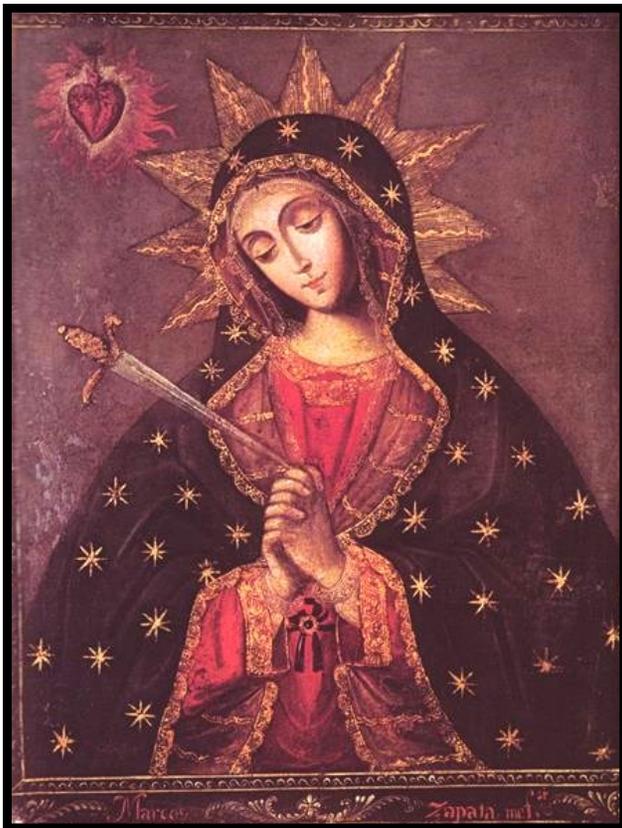


THE SWORDS OF SORROW

*Which pierced the heart of the
Blessed Virgin in the Passion
of her Son.*

— Saint Gertrude



THE FIRST SWORD.

O MOST sorrowful Virgin Mary, I recall to thy mind now that sword of sorrow which pierced thy soul, when thy Beloved, thine only one, came to bid thee farewell, and to ask thy maternal blessing, ere He went forth to death. Remember, O Mother most afflicted, how thy heart was wrung when thy most tender and only Son, thy delight, so lovingly embraced thee for the last time, and with plaintive voice and tearful eyes bade thee farewell. Remember now your sighs and tears, when the hearts so joined together by the strongest ties of love were thus torn asunder, and pierced through with the keenest wound of sorrow.

By that mournful going away of thy Son, and by all the bitter tears thou didst shed, I beseech thee, O Mary, be with me at the last, when all my friends turn away from my lifeless body, and protect me with thy maternal blessing from all the snares of the enemy. Amen.

THE SECOND SWORD.

O MOST afflicted Virgin Mary, I recall to thy mind now that keen

sword of sorrow which pierced thy soul, when the blessed John came to tell thee that thy Son had been betrayed by Judas, seized by the Jews, dragged before Annas and Caiphas, and there blasphemed and mocked, spit upon, buffeted, and overwhelmed with contumely and rude reproach. Remember, O thou most afflicted one, how these mournful tidings pierced thy heart. Oh, remember now the moans and wailing plaints with which thou didst fill the house, and how thou didst cry: O Jesus, my Son Jesus, who will grant me that I might die for thee, O Jesus, my Son, my Son! By that keenest sword of sorrow I beseech thee, O Mary, in my last hour, when my heart shall quake with anguish and the dread of death, do thou deign to cheer me with thy most holy presence, lest I sink in the abyss of despair. Amen.

THE THIRD SWORD.

O MOST sad Virgin Mary, I recall to thy mind now that sword of sorrow which pierced thy heart, when thou didst behold thy Son led forth by Pilate, His sacred Body torn and bleeding, His Head

crowned with thorns, defiled with spittings, so that there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness. Remember, O Mother most sad, how thy heart was torn when thou didst hear the Jews exclaim: Away with him, away with him! crucify him! Remember that keenest wound which was dealt upon thy heart when thou didst hear the sentence of an accursed death pronounced by Pilate. Remember all the compassion and the grief which wrung thy Mother's heart when thou didst see thy Son laden with His heavy Cross, and led forth with direst ignominy to the hill of Calvary. Oh, who shall count thy sighs and tears, who shall tell the sorrows of thy most afflicted heart! I compassionate thee, O Mother most desolate, and I humbly beseech thee be with me in the dread hour of judgment, when I am overwhelmed with the accusations of the devil; and drive far from me then all mine enemies. Amen.

THE FOURTH SWORD.

O MOST desolate Virgin Mary, I recall to thy mind now that sword of sorrow which pierced through

thy heart, when thou didst behold thy Son raised high upon His Cross, and fastened thereunto with three nails. O most sorrowful Mother, how was it that thy soul was not utterly crushed down and wrenched from thy body? How could it be that thine eyes did not fail for tears? Oh, remember now the sadness which filled thy heart when thou didst behold him blasphemed, mocked with vinegar and gall in His thirst, reputed viler and treated more ruthlessly than the very robbers. Remember thine ineffable anguish when thou didst see him fail and sink beneath His impetuous love and sorrow, His lips grow pale, His limbs quiver, His eyes glazed and dim; until at length His heart broke with a mighty pang, and with a loud cry He gave up the ghost. By these thy surpassing sorrows, O Mother most desolate, and by all thy groanings and tears, I beseech thee, be with me with the same love when I draw my last breath, when my heart shall break in the agony of death; and deign to receive my soul into thy hands as it goes forth from the body.

THE FIFTH SWORD.

O VIRGIN Mary, Mother of dolours, I recall to thy mind now that sword of sorrow which pierced thy heart, when thou didst receive into thy bosom thy Son, taken down from the Cross, and didst bedew His sacred Body with thy tears. Oh, what didst thou feel as thou didst gaze upon that Head pierced all around with thorns, that Side riven with the lance, those Hands and Feet dug through with the cruel nails, that beautiful Face marred with blows and denied with spittings, and all that sacred Body torn with wounds, livid with stripes, and besmeared with blood. O most sorrowful Mother, how didst thou kiss that divine Face, and wash it with thy tears, and bewail the dishonour of thy Beloved. O Mother most forlorn, I pray thee, by all the sighs and groans wrung from thy heart, by all the sorrows and the wounds of thy soul, comfort mine in the hour when it goes forth from the body, wash it with thy tears, and receive it into thy maternal arms as thou didst receive the lifeless Body of thy Son, and lead it up to the joys of heaven. Amen.