

“Dead men and women walking” in prisons, on death row.

5. Mary at the Foot of the Cross as Jesus Dies (Jn. 19:25-27)

Innocent victims of natural disasters, famine, violence, power...

6. Mary Receives Jesus Dead in her Arms

Families receive the bodies of children who die of preventable diseases, of starvation, or who are killed in war.

7. Mary Sees Jesus Laid in the Tomb

Witnesses for truth, justice and peace are silenced.

When we join with Mary as Beloved Disciples at the foot of the Cross, I am convinced that God will grant each of us the grace to open our hearts to the suffering we are most called to touch with compassion and love. For it is from the Cross of Jesus, and with Mary, that we are sent in mission, and it is at the foot of that Cross that each of us is invited to ask: To whom am I sent?

For Further Reading:

The Seven Sorrows of Mary: A Meditative Guide, by Joel Giallanza, C.S.C. (Ave Maria Press, 2008)

Life of the Beloved, by Henri Nouwen

Fr. Tom Smith, C.S.C., currently serves as the Director of the Holy Cross Novitiate in Lake Saaka, Uganda. He has committed much of his life to the people in East Africa. Ordained in 1972, Fr. Tom ministered six years in Uganda, returning to the United States in 1978 to serve as Rector and Superior at Moreau Seminary. In 1985, Fr. Tom returned to East Africa where he served as District Superior, Formation Staff Member, and Pastoral Associate. He returned to the United States in 2001 to lead the Holy Cross Mission Center, completing that assignment in June 2010 at which time he returned to East Africa.



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A stained glass illustration depicting the Holy Family at the foot of the cross. Mary is on the left, looking down at Jesus' body. Jesus is in the center, with a Sacred Heart. A young boy is on the right, also looking down. The background is dark with gold accents.

MONTHLY REFLECTION
SERIES

Beloved

by Fr. Thomas Smith, C.S.C.

The logo of the Congregation of Holy Cross, featuring a stylized cross with a central figure.

CONGREGATION OF
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“There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother Mary, who knew grief and was a Lady of Sorrows. She is our special patroness, a woman who bore much she could not understand and who stood fast. To her many sons and daughters, whose devotions ought to bring them often to her side, she tells much of this daily cross and its daily hope.” (Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross, 8120)

My friends are always surprised to learn that the major feast of our Congregation of Holy Cross is not September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, but September 15, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. I have come to be most grateful for this inspired choice of Blessed Basil Moreau, however, a choice that gives direction to the lives of all of us who are blessed to be sons and daughters, brothers and sisters in faith.



After all, few of us are called to join Jesus on the Cross, as are the many whose lives are made a crucifixion by the violence,

poverty and greed in today's world. But all of us are asked to be with the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross, close to Jesus as he suffers in what Mother Theresa of Calcutta called the “distressing disguise of the poor.”

In the Fourth Gospel there is a mysterious, anonymous follower of Jesus who is with Mary at the foot of the Cross - the one who is simply called the “Beloved Disciple.” Though traditionally identified with the Apostle John, the fact that the Beloved Disciple is never named suggests that all of us who pray with this Gospel are invited to identify ourselves with this disciple whom Jesus loved. The spiritual writer Henri Nouwen wrote that “The words ‘You are my Beloved’ reveal the most intimate truth about all human beings.” It is a wonderful, freeing truth - each of us is loved unconditionally by our God.

Like the Beloved Disciple, we are invited to lean upon Jesus' breast, to abide always in His love; and like the Beloved Disciple, we are drawn by this love to be at the foot of the Cross with Mary, to take the faith and sorrows of Mary into the home of our heart, and to learn the way of self-sacrifice for others as the way to life.

The traditional Seven Sorrows of Mary tell us not only about the swords that pierced Mary's heart as she walked in faith with her son Jesus throughout His life and to the foot of His Cross. They ask that we ponder the Sorrows of Mary as she looks upon her children today. During this

month of September all who wish to pray with Holy Cross are invited to take time in quiet meditation with Mary, Mother of Sorrows, seeing with her eyes and loving with her heart those close to us and those at a distance who carry painful crosses in our world. The Seven Sorrows, each with one possible contemporary application, follow. Your prayer with these Sorrows will provide the applications most pertinent to Jesus' call in your own life.

“ You are my Beloved. ”

1. Simeon's Prophecy Pierces the Heart of Mary (Lk. 2:33-35)

Parents full of anxiety for the future of their children.

2. The Flight into Egypt (Math. 2:13-15)

Millions of refugees from oppression and poverty looking for welcoming arms and a secure home.

3. Jesus Lost in the Temple Among Doctors of the Law (Lk. 2:41-50)

Children lost in broken homes, neglected schools and on city streets.

4. Mary Meets Jesus on the Way of the Cross