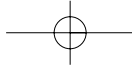


The Compassion of Mary



A Meditation Service for
Good Friday Evening



Introduction and Welcome

Hymn: O Mary Gentle One.

O Mary gentle one,
Teach us to love your Son.
O Mary humble one,
Help us to serve Him.

Chorus:

Teach us to answer Him,
As once you answered Him,
'Let it be done to me,
according to your Word.'

O Mary peaceful one,
Teach us to know your Son.
Oh Mary hopeful one,
Teach us to trust Him.
Chorus:

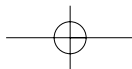
Oh Mary grateful one,
Teach us to thank your Son.
Oh Mary faithful one,
Help us to praise Him.
Chorus.

Reading: The Desolation of Mary.

Desolation is deprivation of all comfort, sympathy and consolation. Mary is desolate, through the night of the first Good Friday, through the following day, till Easter morning. Jesus is dead and Mary is now alone. 'All ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.' No one can truly comprehend the sorrows of the heart of Mary. Her inmost grief is born of her unmeasured love, her knowledge and understanding of Jesus and all that He suffered. She alone knew the secret sufferings of His soul. She alone knew His thirst for souls, the depth of His love for us. She had accompanied Jesus throughout His passion. In the quiet and silence of the night all the memories of Good Friday come back to her. She ponders them one by one, each word, each suffering. This is the beginning of the sorrows of memory. She will relive the passion continually during her remaining years on earth. It will fill her heart, as it filled the hearts of the saints, with grief and compassion, but for her it is memory not meditation. She had her part in it all, and the memory can never leave her.

(Short silence)

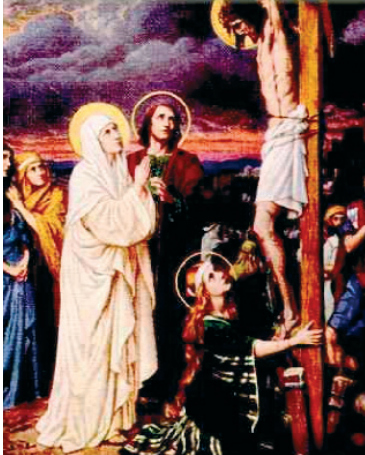
So let us accompany Mary on her Good Friday journey.



Mother of those who suffer	pray for us
Mother of the sick	pray for us.
Mother of the persecuted	pray for us.
Mother of the poor	pray for us.
Mother of the despairing	pray for us.
Mother of the homeless	pray for us.
Mother of those whose children are lost	pray for us.
Mother of mercy	pray for us.

Prayer:

Mary, help me by your example to understand the suffering of others, to be with them, to comfort and console, even when this demands more than I am often willing to give. Amen.



Mary Stands Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Scripture:standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (John 19:25)

Meditation

Mary stood beneath the cross of Jesus. In itself, standing all that time would have been extremely exhausting. Add to it the heartache and sorrow of seeing and hearing a loved one die—how much strength this standing must have taken. The standing posture of Mary tells of her courage and fortitude. Her long vigil there also speaks of her faithfulness. When love is the motivation, one can wait beneath a cross for a very long time. Even though her heart is broken, Mary is steadfast in her expectant and eager longing for the *promise made by her ancestors to be fulfilled*.

Here at the foot of the cross she becomes the compassionate Mother of all the living. There is so much suffering in our world. Everywhere people stand beneath heartbreaking crosses as they experience the excruciating pain of watching someone suffer. Like Mary beneath the cross of her beloved Son, all that they can do is 'be there' and wait with the one who is hurting, offering their love and support.

HYMN:

Sing we of the blessed Mother,
Who received the angel's word;
And obedient to his summons,
Bore in love the infant Lord.
Sing we of the life of Mary,
At whose breast that child was fed;
Who is Son of God eternal,
And the everlasting Bread.

Sing we now of Mary's sorrows,
Of the sword that pierced her through;
When beneath the cross of Jesus,
She his weight of suffering knew,
Looked upon her Son and Saviour,
Reigning high on Calvary's tree;
Saw the price of our redemption,
Paid to set the sinner free.

Sing of Jesus, Son of Mary,
In the home at Nazareth;
Toil and labour cannot weary,
Love enduring unto death.
Constant was the love he gave her,
Though it drove him from her side;
Forth to preach and heal and suffer,
Till on Calvary he died.

Virgin Mother, Mary blessed,
Raised on high and crowned with grace;
May your Son, the world's Redeemer,
Grant us all to see his face.
Glory be to God the Father,;
Glory be to God the Son;
Glory be to God the Spirit,
Glory to the three in One.

Woman of hope	pray for us
Woman of courage	pray for us
Woman of compassion	pray for us.
Woman of integrity	pray for us
Woman of tenderness	pray for us.
Woman of sorrows	pray for us
Woman of faith	pray for us.
Blessed of all women	pray for us.

Prayer:

Teach us Mary, to listen to the powerful Word of God and to be obedient to it, even when what is asked of us seems too hard for us. Help us to understand more fully the mystery of your Son's cross and so come to understand that through our trials we can come to new life and become signs of his compassionate presence in our world. Amen

Mary receives into her arms the dead body of Jesus

Scripture:

Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission; so he came and removed his body.
(John 19:38)

**Meditation:**

The greatest hurt of Mary's life is artistically expressed in Michelangelo's marble masterpiece, the Pieta. Here we see the poignant image of a mother holding the torn and ravaged body of her executed son. Mary drew not only his dead body to herself, she drew a lifetime of love and all that he suffered, to her heart. His pain was inside her. The pieta is a strong image of compassion. The figure of this sorrowful mother reflects all those who weep and grieve as they hold their loss and pain close to their hearts.

Gazing on the Pieta one sees not just Mary, but every person who has ever embraced and held the pain of another in the arms of their care. Never have we needed this inspiration more. Our world is filled with pain and distress. Everywhere there are hurting ones longing to be received with this kind of loving embrace.

As we listen and sing with the CD: 'You are my Refuge,' let us place in the arms of Mary the sorrows of our own hearts and the lives and difficulties of those we carry here in our hearts to-night. Let us not forget the suffering of our world for we are all brothers and sisters of the same loving Father.

YOU ARE MY REFUGE (Psalm 91)

Chorus: You, you are my refuge, and my stronghold,
My God in whom I trust.

Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High
And abide in the shade of the Almighty
Say to the Lord, 'My refuge, my stronghold,
My God in whom I trust!'

It is God who will free you from the snare
Of the fowler who seeks to destroy you;
God will conceal you with his pinions,
And under his wings you will find refuge.

You will not fear the terror of the night
Nor the arrow that flies by day,
Nor the plague that prowls in the darkness
Nor the scourge that lays waste at noon.

Upon you no evil shall fall,
No plague approach where you dwell
For you God has commanded the angels,
To keep you in all your ways.

Mother of compassion

Hear our prayer.



Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Scripture:

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

(John 19; 41—42)

Meditation:

It is difficult to imagine Mary's sense of desolation in those final moments when the body of her son was laid to rest in a cold tomb. She watched the stone being rolled into place and the tomb sealed; even in death, Jesus was seen as a threat by the authorities. Those faithful few who stayed with her to the end would have tried to comfort her, but it is difficult to reach the heart of a person who is numb with the shock of grief. Anyone who has known the death of a loved one, knows something of this sorrow and how even the comfort of friends is not enough to assuage the pain of grief. A bereaved person has to search within themselves for the strength to face a future without a loved one. For Mary that strength lay in her confident knowledge that God is faithful and will never abandon us. Even in her grief she waits in expectant hope for a future yet to be revealed.

Prayer:

Which of the four scenes to-night has spoken to your life situation? You are invited to come forward and pick up a candle and place it by the picture of that sorrow, praying for your own life and that of others. To receive the light, is to acknowledge that even in the midst of our sorrow a seed of hope has already been planted in our hearts.

Woman of hope hear our prayer.

Salve Regina - Hail Holy Queen