, **pray for us.**
Sea of bitterness, **pray for us.**
Field of tribulation, **pray for us.**
Mass of suffering, **pray for us.**
Mirror of patience, **pray for us.**
Rock of constancy, **pray for us.**
Remedy in perplexity, **pray for us.**
Joy of the afflicted, **pray for us.**
Ark of the desolate, **pray for us.**
Refuge of the abandoned, **pray for us.**
Shield of the oppressed, **pray for us.**
Conqueror of the incredulous, **pray for us.**
Solace of the wretched, **pray for us.**
Medicine of the sick, **pray for us.**
Help of the faint, **pray for us.**
Strength of the weak, **pray for us.**
Protectress of those who fight, **pray for us.**
Haven of the shipwrecked, **pray for us.**
Calmer of tempests, **pray for us.**
Companion of the sorrowful, **pray for us.**

σωτήρ

[sōtēr - saviour]

Retreat of those who groan, **pray for us.**
Terror of the treacherous, **pray for us.**
Standard-bearer of the Martyrs, **pray for us.**
Treasure of the Faithful, **pray for us.**
Light of Confessors, **pray for us.**
Pearl of Virgins, **pray for us.**
Comfort of Widows, **pray for us.**
Joy of all Saints, **pray for us.**
Queen of thy Servants, **pray for us.**
Holy Mary, who alone art unexampled, **pray for us.**

V/. Pray for us, most Sorrowful Virgin,
R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
Let us pray.

O God, in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of grief pierced through the most sweet soul of Thy glorious Blessed Virgin Mother Mary: grant that we, who celebrate the memory of her Seven Sorrows, may obtain the happy effect of Thy Passion, Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Final prayer to Our Lady of Sorrows

Oh Mary, our Mother most beloved, you stand beside our crosses as you stood beside the cross of Jesus, we pray that you may strengthen our faith that, even if we may be afflicted by sorrow, we may keep our eyes fixed on the face of Jesus from whose extreme suffering on the cross shone forth the pure and immense love of God for us all. Mother of our hope, may we have your same eyes that see beyond suffering and death; your eyes that see the resurrection in all circumstances. May we have your heart that persists in trying times, that loves and serves. Oh most Holy Mary, our Lady of the Cross, pray for us. Amen.