

Maronite Monks of Adoration

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Through Lent with Mary

With the season of Great Lent upon us already, I would like to recommend to you a profitable spiritual exercise that is tried and true: to associate each day of the week with one of the Sorrows of Our Lady. Who else could better guide us into the mystery of our redemption than the Mother of the Redeemer? She witnessed and shared his suffering ... and not only for the brief days of holy week but for the whole of His life! She not only saw these sufferings, but as St. Luke tells us, "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19). Who else could instruct us how to love our Savior and suffer with Him for the salvation of souls but Mary, who "suffered and almost died with her suffering and dying Son. She abdicated her maternal rights for the salvation of men and, as much as she could, immolated her Son to appease the justice of God to such an extent that we can justifiably say that she redeemed the human race with her Son" (Pope Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*).

A holy and zealous priest named Fr. Gerald Fitzgerald used to recommend this practice to priests. Nevertheless, it will be profitable for

any and all the faithful: to meditate and to participate in the work of redemption; to become as much like Christ as Mary His mother in our love and zeal for souls. (This passage is from the book **A Prophet for the Priesthood - A Spiritual Biography of Fr. Gerald M.C. Fitzgerald**, by Fr. John A. Hardon, SJ).

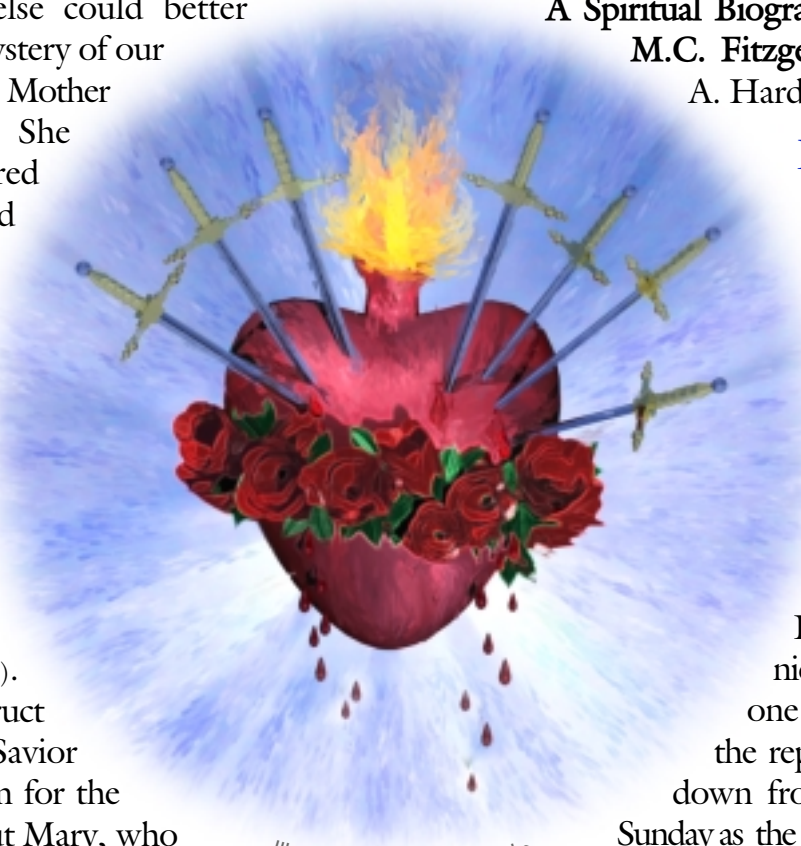


Illustration: Maronite Monks

Days in Honor of Mary

Another recommended form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to associate each day of the week with one of the Sorrows of Our Lady. "It goes very nicely especially when one puts Saturday as the repository, the taking down from the Cross, and Sunday as the entombment, giving Friday the place for the foot of the Cross, Thursday the meeting on the way to the Cross, Wednesday for the loss of the Christ Child, Tuesday for the fight into Egypt, and Monday for the first sorrow, Simeon's prophecy."

On each day, the priest should give some special attention to the particular Sorrow of Our Lady and maybe compose a short prayer to go with it.

Thus on Mondays, as one finished for example the Hour of one's office, one would say, "The Sorrowful Heart pierced by the knowledge of

Simeon's prophecy, grant that I may today console you by my fidelity to Christ."

Then on Tuesday, reflect on the flight into Egypt. "That flight into Egypt made our Blessed Mother Queen of all the [refugees]. What a Queen she is of all the displaced persons. So gather up all your little sorrows and separations from your dear ones. And you ought to say, `Blessed Mother, I too am on my little flight into Egypt. Help me to travel lovingly and trustingly in Jesus and Joseph. And like Joseph, I trust in Jesus and in you."

On Wednesday, focus on "the loss of the Christ Child (that) ended in the finding of the Christ Child." The lesson is that "the joys and the sorrows in Our Lady's life are closely mingled, like our own lives." So that "if anybody goes with faith to our Divine Lord, the darkness is bound to disappear. We may not be with Him, but He is always with us"

Then on Thursday, "you have the meeting on the way to Calvary. Those of you who still have mothers on earth, you know that every moment that goes by brings one or the other of you closer to eternity." The mystery of Christ's meeting with Mary on the way to Calvary emphasizes the need for our own "great loving conformity to the Divine Will. We see everything pass: our life, our health, our opportunity. But please God before our opportunities pass, we must seize as many as we can for the salvation of immortal souls."

Friday is "the natural day to spend with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross" Among the sentiments to cultivate on Friday is the need for being patient with others, even as Mary was patient with her Son's executioners. "How blessed is the soul that learns to accept, to offer up the mortification of one's sensibility for the sake of Jesus. If we can't bring to God

beautiful large gems of merit, let us bring the gold dust of our little sacrifices." In practice, this means we are to be "big in forgiving, big in overlooking the limitations of others, big in recognizing that behind every little man, stands the great beautiful God." To cultivate this habit, "Do what the Blessed Mother did: lifted her eyes over that crowd who were crucifying their God, over the heads even of the apostles, over the head of the golden hair of Magdalen, up to the Cross." She "lifted her eyes until they rested on Jesus" Then like Mary, you "will find in Jesus the answer to all your problems and permit Him as He did eventually for His Own Mother, to wipe away, to drive away, to absorb your tears in the golden chalice of His divine love."

Saturday commemorates the taking down from the Cross. "Who shall taste the sorrow of the Mother of God at the descent from the Cross? With a mother's privilege to be the throne of her child while in life, in death she became His altar." This has particular meaning for priests who may see in the dead Christ in Mary's arms the numerous sinners estranged from God, and dead to His life, for whose reconciliation they have been mainly called to the priesthood.

Sunday may be associated with Christ's entombment, to commemorate Mary's strong faith while her Son's body was resting in the grave. It is also profitable spiritually to remember the poor souls in purgatory in relation to the seventh Sorrow of Mary. "Be devoted to the Queen of Purgatory, one of the titles of Our Lady." Ask her to intercede for those who have died in body and are buried, but whose souls are still detained from heaven and especially "the priests to whose purgatory we may have contributed by our omissions or commissions!" ✠