September 15th: Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

Gospel text (*Lk* 2:33-35): Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

"You yourself a sword will pierce"

Fr. Josep Mª SOLER OSB Abbot Emeritus of Montserrat
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, in the celebration of the feast of our Lady of Sorrows, we hear the most unspeakable words in the mouth of old Simeon: "You yourself a sword will pierce" (Lk 2:35). From its context, we can assert this declaration does not only concern Jesus Christ's passion, but his missionary work, that will stir up the division of the people of Israel, and therefore, a painful grief in Mary's heart. All along Jesus' public life, the Virgin Mary will experience great sufferings upon seeing Jesus rebuked and threatened with death by the city authorities.

As the rest of Jesus' disciples, Mary has to learn to place her family relations in a different context altogether. She must also leave her Son because of the Gospel (cf. Mt 19:29), and have to learn not to appraise the Christ for his flesh, despite the fact He is flesh of her flesh. She is to crucify also her flesh (cf. Gal 5:24) to be able to transform herself into the image of Jesus Christ. But the height of her suffering, where she lives the cross more deeply, is Jesus' crucifixion and death.

Also in her pain, Mary is the model of perseverance of the evangelic doctrine while sharing Christ's suffering through her patience (cf. Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 50). She has done it all her life, and most of all, during the Calvary. There she becomes the prototype and model for all Christians. Because she has been so closely linked to Christ's death, she is linked afterwards to his resurrection too (cf. Rm 6:5). In her excruciating pain, Mary's perseverance to abide by the Father's will, grants her a new illumination for the benefit of the Church and of Mankind. Mary precedes us and helps us to follow Christ in our way of faith. And the Holy Spirit leads us to share with her this great adventure.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Just as we have to be grateful to Jesus for his Passion, suffered for our love, so we also have to be full of gratitude to Most Holy Mary for the martyrdom that, when her Son died, she wanted to endure voluntarily to save us." (Saint Albert the Great)

- "At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. Let us address her in the words of the Salve Regina, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus." (Francis)

- "Mary is the perfect Orans (prayer), a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes,for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 2679)