



Dolorosa

SECOND WEEK OF LENT

MARCH 2017



The Sorrowful Passion of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Third Sorrow The Loss of Jesus in Jerusalem

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After spending seven years in the land of the pagan Egyptians, the Holy Family joyfully returned to Nazareth upon the death of King Herod. In *Our Lady Book*, Father Lasance describes the life of the Holy Family upon their return home:

Joseph set himself to his old labors in the carpenter's shop. Mary looked after her little household; ground corn in her handmill; cooked the simple meals, and took care of her Son, who grew from day to day in grace and beauty, and was never absent from her side. Perhaps it was now that she wove the seamless garment which is said to have grown with His growth, and for which the Roman soldiers were one day to cast lots on Calvary. (111-112)

For the next five years, life at Nazareth would continue as Jesus, in the words of Saint Luke, "grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him" (2:40). Though poor, the home of the Holy Family was a happy one. It was a peaceful dwelling. This tranquil state of domestic life, however, was soon to be disturbed and embittered by a drop of anguish.

Three times each year, that is, on the Feast of the Pasch or Passover, on the Feast of Pentecost, and on the Feast of Tabernacles, all Jewish men were obliged to make a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate these

feasts. Every boy in Israel, on reaching his twelfth year, was declared by law to be "of age" and was also obliged to perform all the religious exercises in connection with the feast days. Women, however, were not required to make the visits to the temple. Yet, the most pious among them made the visits voluntarily out of devotion. Thus the Blessed Virgin, the most pious of women, made the journey each year with Saint Joseph.

In Our Lord's twelfth year, the Holy Family set out for Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Though the eternal Son of God was in no way obliged by the Law in this matter, yet in His humility and obedience He would comply with the laws of Israel. The journey was tiring, but the hardships that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph endured were lightened by their joy in fulfilling God's law and by their love for one another. At length, they arrived in the holy city. Whether the Holy Family was able to find suitable lodging in Jerusalem or whether the sad events of Christmas Eve were repeated because of the great crowds of visitors, Sacred Scripture does not tell us. They surely found some place to stay, however, for the Feast of Passover lasted an entire week.

After the celebration of the feast, Mary and Joseph set out on the return journey to Nazareth with their relatives and friends. In those days, it was customary for men and women to travel in separate groups. The men would travel in one party some



—James Tissot. *Reconstruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Herod*. 1886-1894. Brooklyn Museum.

distance ahead of the women. Children were at liberty to travel in either group—either with their mother or their father. Thus, when returning from Jerusalem, the Blessed Virgin supposed that Jesus was with Saint Joseph, while he believed Him to be with Mary; but in reality, Jesus was with neither Mary nor Joseph. Saint Luke describes the situation very simply. “And having fulfilled the days,” he writes in his Gospel, “when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day’s journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance” (2:43-44).

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In his magnificent work *The Illustrated Life of the Blessed Virgin*, Father B. Rohner, O.S.B., describes the astonishment and alarm of Mary and Joseph at not finding Jesus when the caravan stopped and the families reunited to rest for the night:

On meeting each other, they eagerly asked, “Where is Jesus?” On discovering their mistake, they reproached themselves, but not each other, with their unpardonable negligence in having thus lost sight of their beloved Child. The evening was now far advanced, and the holy couple were tired and hungry after their exhausting day’s travel. But neither food nor rest was to be thought of. From door to door, from tent to tent, from neighbor to

neighbor the afflicted pair hurried to and fro in anxious search of Him whom their souls loved. But all in vain. Then they made a few hasty preparations and hurried back again to Jerusalem. (245-246)

The journey back to the holy city seemed like an eternity to the Blessed Virgin and her chaste spouse. The most dismal visions arose in the Mother’s imagination and broke her heart over and over again. Perhaps, she no doubt thought, the successor of Herod, or some of his soldiers, had discovered that her Child was the one sought after years before, and had already put Him to death. Perhaps He had fallen into the hands of malicious men. “Add to that,” writes Father Rohner, “her self-reproach that it was through her own fault that her Son and God had been lost . . .” (246).

Towards morning the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, exhausted and hungry, arrived in Jerusalem. They hastened to the house in which they had lodged during the festival days. Jesus was not there. Mary and Joseph then hurried to all their friends and relatives in every part of the city, but found no sign of Our Lord. Our Lady even inquired of strangers in the streets, but they knew nothing of the twelve-year-old Boy. Some did not even give her a minute of their time but responded with an impatient, “No.” There were others, however, who surely tried to compassionate the young Mother, but no one offered to assist her in her search.

At last, after three long days of anguish, sorrow, and exhaustion, Our Lady and Saint Joseph found Jesus. Words can describe neither the scene of the reunion of the Holy Family nor the joy and relief that Mary felt at seeing her Son. Even Saint Luke refrains from describing in detail the finding of Jesus. He merely records the desolation of Our Lady during the three days’ search and the joy of the finding in a very short and simple narrative.

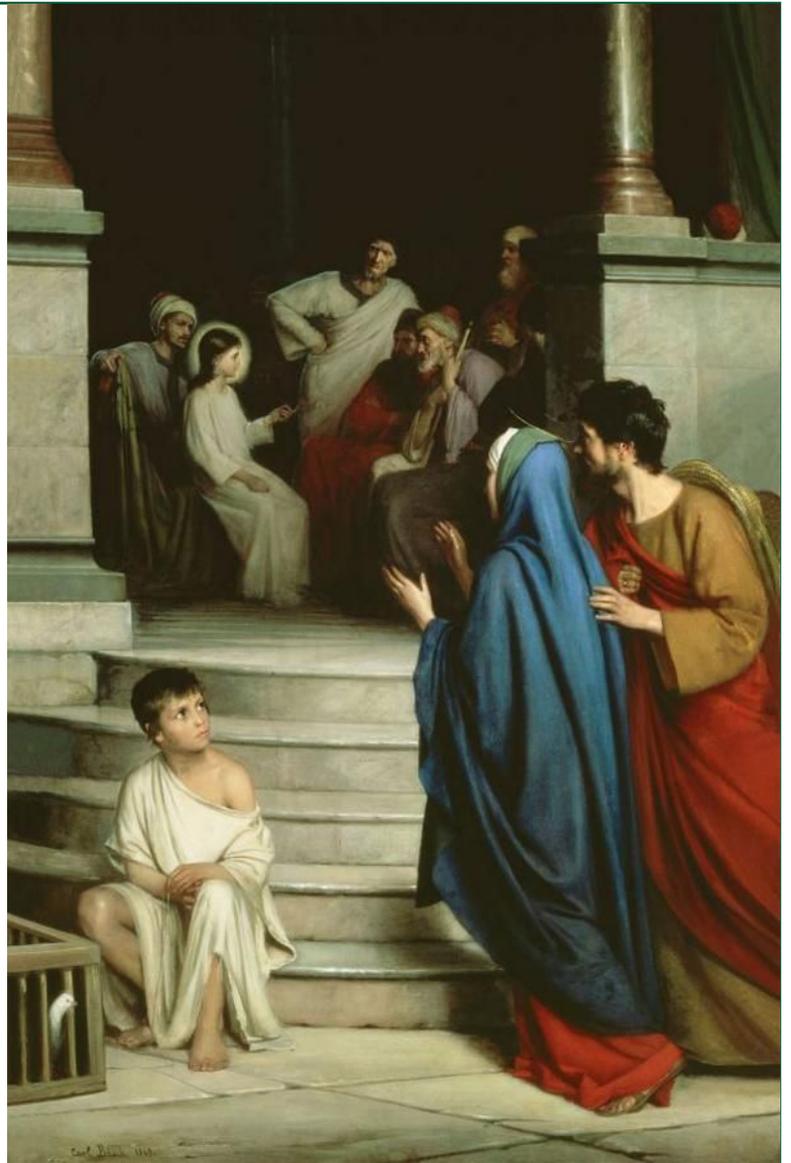
And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. (2:46-48)

After the assembly of doctors and lawyers had adjourned for the day, Our Lady and Saint Joseph approached Jesus. The Blessed Virgin lovingly embraced her Son and then gently put this question to Him: “Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Lk. 2:48). In asking this, Our Lady was in no way complaining or questioning Our Lord in a critical way, rather she was asking Him with the solicitude of mother. Her words, as Cornelius a Lapide writes in *The Great Commentary*, “are the words of a mother, not finding fault with Christ, but in wonder and in sorrow, and sorrowfully unfolding her grief” (3:295).

Some might wonder why Our Divine Savior caused His Mother grief and sorrow so overwhelming that, according to Saint Alphonsus, she would have died had God not intervened (*The Glories of Mary* 408). Why did He remain in Jerusalem without telling her or Saint Joseph? The answer to this mystery is found in Our Lord’s response to His Mother’s question. “How is it that you sought Me?” Our Lord said. “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Lk. 2:49)

What was His Father’s business? His Father’s business was the redemption and salvation of mankind through the crucifixion and death of His Divine Son. His Father’s business was the cross. Our Lady and Saint Joseph, however, did not understand what Our Lord meant by being about His Father’s business. Saint Luke plainly says, “And they understood not the words that He spoke unto them” (2:50). But the Evangelist does add this: “His mother kept all these words in her heart” (2:51). Our Lady kept the words of her Divine Son in her heart. She pondered them. She meditated upon them until she eventually came to understand the full and complete implication of those words. Thus, Mary came to understand what His Father’s business was. She came to understand the cross long before her Son was nailed to it.

In the course of our lives, and particularly in the midst of hardship, difficulty, sickness, and suffering, we will be tempted, at times, to turn to Our Lord in one way or another and say critically: “Lord, why hast Thou done so to



us?” There are surely many events that have happened to us in the past; things, perhaps, that are happening to us now; and, situations and events that will happen to us in future—things that we have not, do not, and will not understand. Like Our Lady who did not understand why her Divine Son remained in Jerusalem without telling her, we too do not always understand why certain things are permitted by Divine Providence. We may be tempted, for example, to wonder why at times we are treated with

coldness and contempt. We may be tempted to ask why we are often afflicted and saddened by the trials of life and why we are sometimes crushed by the various burdens of our state in life.

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going to tell us. Our Divine Savior is not going to give us an explanation of why He does what He does or why He permits what He permits. For our part, we must, like Our Heavenly Mother, not question Our Lord's reasons. She did not question the reason He gave her when she asked why He stayed behind in Jerusalem. Our Lady did not ask Him: "What is your Father's

business? What do you mean?" Rather, she accepted that this was God's will and was resigned to it.

So it must be with us, too. We must not question why God does what He does or why He allows certain events and circumstances to happen. We must resign ourselves to His holy will. Like Our Blessed Mother, we must persevere through the sorrow and hardship and keep these in our hearts until we come to understand better the Father's business, that is, until we come to a fuller realization that the sorrow or hardship—that the cross—is the will of God for us.

We must remember that everything happens for a reason. There is nothing that happens to us and there is nothing that happens in this world without God's permission. In one way or another, it is all part of His loving Providence. God allows suffering and hardship

because they have a purpose—a purpose of which we are often unaware. We are not gods. We do not possess divine minds. Thus we do not see things the way God sees them; we do not know everything that God knows. That is, we do not know all the details of the past, present, and future. God knows what is best, and He always draws good from even what seems to be the greatest evil.

Place your trust and confidence in Our Blessed Savior, then. When the sufferings and the hardships of this life come, rather than complain about them—rather than say "Why, Lord?"—pray in the words of Our Divine Savior as He suffered in Gethsemane: "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done."

Let us always bear in mind that as the Blessed Virgin's tears of sorrow were turned to tears of joy—as the

Third Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was turned by God into the Fifth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary because Our Lady found her Divine Son—God will do the same for us. He will change our sorrows, our hardships, and our sufferings on this earth, which we bear patiently for the love of Him, into the never-ending happiness and joy of eternal life.

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Prayer of Resignation in Union with Our Lady of Sorrows

Mary, most holy Virgin and Queen of Martyrs, accept the sincere homage of my filial affection. Into thy heart, pierced by so many swords, do thou welcome my poor soul. Receive it as the companion of thy sorrows at the foot of the cross, on which Jesus died for the redemption of the world. With thee, O sorrowful Virgin, I will gladly suffer all the trials, contradictions, and infirmities which it shall please Our Lord to send me. I offer them all to thee in memory of thy sorrows, so that every thought of my mind, and every beat of my heart may be an act of compassion and of love for thee. And do thou, sweet Mother, have pity on me, reconcile me to thy divine Son Jesus, keep me in His grace and assist me in my last agony, so that I may be able to meet thee in heaven and sing thy glories. Amen.

An indulgence of 500 days (S. C. Ind., Mar. 20, 1887; S.P. Ap., May 19, 1934 and June 18, 1949).