

*The Virgin Mary offers us the perfect model of discipleship, leading us ever closer to Jesus*

## *The Perfect Lenten Companion*

*Mother of Sorrows*

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### **United with Christ**

Because Lent points to Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows assumes particular importance. But even under the cross, Mary remains a teacher and a model. She shows how all of the faithful, like her, can unite their sufferings to the passion of Christ for the redemption of the world. John Paul 2 explained this beautifully in a 1984 apostolic letter:

*"It is especially consoling to note – and also accurate in accordance with the Gospel and history – that at the side of Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always his Mother through the exemplary testimony that she bears by her whole life to his particular Gospel of suffering. In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakeable faith but also a contribution to the redemption of all. In reality, from the time of her secret conversation with the angel, she began to see in her mission as a mother her 'destiny' to share, in a singular and unrepeatable way, in the very mission of her Son. And she very soon received a confirmation of this in the events that accompanied the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, and in the solemn words of the aged Simeon, when he spoke of a sharp sword that would pierce her heart. Yet a further confirmation was in the anxieties and privations of the hurried flight into Egypt, caused by the cruel decision of Herod.*

*"And again, after the events of her Son's hidden and public life, events which she must have shared with acute sensitivity, it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysterious and supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the Cross together with the Beloved Disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son. And the words which she heard from his lips were a kind of solemn handing-over of this Gospel of suffering so that it could be proclaimed to the whole community of believers.*

*"As a witness to her Son's passion by her presence, and as a sharer in it by her compassion, Mary offered a unique contribution to the Gospel of suffering, by embodying in anticipation the expression of Saint Paul which was quoted at the beginning. She truly has a special title to be able to claim that she 'completes in her flesh' – as already in her heart – 'what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.'*

*"In the light of the unmatched example of Christ, reflected with singular clarity in the life of his Mother, the Gospel of suffering, through the experience and words of the Apostles, becomes an inexhaustible source for the ever-new generations that succeed one another in the history of the Church. The Gospel of suffering signifies not only the presence of suffering in the Gospel, as one of the themes of the Good News, but also the revelation of the salvific power and salvific significance of suffering in Christ's messianic mission and, subsequently, in mission and vocation of the Church" (Salvific Doloris, No 25).*

Mary's "unique contributions to the Gospel of suffering" shows us that suffering is not meaningless. Lent is a special time to remember the sorrows of Mary and to join ourselves to her in offering her divine Son "in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world" (Chaplet of Divine Mercy). There, is no better companion for the journey of Lent than Mary. As she leads us closer to Jesus, she will serve as "our life, our sweetness, and our hope."