

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Grief, Healing and Meditating on Our Lady of Sorrows

Jeannie Ewing

Hi again everyone, and my name is Jeannie Ewing. I am really glad that you're joining us again for this Pray More Novenas Online Healing Retreat. Today I want to share with you how the Blessed Mother, specifically under the title of Our Lady of Sorrows, can help us on our journey to healing. So this is going to start with my story after we begin in prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Our Lady, Healer of Hearts, pray for us. Virgin Most Powerful, pray for us. Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I want to begin to talk to you a little bit about my journey with my relationship with our Blessed Mother. It begins with my relationship with my earthly biological mother. So when I was about I would say five years old, I remember sitting in my room as a kid and pondering all of these eternal truths that I was learning. I was baptized and raised Catholic, and so I was very familiar with and believed in the presence and the intercession of the angels and the saints, and I knew the Blessed Mother at least from a distance, but she seemed very much like a faraway person. Because of her perfection, her virtue, because she was conceived without Original Sin, there were just things about her I never felt like I could relate to her, or that she was really maternal in a sense. And I also felt like because I was not a naturally quiet, complaisant, compliant kind of a person, that what possibly would the Blessed Mother want to do with me?

So my relationship with the Blessed Mother really did not extend beyond praying the Rosary, praying a Hail Mary, kind of the rote rehearsed prayers that we learn as Catholics. It wasn't until about two years ago that I really felt like I had this tugging on my heart from the Holy Spirit, her spouse, to deepen my relationship with Our Lady. At the time, I was really struggling with my relationship with my earthly mom. She and I have very different personalities. We approach life a little bit differently. My mom has always been very sickly, and while I also have some medical conditions I struggle with, I just face them a little bit differently than my mom does.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

And so having this relationship with my mom that was full of this tension, it was rife with contention, competition, an air of jealousy I would almost say, I never really felt like my earthly mother understood me, especially now that I am a mom of four children. So there's this deep wound in my heart, there's this pain because I had this longing that my own mother would love me the way I needed to be loved, the way I really pined for love, and I wasn't finding that in that relationship. And it hurt deeply.

So, through divine providence, I found out about the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. Well, I was nominally familiar with Our Lady of Sorrows, but I had never really prayed to her under that name, nor had I really meditated upon the Seven Sorrows of Mary. I'll tell you something that I learned that helped me to really forge ahead with this relationship with Our Lady of Sorrows. I was reading from St. Louis de Montfort in *Total Consecration to Mary*. So this is one of the classic spiritual works that many of us have heard of, and many of you maybe have even embarked on the journey of total consecration to Jesus through Mary. Well, originally that came from St. Louis de Montfort, and I know that there are some other versions of that now, but St. Louis de Montfort is just my favorite Marian saint I would say.

I was reading in this book about how he said that when we pray to the Blessed Mother, we should always ask for two things: A participation of her grace, and a portion of her heart. A participation of her grace, and a portion of her heart. And that just really convicted me as a person. I then learned that we invoke Our Lady under certain titles because the Lord gives her permission to dispense specific graces under that title. Maybe you didn't know that, I didn't know that.

So, for instance, under the title "Our Lady of Sorrows," if we invoke Mary under that name, the particular grace that we are given is the grace to, A, know our primary defects - So that is to grow in self-knowledge - and, B, to see ourselves more honestly, which goes along with self-knowledge as well. The reason that Our Lady is given this access, so-to-speak, to give us these graces specific to self-knowledge is that the prophet Simeon said "You yourself a sword shall pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

So Our Lady of Sorrows is considered by Mariologists, by and large, to be the specific name we invoke when we want to understand what is hidden from us. So what is confusing in your life? What is something that's not clear to you? And I think that that's really important when we're talking about a journey to healing, because oftentimes we have all of this mess inside of us and we don't know how to sort through it, we don't know where to begin, or are not even really sure of the origin of our woundedness. And so if we pray for Our Lady of Sorrows, then we

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

begin to kind of see more clearly, more honestly what the source of our brokenness is, and that is a huge breakthrough when we're talking about finding lasting healing and peace through the Lord.

So the Seven Sorrows of Mary, we almost participate in this mystical suffering that she endured. So, if you think about it, the journey of the Seven Sorrows of Mary - If you're not familiar with them, I can't go through them this video because I don't have the time. But look it up. It's basically taking a journey with Mary and Jesus, but through her eyes and through her heart. What was it like as a mother for her to, A, begin her journey of sorrow when she received the prophecy from Simeon about the piercing of her heart with these seven swords? And then all the way until the burial of Jesus.

So we're taking this journey with her, and as we do that we discover this beautiful gift of Divine Mercy that's given to her. It's almost like because she endured the same suffering that Jesus did - only hers was a mystical suffering, an interior suffering, but she went through the same kind of passion, the same cross that Jesus did, because their hearts are so inextricably linked - because of that, she knows your suffering. She knows what you're going through. She knew my pain of not being able to really connect with my earthly mom, and therefore not really understanding how to have a relationship with her. And it wasn't until I started praying these Seven Sorrows on a daily basis and meditating on them that really jumpstarted my desire to connect with the Blessed Mother in a very intimate way, in a way that was deeper than what I had ever done, like a true relationship I would say, a relationship of hearts.

So that's what happened to me when I started to pray to her under the name "Our Lady of Sorrows." I really understood that this mystical suffering was actually a gift, and that she was inviting me to participate in that gift. But more than that, it's this maternity about her. So I, as her daughter, you as her son or daughter, we are children, we're adopted children of Our Lady, and there's nothing more that she wants to give us than this healing we long for. She wants that more than we do, and she wants it because she saw what her Son had to go through to pay the price for our salvation. So there's almost always this urgency, I would say. When you bring your prayers, when you bring your suffering heart, your cross, your trials to her, there's almost a desperation and an urgency on her part to intercede for you.

So I hope that's encouraging to you. A couple of final thoughts about this. First of all, we need to remember, when we're talking about healing, our journey in healing, that there is this beatitude of meekness, and Father Jacques Philippe wrote a beautiful book called *The Eight Doors to the Kingdom: Meditations on the Beatitudes*. So this is a fairly new book; within the past few years it was published.

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

And in that book, on the chapter of meekness, he talks about what could call or consider three sub-virtues of meekness. So he lists those as sensitivity, compassion, and receptivity. I would add to that vulnerability.

Meekness is this beatitude that softens our hardened hearts. Do you remember that verse from I think it's Ezekiel, in which it says from God the Father ***"I will replace your hearts of stone with one of flesh, with a heart of flesh."*** So think about that when it pertains to your own suffering that you're going through right now, whatever you're seeking healing for. Oftentimes, when we are in the midst of great pain, tribulations, spiritual darkness, agony, we hole ourselves up when it comes to our emotions because it's safer, and because it's a coping mechanism. It's a way that we can defend ourselves by building these walls and these barriers. But what happens is, over time, we lose our ability to love, to give and receive love. Meekness is that beatitude that thus crushes those stony parts of our heart that is because of our heart, it's because of our woundedness and our brokenness.

So, through Our Lady of Sorrows, she really cracks all of those bricks and stones and the hardness and she opens our hearts, so that we are able to give and receive love again, and to be ourselves authentically without apology; to just live in this freedom of truth. So that is a huge healing gift, and I will tell you that since I have developed a relationship with Our Lady of Sorrows, it's really softened my heart because, A, I'm understanding myself and my own sins and weaknesses better, and therefore I'm able to look at my mom and her limitations with more compassion and acceptance. I can see the journey in her own life, and I can see all of the struggles she's been through and all of the obstacles she's overcome in her life. And it's given me some respect for that, and it's also helped me to just come to terms with and be at peace with the fact that she is a finite person just like me.

So I hope that you will find a relationship with Our Lady of Sorrows to be very instrumental in your own journey to healing. I want to conclude with this prayer to the Blessed Mother by St. Germanus. *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Most Holy Virgin! You are the greatest consolation that I receive from God, you are the heavenly dew that soothes all my pains, you are the light of my soul when it is surrounded by darkness, you are my guide in unfamiliar paths, the support of my weakness, my treasure in poverty, my remedy in sickness, my consolation in trouble, my refuge in misery, and the hope of my salvation. Hear my petitions, have pity on me, as is fitting for the mother of so good a God, and obtain from me a favorable reception of all my petitions at the throne of mercy. Our Lady of Mercy, pray for us. Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*