

## Virtues Highlighted

**Perseverance** — trying hard and continuously despite hardships and obstacles

**Love** — the theological virtue by which we love God above all else for His sake, and other people as ourselves for love of God.

### The Purpose of This Story is to:

- Help us to understand and imitate Mary as a model for witnessing suffering in our world. Foster hope that we can imitate Mary in witnessing the suffering of others through love for others, faith and hope in the resurrection, and faith in God's grace.
- Foster hope that we ourselves can also personally endure the most radical of sufferings that may come our way based on our love for God, faith and hope in the resurrection, and, in God's grace to see us through any difficulty.
- Help us to appreciate the power of simple acts of love in reaching out to someone else who is in need in their suffering.

### Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the gift of Mary as our perfect mother and model for how we as Christians witness suffering in our fallen world. Help us to remember Mary as our model as she comforted others in need with loving compassion, and with faith in Your resurrection and grace.

\*(excerpted from: catholiceducation.org)

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## Mary, Witness to Suffering with Love and Faith in "The Passion of the Christ"



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\*We are used to seeing Mary as beautiful, young, with a warm smile, loving eyes, and of course a character born without sin. In *The Passion*, Mary retains her sinless character, her sweetness, her gentle manner, but she is no longer the teenager who carried the Son of Man in her womb.

She is nearing 50 years of age. She has the wrinkles of an aging mother, the worry lines of one who knows the suffering that is to come — but pleads in her heart that it not be so. Her robe is dusty and stained with blood — the blood of her own son. Physically this depiction of Mary is very different for us. Emotionally, however, we may have felt more connected to Mary, as the reality of how Mary suffered in witnessing the suffering of her son speaks to our lives in a more relevant and powerful way.

### United With Mary Through Suffering

We all experience sadness through our own suffering, and have witnessed the suffering of those close to us. In *The Passion* we see how Mary witnessed the terrible ordeals of her own son being humiliated before the church elders, dragged before Pilate for judgment, scourged nearly unto death, and finally nailed to a cross to die. We now realize the fullness of Mary's humanity as we saw the intensity of her shock, disbelief and intense sorrow as she remained with her son unto his death.

The ordeal of Jesus' persecution and death are so horrific that nearly all of his followers abandoned him, yet Mary, Mary Magdalene and his apostle John remained. What enabled Mary to remain with Jesus and persevere through this suffering? How does the answer to this question speak to our lives today? Mary's love for Jesus as his mother, and her faith and hope in his divinity enabled her to endure the path to his death. And 2000 years later it is this same love for our fellow man and faith in God that enables us to persevere through any suffering the world may present. Often when someone else is suffering, the best way we can help is in simply being with them, and praying for them. We wish we could do more, yet often we cannot cure the illness or remove the injustice that causes the suffering. In *The Passion*, Mary knew she could not stop the torture and death of her son, yet her love for Jesus compelled her to remain with him despite the suffering this caused her. For Mary, her suffering was so intense that she had to be supported by Magdalene and the apostle John as she lingered between consciousness and unconsciousness.

The intensity of both Mary's suffering and her love for her son are vividly portrayed in the scene where Mary and John scurry through the narrow streets in an attempt to see Jesus. Christ appears from behind the buildings ahead. His body weakened by scourging and the crown of thorns; he bends under the weight of the cross and falls to the rocky street. Mary stops short of the scene. She slumps on a doorstep, sighing in grief, immobilized by shock and fear. She knows that her son is divine. She knows that this was to be his earthly fate. But she remains a human mother watching her child suffer.

She is brought back to action by a flashback in her mind. It is an image of Jesus as a little boy, falling and calling for his mother. Stirred by that memory, she runs to her son weighed down by the cross and comforts him. Although Mary could not save Jesus from death, she did everything that she could, and we can only imagine how much Mary's simple act of love meant to Jesus in the midst of his suffering.

### Mary as Our Model for Witnessing Suffering

Was Mary's ability to endure her son's death a story of the past, or does it in some way speak to each of us in our lives today? The answer is definitively the latter — for all of us suffer and witness suffering.

Each of us can resolve to imitate Mary in our own lives, by reaching out in love and compassion to assist and comfort others whom are suffering. At times this can be relatively easy, such as simply spending time with a friend who is suffering with a problem and may only need someone to listen. At other times the witnessing of suffering may require much greater effort, such as when a loved one is dying from a painful illness.

During the times when our suffering is most intense, we can remember Mary in *The Passion*. Yes it can be hard, and at times we may feel as Mary did- that we cannot go on any longer. Yet Mary teaches us that through our love for others, rooted in our love for God, and faith in the resurrection and power of God's grace, we have the strength and courage to persevere through any suffering the world presents.