

What were the Holy Mother's thoughts as she gazed into the five wounds and sees the Sacred Body covered with gaping wounds and bruises, battered out of all shape by the cruelty of man! O Mother of Sorrows, great as an ocean is thy sorrow! What must be thy hatred of sin, when thou seest what it has wrought in the Divine beauty of thy spotless Son! What a mixture of agonizing compassion and mournful sorrow, of hope and consolation, gratitude and triumphant joy, fills her holy soul while she looks on the dead Body of her Son. The day on which Jesus died is indeed well called Good Friday. It is the day when Jesus consummated His victory over death.

Shall I not condole with my Mother—the Mother of Sorrows—as with unutterable woe she lives through the whole Passion again, following it out by the dreadful traces it has left? Now she sees it all close at hand. What have I to say to her as she arranges the hair, touches, kisses, and closes the wounds? And of what does she think? Surely of happier times—of the hour of the Last Supper—the majesty and nobility of His Sacred Person during the three years of His public life—of the sweet days in Nazareth and Bethlehem. See! The Babe of Bethlehem has come back to His Mother's lap. But how differently His arms are stretched out now! Oh, of what do all these wounds speak to the Blessed Mother, if not of His love for us? We were bought with these wounds, this Blood, and this death. How could she help loving us? How could she forget us? We are graven on her heart in a thousand wounds. Everyone who passes by the Cross sees the Mother there with her dead Son on her lap, and blesses God for having so confounded our enemies through her means. Blessed art thou—above all upon earth! O Holy Mother, Queen of Martyrs, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son. So long as this heart of mine shall be capable of loving, it will love thee. O Mother of Jesus, and my Mother, too—yea—it will burn to influence all hearts with the same fire of love—that all may begin upon earth to love thee for the sake of Jesus—and Jesus for His Own dear sake. O Mother, give me to Jesus! Now and at the hour of my death. Amen.

by Fr. Reginald Walsh, OP
taken from his work

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September is Dedicated to Mary's Sorrows *Our Lady's Greatest Sorrow*



*Looking at her Son,
Our Lady prayed that everyone would go to Heaven;
that all would truly follow God,
so that Jesus's torturous death would not be in vain.*

THE TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Contemplate the heart-breaking situation of the Mother of Jesus. As evening came on, it grew quieter and quieter around the Cross of Jesus. See the soldiers occupied in dragging the dead bodies of the thieves down the hill to the common burial-place. See the Immaculate Mother—her eyes fixed on Jesus. Oh, with what unutterable pain Mary contemplates this Holy Body hanging on the Cross—now robbed of all form and beauty, even of Its soul—torn and shattered, borne down by Its Own dead weight on the Cross. She could not take Him down, and had no grave for Him. Any request from her might result in grosser execration (cursing). The Holy Mother feared every moment that the soldiers would come back and drag away her dear Son's Body also to the burial-place of criminals. It was considered a disgrace among the Jews not to be buried in their own family sepulcher. The Mother of Jesus had always been poor—poor in Bethlehem, poor in Egypt, poor in Nazareth—but never had she felt her poverty so bitterly as here in the sight of her Jesus' dead Body.

Note the party of men passing through the judgment-gate bringing ladders and many other things. They are hastening rapidly towards Calvary. Our Blessed Mother, sick at heart, asks John anxiously: "Who are coming?" At last, when they are near enough, John whispers to the Blessed Mother that she has nothing to fear. They are friends. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews—Nicodemus likewise. But lo! Jesus in His Death has made all things new. Joseph and Nicodemus are not afraid now. The Passion of Christ has strengthened them. Scarcely had Jesus breathed His last sigh than the efficacy of His Blood inspires them with a courage they had not known before. They are determined to honor the Body of Jesus Whom they recognize as the Messiah. At once Joseph goes to the Praetorium and boldly asks Pilate for the Body of Jesus. A glorious testimony to the innocence, sanctity, kingship, Divinity of Jesus, all of which have been well proved by the miracles of His life and death.

See with what ardor and reverence they approach the Sacred Body of Jesus. They salute the Mother of Sorrows, but neither can speak, their hearts are full of emotion and deepest sympathy for the Mother and Son. The beloved disciple joins them—all prostrate and adore Jesus on the Cross. Then the ladders are placed against the Cross and they begin the most sacred of duties.

Note how lovingly and reverently they touch the Sacred Body. First, the crown of thorns is removed—kissing it reverently they give it to the Immaculate Mother, who stretches out her hands to receive it, and she, too, kisses it and presses it to her heart. With the tenderest care the nails are drawn out, and passed one after another to the heroic Mother. See how gently and with what reverent love Joseph and Nicodemus wind linen bands around the limbs and then lower the Sacred Body to the ground. John holds the Adorable Head,

Joseph and Nicodemus support the Body, and Mary Magdalan—always at her chosen place—takes the Sacred Feet of the Divine Master. No priest can treat the Blessed Sacrament with more care and reverence than these holy men of high degree treated the Body of Jesus. How dear they must be to us for their love of our Lord, and His Holy Mother, and for the generosity with which they give not only their property, Nicodemus his wealth and Joseph his sepulcher, but also themselves, the personal service of their hands; and lastly, for their courage.

It is not without significance that we are told that Joseph went "boldly" to Pilate. It really needed courage to do this, seeing the fanatical hatred borne by the Chief Priests and Rulers to Jesus, and the victory they had gained over Him. Joseph's and Nicodemus' sympathy for the fate of the Crucified—their intervention for Him—and the public burial they gave Him—might well be regarded as a demonstration of opposition, and might have the worst consequences for themselves. But they care nothing for all this. They came to know Jesus, they love Him, and everything must be done to serve and honor Him—Love is proved by deeds! These noble-minded men and their acts is the first victory of the Death of Jesus, and a fruit of our Lord's gentleness and patience. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth"—by being crucified—"shall draw all to Myself." He did not take it amiss that they kept the fact of their discipleship secret for a time. Jesus waited patiently, and now His patience has borne fruit. And this is all the more wonderful—seeing that they were the only ones of all the disciples and Apostles, except St. John, who openly declared themselves for Jesus and espoused His cause.

As soon as the Sacred Body is lowered, going a few steps they place the "World's Treasure" in the winding-sheet that our Lady has spread on her knees. Then all prostrate and adore. I also will kneel and adore, fixing my eyes alternately on the Sacred Body of Jesus and on Mary. Contemplate lovingly, and mark how all who surround the Sacred Body of Jesus preserve a religious silence! How the Blessed Mother's heart speaks to her Beloved Son as she gazes on His bleeding face, His glazed eyes, His mangled body, His pierced hands and feet, His opened side. She speaks to the Eternal Father, the Holy Angels, the faithful friends of her adorable Son, she looks over the whole human race for whose redemption Jesus has suffered and died. She prays for all—for me! How reverently Jesus' faithful ones listen to the Immaculate Mother—her words are loving and tender—they illumine the mind and move the heart. Mary's incomparable grief alters neither the peace of her soul nor the majesty of her countenance, and "in peace is her bitterness most bitter."