

her 5-year old son who was about to have surgery for brain cancer. He survived and is well.

To be human is to suffer. Sorrow is of the genus of suffering. Sorrow is a unique suffering, born of grief, as the heart breaks with loss, as when the pace of a good life is broken by sin, sickness, or death. No one wants sorrow, but learning to embrace sorrow is crucial to finding peace, renewing hope, and living the happiness God wants for us. Moreau, in his meditation, describes the “blow to Mary’s soul as she beholds Jesus bowed down under the weight of the cross - his head crowned with thorns, his face ravaged, his tunic stained with blood, the way he walks marked by drops of blood.” He describes the moment when mother and son lock eyes. “Their hearts also meet and speak more than their mouths, which probably remain silent in sorrow.” He tells how this woman of sorrows stands at the foot of the cross for three hours, never once taking her eyes off her son’s wounds. “O Mary,” he shouts in prayer, “share with us some spark of the burning love that was ablaze in your heart.” This would have been a hurting love.

This year, the liturgical calendar drops the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, patroness of Holy Cross, because it happens on a Sunday, the day of resurrection, when the cross became the

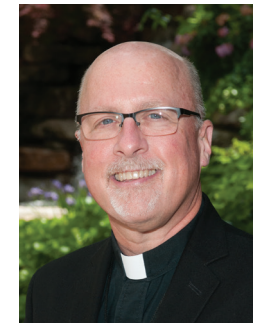
rallying cry for all who grieve in hope and die with Christ. That’s us of course, the disciples of Jesus who accept the gift of Mary as our mother too, a gift Jesus bestows from the cross to John, who stands there on behalf of sinful humanity. “At the foot of the crucifix keeping station” thus became the spiritual footing of the disciples of Jesus. It’s this that awakens divine courage in us when we are terrorized by personal loss and sin, and as mass shootings, war, and the violence of poverty prematurely end human lives and violate God’s plan for humanity. We need courage to make the world a just and loving place for all people, especially the poor and afflicted, and this courage is ours as we dare to share in the intensity of Mary’s sorrow at the foot of the cross. She shows us how to search for love in our hearts by accepting the dying and rising of our beloveds, especially Christ Jesus. Out of your broken heart and sorrowful wounds, I invite you to pray with Blessed Moreau, “Therefore, O Mother, source of love, make me share in the intensity of your sorrow that I may weep with you.” *Ave Crux, Spes Unica!*

Excerpts taken from:  
Sue Klebold, *A Mother’s Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy* (New York: Broadway Books, 2016).

Kevin Grove, C.S.C. and Andrew Gawrych, C.S.C., *Basil Moreau: Essential Writings* (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2014), 288-291.

Icon of Our Lady of Sorrows written by Mr. Stephen Barany

Rev. Daniel J. Issing, C.S.C., Ph.D., is associate professor of theology at King’s College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. September 15 has always been an important day in his life. It was his father’s birthday. The living example for this meditation is his mother who exemplifies trust and hope in God amidst trials and sorrows and whose love for her own family has become compassionate love for all who suffer and mourn. Holy Cross first taught him how to keep station at the foot of the crucifix and keeps him there. He’s very grateful.



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Sorrow

Fr. Daniel J. Issing, C.S.C.

CONGREGATION OF  
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In a meditation on the compassion of Jesus' sorrowful mother, Blessed Basil Moreau nudges the religious of Holy Cross to "imagine the most holy Virgin showing you her heart pierced by seven swords." "Ask her," he continues, "for the grace to experience consciously the sorrows of her divine son." This petition expresses the hope of every Christian prayer as it invites us to bring the cross into the situations of our lives. Moreau's is an appropriate meditation for all touched and confused by sorrow.

The gift of an icon of Our Lady of Sorrows, painted by a friend, has me of late following Moreau's instruction. The icon shows Mary with her hands touching the place within where sorrow dwells, at the center of her being, and this place surrounded by seven swords poised to pierce, almost in waiting. A few weeks after having received and prayed this icon, I came upon and began reading *A Mother's Reckoning* by Sue Klebold, the mother of Dylan, who with Eric Harris killed twelve students and a teacher and wounded twenty-four others at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. In a short chapter called "A Place of Sorrow," Sue tells of the June day later that year when she, her husband Tom, and their other son Byron visited the library of the school where Eric and Dylan died by suicide once their shooting spree was over. "My heart caught," she



says, "when I saw the long, lean, angular shape marked out on the floor. Of course that was Dylan; it looked just like him. My tears splashed the floor. Byron's gentle hand was on my back as I knelt beside the shape resembling my son and touched the carpet that held him when he fell" (107). Mary, too, had to reckon with the charge of criminality against her son as well as His rejection by many.

Sue describes how on the night of this tragedy, learning of her son's death and stunned by his murderous actions, she "was afraid to make eye contact with God." She was instead bowed down. She recounts how every night since her boys

had been born, she had prayed for divine guidance and protection of them. "I truly believed those prayers watched over my sons." She also prayed, as they grew, that they would never cause harm to others, that "no expression of pure teenaged stupidity or carelessness would ever result in injury to someone else." What Christian mother has not prayed these prayers? This night was ungraspable to her and challenged her most outstanding belief that "if I worked hard and gave what I could to charity ... I would be rewarded with a good life" (20). Sue Klebold, as Mary, is a sorrowful mother.

I have met many sorrowful mothers in

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“ O Mary ... share with us some spark of the burning love that was ablaze in your heart. (Blessed Basil Moreau) ”

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my 29 years of ministry. It began in the seminary when I visited a 45-year old mother hospitalized for an unknown condition around the anniversary of her first-born's death to a drunk driver. There's the 80-year old woman who has never met her grandchild because of an unreconciled relationship with her son. There's the 60-year old woman who as a matter of faith and discernment determined to give in to cancer against the wishes of her daughters who wanted more fight. There's the woman putting her last children through college who lost one of them in a car accident. There's my former student who called many years after graduation asking for prayers for