

How to pray the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

This ancient spiritual practice helps us enter into the heart of Our Blessed Mother as we recall her sufferings.

“As Christ was the ‘man of sorrows’ (Is 53, 3) through whom it pleased God to have ‘reconciled all things through him and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, when he made peace by his death on the cross’ (Col 1, 20), so too, Mary is ‘the woman of sorrows’ whom God associated with his Son as mother and participant in his Passion (socio passionis).”

(Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy)

Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows is very ancient and over time pious customs have been developed to enter into the heart of Mary that was pierced so “thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:35). One such custom owes its origin to the Servite Order founded by a group called the Seven Holy Founders in 1233. From the very beginning they sought to live a life dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Through their spirituality they developed what has been called the “Servite Rosary,” also known as the “Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.” It recalls seven events in the life of Mary when she experienced great sorrow. They are as follows:

- ❖ The Prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:34–35)
- ❖ The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
- ❖ The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem (Luke 2:43–45)
- ❖ The Meeting of Mary and Jesus on his Way to Calvary (traditional)
- ❖ Standing at the Foot of the Cross (John 19:25)
- ❖ Jesus Being Taken Down from the Cross (Matthew 27:57–59)
- ❖ The Burial of Jesus (John 19:40–42)

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To pray this chaplet in memory of Our Lady’s Seven Sorrows, the custom is to pray the Our Father once and then the Hail Mary seven times at each division. At the very end, three Hail Marys should be prayed in honor of Our Lady’s tears.

It is suggested when praying the chaplet to say an Act of Contrition at the very beginning, recognizing the role our sins had in Our Lady’s sufferings.

One method that helps facilitate the meditation on Mary’s sorrows is to announce each sorrow before praying the seven Hail Marys. Here is the text given by the Church in the 1910 version of the *Raccolta*:

With this confidence in my heart, I meditate on the First Sorrow, when Mary, Virgin Mother of my GOD, presented JESUS her only Son in the Temple, laid Him in the arms of holy and aged Simeon, and heard his prophetic word, “The sword of grief shall pierce thy soul,” foretelling thereby the Passion and Death of her Son JESUS.

The Second Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she was obliged to fly into Egypt by reason of the persecution of cruel Herod, who impiously sought to slay her well beloved Son.

The Third Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when, after having gone up to Jerusalem at the Paschal Feast with Joseph her spouse and JESUS her beloved Son, she lost Him on the way back to her poor house, and for three days bewailed the loss of her only Love.

The Fourth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she met her dear Son JESUS carrying to Mount Calvary on his tender shoulders the heavy Cross whereon He was to be crucified for our salvation.

The Fifth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she saw her Son JESUS raised upon the hard tree of the Cross, and blood flowing from every part of his sacred Body, and then beheld Him die after three hours agony.

The Sixth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she saw the lance pierce the sacred Side of JESUS, her beloved Son, the nails withdrawn, and his holy Body laid in her purest bosom.

The Seventh and last Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, Queen and Advocate of us, her servants, miserable sinners, was when she saw the Holy Body of her Son buried in the grave.

V/. Pray for us, Virgin most sorrowful.

R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of CHRIST.

Let us pray.

GRANT, we beseech Thee, O LORD JESUS CHRIST, that the most blessed Virgin Mary, thy Mother, may intercede for us before the throne of thy mercy, now and at the hour of our death, whose most holy soul was transfixed with the sword of sorrow in the hour of thine own Passion. Through Thee, JESUS CHRIST, SAVIOR of the world, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

The Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows is a beautiful tradition in the Church and allows a soul to walk the *via matris*, following Mary who kept all of these sorrows in her heart.

