

From Sorrow to Joy

By Fr. Daniel Brandenburg, L.C.



How can joy and sorrow go together? After all, you don't usually find grieving widows laughing, nor newlyweds weeping. Joy and sorrow are so far removed from each other on the spectrum of human emotion that it seems illogical to stick them together. Yet there is a deep mystery here to unlock.

Your life has sorrows. You are meant for joy. Facing the reality of sorrow, we can either live in denial of the pain or dig deeper for meaning...and then find joy. When contemplating the seven sorrows of the mother of Jesus, we can discover what so many Christians over the centuries have found: in Mary's sorrows there is a model of how to discover happiness in the midst of suffering.

The seven sorrows include (1) the prophecy of Simeon, (2) the flight into Egypt, (3) the loss of Jesus in the Temple, (4) her meeting with Jesus on the way to Calvary, (5) the death of Jesus on the Cross, (6) the piercing of Jesus with a lance and his placement in Mary's arms, and (7) Jesus' burial in the tomb. All of these sorrows are experiences we can easily understand. Each stems from Mary's love of Jesus, and amazingly, while all these trials begin in sorrow, none end in sorrow.

Mary's sorrows reveal key principles for dealing with trials in our lives:

- Joy is a fruit of love, and joy comes from knowing that we are loved.
- Love makes us vulnerable to suffering, but we cannot protect ourselves from suffering by avoiding love. We love more when suffering comes.
- Suffering and sorrow without meaning, without God, lead to despair.
- When we suffer with Christ and for Christ, we unlock the transcendence that leads to meaning, purpose, completion, and joy. It brings us to a deep level of intimacy with Christ, who chose to suffer for each of us.
- Suffering well can lead to greater and deeper joy.
- Jesus is the cause of our joy and Mary leads us to him.
- When we use our freedom wisely, we focus our attention on concrete acts of love and dedication instead of our particular sufferings.

Let us pray. Virgin Mary, Mother of Sorrows, but also Mother of Joy, you wrapped your Son in love before wrapping Him in the shroud. Teach me to let go and trust in the Father's plan. Show me how to hold on to faith, hope and love. Guide me on the Way – your Son – toward the life He has in store for these who love Him and keep his commandments. Mary, I renew again today my trust in the Father. By following your example, guide me through sorrows to deeper joy in my life, and to the happiness of eternal life forever in heaven. Amen.

For more information, please refer to Fr. Brandenburg's book, *Journey to Joy: Reflections on the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, published by the Regnum Christi Center in Atlanta, Georgia [<https://www.regnumchrististore.com/>].