

APRIL 2021

ICON BY SR. MONICA SPATES, T.O.R.



THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM: JESUS' PASSION, DEATH, & RESURRECTION

WITH THIS ISSUE OF *UNDER HIS MERCY*, OUR HOPE IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH REFLECTIONS AND IMAGES TO ENRICH YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE AS YOU ENTER INTO THIS MOST SACRED WEEK. PLEASE KNOW THAT WE ARE PRAYING FOR YOU AND WE ARE ALL TRULY UNITED IN THE BODY OF CHRIST!

ENTERING INTO THE PASCHAL MYSTERY WITH ST. JOHN

BY SR. JEAN DAUGHERTY, T.O.R.

HOLY THURSDAY

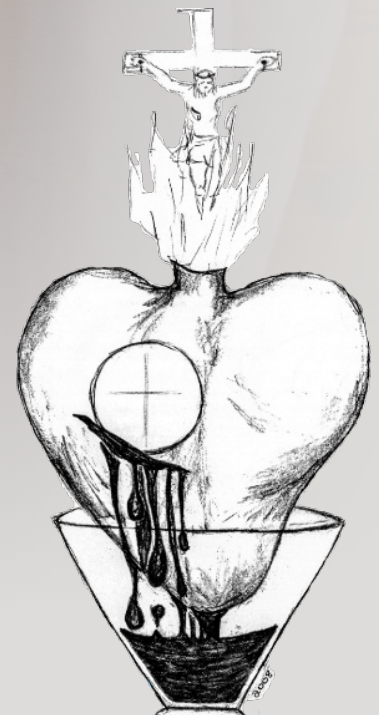
My twin and I, the first children to be born of my parents, were named after my father "John" – I was named Mary "Jean" and my sister Mary "Joan". Being given the name Jean set the stage for what later would develop into an intimate relationship with Jesus and the apostle who was the closest to His Heart – John the Beloved.

One day in prayer, several years ago, I sensed St. John inviting me to take His place resting against Jesus as he did at the Last Supper. I was intimidated by this at first, but gradually I was able to put myself in John's place with my head leaning against the Heart of Jesus, receiving His love and consolation. Throughout the years, my love for Jesus and for St. John continued to grow. I was fascinated by John's closeness to Jesus, and sometimes I found myself actually envying the love relationship they had. I desired the same intimacy with Jesus that John had.

A little more than two years ago, I was introduced to the book *In Sinu Jesu: When Heart Speaks to Heart - The Journal of a Priest at Prayer*. This book was and continues to be a balm to my soul, for it speaks of Jesus' desire to be a friend to everyone (especially to priests) - "Be my friend, the friend of my Eucharistic Heart, as was St. John. He will help you to follow him in the way of a strong and tender love for Me... The disciples of My beloved disciple will be known by their burning love for Me in the Sacrament of the Altar, ... and by their willingness to remain close to Me in My bitter Passion" (*In Sinu Jesu*, p. 42).

In our community, we have the privilege of having Eucharistic adoration twice a day. It is in these hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament that I have experienced a growing intimacy with Jesus and a desire to give everything to Him. I often call upon the Beloved Apostle to help me realize this desire.

Very recently, I experienced another invitation from my patron saint – this time to stand at the foot of the Cross, between St. John and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. St. John was the only apostle who had the courage to stand at the foot of the Cross during Jesus' hours of agony and death. As we near the celebration of these holy events, let us ask the Beloved Apostle for the courage to be with our Savior during His passion and death, to console Him and offer Him the undivided love of our hearts.



"LOVE OUTPOURED" BY SR. SARAH ROSE DENT, T.O.R.

CONTEMPLATING THE PASSION WITH OUR LADY

BY SR. MARY CATHERINE KASUBOSKI, T.O.R.

GOOD
FRIDAY

When I was very young, I thought the title “Our Lady of Sorrows” sounded sad and morbid.

One year during Lent when I was in college, someone gave me a copy of the prose version of the “Stabat Mater,” which is the hymn that is often sung in three-line stanzas when we pray the Stations of the Cross. I was struck deeply by the prose, which is a much closer translation of the Latin prayer. As I prayed and pondered it, I began to see the Passion of Jesus through Mary’s eyes. This perspective enriched my meditation on the Passion immeasurably. For one thing, I felt like her experience of the Passion of Jesus was closer to my own. I could not imagine myself being scourged, carrying the cross, or being crucified with Christ, but I could see myself watching Jesus do all this with and through the eyes of His Mother Mary.

The *Stabat Mater* prayer also asks Mary specifically to “*pierce my heart once and forever with the wounds of your crucified Son. Let me share with you the pain of your Son’s wounds...*” It goes on to ask, “*Grant that my tears of love mingle with yours and that, as long as I live, I may feel the pains of my crucified Lord. To stand with you beside the cross and be your companion in grief is my own wish.*” Although this dynamic is played out in my own life countless times in ministry experiences, a couple of years ago I had the opportunity to walk with a close friend through a very painful time in her life. As she went through her own interior crucifixion, I was there to listen, support, encourage, and pray. I experienced the truth of the saying that to watch someone we love suffer is harder than to bear our own pains and sufferings. I joined my sorrows and sufferings to the feminine, motherly heart of Mary, and knew that my pain was understood and supported by her in a way no one else could. I believe I grew closer to her in those difficult months, and I came to love meditating on her sorrows in a deep and personal way. I could identify with her heart and how she compassioned her Son in His sufferings.

The sorrows of motherhood are as real to us as spiritual mothers as they are to physical mothers. Praying the Passion of Jesus with Mary has led me to a deep understanding of the



OUR LADY OF SORROWS ICON
BY SR. THERESE MARIE IGLESIAS, T.O.R.

sufferings common to all women. Many women have shared their sorrows with me—sorrows that often involve or are caused by their own children—and I always feel like I am imitating Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, as I listen to them and seek to offer them some solace. I no longer think that Mary’s title “Our Lady of Sorrows” is merely sad and morbid. Now I know it is full of depth, beauty, and meaning because Christ’s sufferings have given meaning to all our sufferings. Being with Mary in our sufferings gives us the courage to face them with grace and tenderness. “*Come then, mother, from whom all love springs, make me understand the meaning of your sorrow that I may mourn with you. Make my heart burn with the love of Christ, my God, that he may look on me with favor.*”

GOD’S HIDDEN WORK

HOLY
SATURDAY

Waiting. I’m sure we’ve all experienced it. As a matter of fact, we experience it so much every day that we don’t even think about

it: waiting at a traffic light; waiting at the grocery checkout; waiting for medical test results; waiting for a son to come home from deployment in Afghanistan; waiting for the results of a quiz; waiting for the game to start; waiting for the water to boil; waiting for the hubby to come home from work; waiting for the birth of a child—the list goes on and on. Such a thing, so integral a part of our lives and so seemingly mundane at times, is often reflected upon so little. Yet it is so significant.

On Holy Saturday, we commemorate the span between Jesus’ passion and death and His resurrection and glorification. During this time, while His disciples were waiting, Jesus was busy about a hidden work. Unseen by all, Jesus was releasing

BY SR. MARY ANN KESSLER, T.O.R.

the souls from Hades and setting free all those who had died before He died. We refer to this every time we recite the Creed: “and He descended into hell.”

Jesus explained this transforming work of His in the analogy of the grain of wheat (cf. John 12:24). The grain falls to the ground and the seed “dies.” It is changed from a seed to a new, sprouting wheat plant. Yet, the transformation process takes place underground. It is hidden.

How often do we really think about the farmer who plants his crops in the spring so that we have food to purchase at our local grocery store? It takes an act of faith every time we drive to Publix and buy a bag of lettuce. Why? Because we know we can’t make lettuce grow. We can water and fertilize it. We can make sure it receives enough sunlight, but we humans (cont’d)

cannot make anything grow. Only God can do that. We trust that God will make those seeds grow into plants that become the food we eat. And all this growth is hidden, until we see the results “above the ground,” so to speak.

This also applies to all those times of waiting in our lives, whether they are as mundane as sitting at a traffic light, or as painful as the death of a loved one, or as anxiety-provoking

as anticipating the test results that indicate cancer. These are opportunities to deepen our faith in Jesus’ transforming power and strengthen our hope in his promises. So, as we approach this liturgical season of the Holy Triduum, let us be mindful of and receptive to those moments of waiting, when hidden graces are poured out upon us for our own growth and holiness and for our ultimate destiny in heaven with Jesus and all the saints.

RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES

AN INTERVIEW WITH SR. ELIANA DAY, T.O.R.

EASTER SUNDAY

One Easter Sunday, Sr. Eliana and her sisters were making their thanksgivings after Mass, when they were surprised by a request from one of the Mass attendees. He had a guest visiting for the weekend who really needed to talk—could the sisters pray with her? What happened next was an extraordinary Easter grace.

What do you remember about your experience that day?

I remember that we were exhausted [the sisters coordinated all the Triduum liturgies, including the late-night Easter vigil Mass]. I remember going into the side chapel and sitting down with her and just beginning to chit-chat. I remember how heavy she was. . . . She was very open with us, but kind of dark and hopeless and broken. She showed great insight into what her struggles were, and their deeper roots. I remember Sr. Elizabeth and I looking at each other and silently, together, realizing: this isn’t going to be a little prayer session. We’re going to do Unbound [a method of deliverance and healing prayer] and we’re going to do the whole thing. Even in the moment, in our tiredness, there was a strength – this is what God has given to us and we’re going to follow the Spirit’s lead.

When did you start to see a change in her?

At one point, when we were breaking soul ties with former boyfriends, that’s when I remember seeing the freedom come about in her and the new life. She felt that she was taking back the authority that she had given to others. She was empowered. She even pumped her fists and put her hands up in the air. She was choosing to reject sin and the lies that the evil one had planted in her heart about herself. She was choosing to accept the grace of God and who she truly is as His child. She was accepting God’s love for her. She was choosing to break ties with her former way of life—the sinful parts of her life. When we prayed the Father’s blessing over her, she was just receiving it. Even her facial features changed. There was light in her eyes. She had hope and joy and peace that she hadn’t had before. I literally felt like I was watching someone being raised from the dead.

How did you feel after witnessing that?

I just remember being so full of joy and so full of awe at God’s power, and so full of praise, that God would do it and that we had a front row seat to watch it happen. We saw God’s resurrection graces applied and active right before our eyes, on Easter Sunday. . . . We literally watched God work. It was so beautiful!

What is it like for you when you pray Unbound with someone?

It’s very humbling – it’s like walking with someone in their darkest moments, but at the same time, holding the hope out for them. I know what God’s going to do, and they often don’t. As we talk about the really hard stuff in their life, interiorly I’m excited to get it out into the light, because I know God’s going to free them. I’m also very aware of the battle that we’re fighting. We’re doing battle against the enemy. We’re bringing someone to freedom. We’re winning this person back for the Lord, because God has already won.

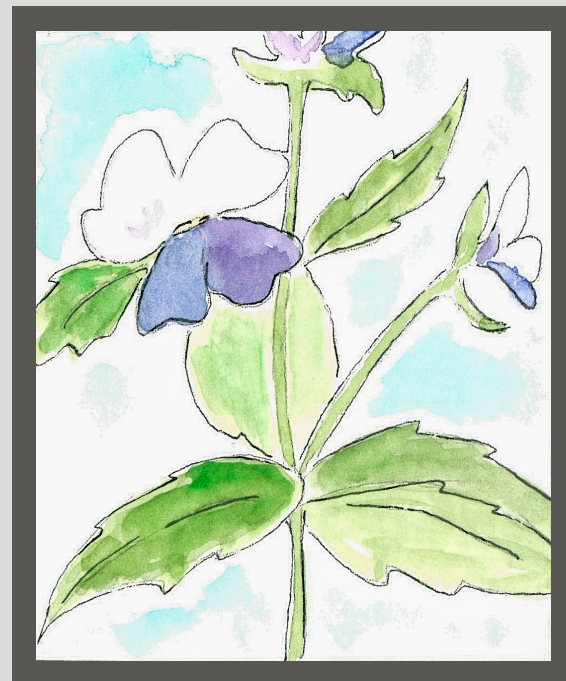
How is your ministry in praying Unbound a fruit of your own story?

I’m not scared of the darkness because I’ve been in very dark places myself, pretty much to the depths of despair. I’ve experienced God’s light shining into those places, and I’ve experienced His healing and His freedom. That scripture passage – “I was in the depths of the water and he reached down and pulled me out of the depths. He saved me because he loved me.” (cf. Psalm 18:17-20) – I feel like that’s me. Now, when I go with people into those dark places, I’m not afraid, I’m not scandalized, I’m not ashamed, and I’m not shocked at all, because I’ve been there before. I know that we’re going there for freedom. I know that we’re not going there to wallow in it.

What would you say to anyone reading this?

This is the freedom that God wants for every one of us, and He wants it for us every day, not just on big occasions or only with big brokenness or big sin. He wants it for even the smallest, little insignificant wounds or sins – He wants freedom there. This freedom is meant for you.

Find out more about Unbound Ministry ® at heartofthefather.com.



“BLUE-EYED MARYS”
BY SR. JUNE BENEDICTA BELL, T.O.R.

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"BEFORE THE FEAST OF PASSOVER, JESUS KNEW THAT HIS HOUR HAD COME TO PASS FROM THIS WORLD TO THE FATHER. HE LOVED HIS OWN IN THE WORLD AND HE LOVED THEM TO THE END."

-JOHN 13:1



"REVERENTIAL LOVE" BY SR. KATHERINE CALDWELL, T.O.R.

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*"To Glorify God and Make
Known His Merciful Love"*



SAVE THE DATE!

SHARE HIS MERCY VIRTUAL BENEFIT

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 25

- *Livestreamed Event*
- *We hope to also have an in-person option (both indoors and outdoors) at Our Lady of Sorrows Monastery*

We will keep you posted! Plans are subject to change, based on our state and local guidelines for large gatherings. We are working to keep safety a priority as we plan for our annual event.

