

Heart of Sorrow

Steadfast in Love, Persevering in Hope



The world wants to drown sorrow

The world today wants nothing to do with sorrow. It drowns out its sorrow with busyness, music, therapists, and even medication. *If it makes me sad, it must be bad!* is a maxim to which we seem to adhere by default.

But sorrow can be beneficial; it is not always a bad thing. Paul writes to the Corinthians that, though he did initially, he does not regret having caused them sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:8) because they were made sorrowful to the point of repentance, according to the will of God (2 Corinthians 7:9).

This verse makes clear that there is a kind of sorrow that is according to the will of God. There is a sorrow that God wants us to experience, because the sorrow that is according to the will of God *“produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation”* (2 Corinthians 7:10). Paul is teaching the Corinthians that an essential component of true repentance is genuine sorrow over having grieved God and belittled His holiness.

Our Blessed Mother encountered much suffering, sorrow, and anxiety, as Simeon announced at the Presentation of Our Lord. *“A sword will pierce your own soul too”* (Luke 2:35). Simeon forewarned Mary, predicting that she would feel the effects of the suffering her Son was to endure.

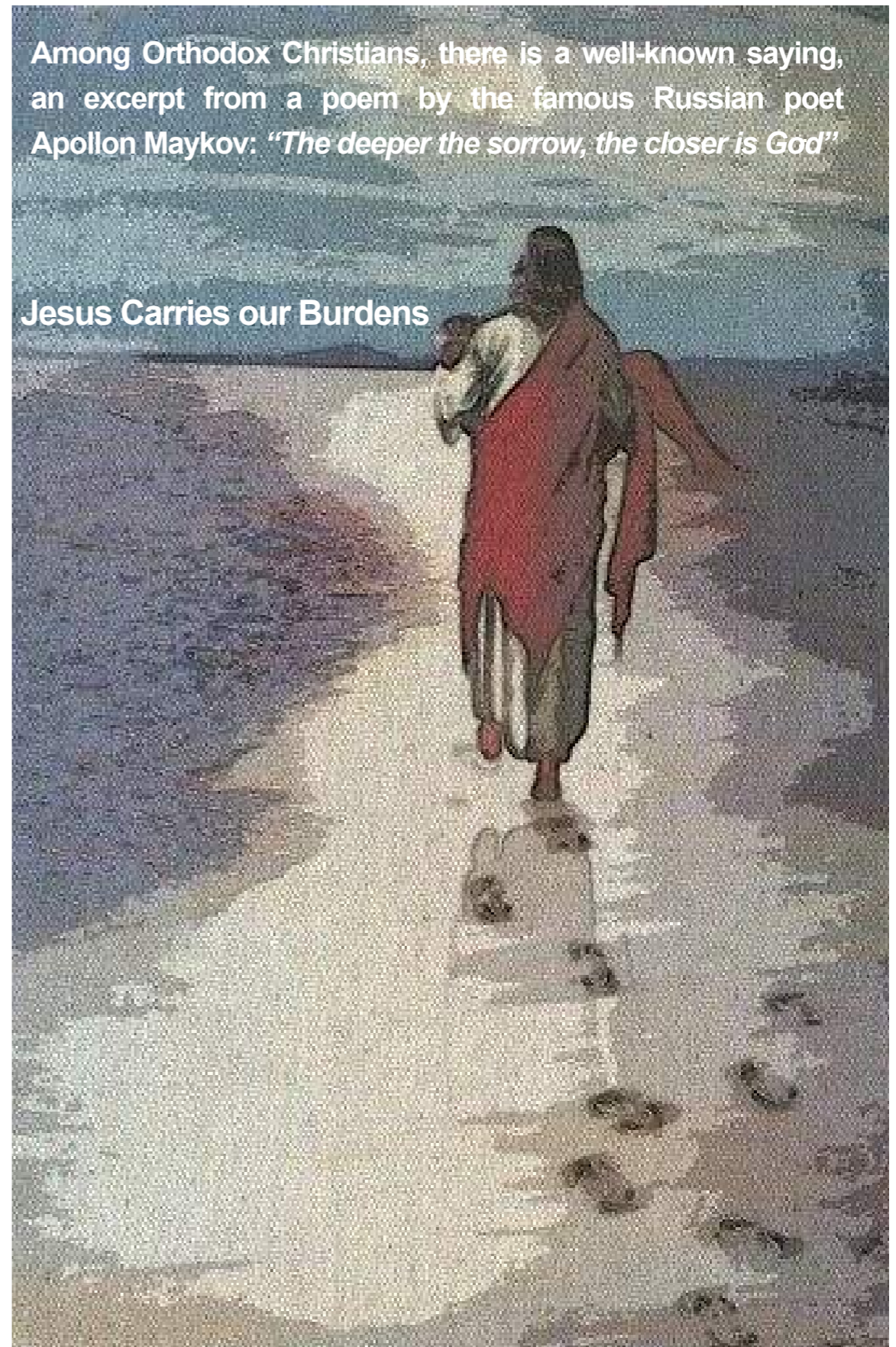
Fear, anxiety and depression are on the upward trend with the global Covid-19 Pandemic. Even devoted and faith-filled People of God are facing sadness, fear and anxiety. We are not alone in this inner anguish of emotional suffering.

Jesus himself sweated blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as He immersed Himself in prayer, preparing Himself for his impending Passion and death on the Cross.

Both Mother and Son experienced tremendous suffering, and certainly understand and relate to the hardships of those who suffer in mind, body and spirit.

Among Orthodox Christians, there is a well-known saying, an excerpt from a poem by the famous Russian poet Apollon Maykov: *“The deeper the sorrow, the closer is God”*

Jesus Carries our Burdens



Prayer

Lord, help me to love with the love of Your dear Mother. Help me to feel the same holy sorrow she felt and to allow that holy sorrow to deepen my concern and compassion for all those who suffer. Jesus, I trust in You. Mother Mary, pray for us.



Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. - James 1:12

On the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, 15 September, we remember Mary on Calvary where she suffered the supreme sorrow of all sorrows that filled her life. Indeed, so great was Mary's grief on Calvary that on this feast day mass, there is the sequence of *The Stabat Mater* which we also sing during the Stations of the Cross in Lent.

Her love as Mother of Jesus only increased her suffering. We are not alone in our sufferings. In fact, the immensity of the crosses suffered by Our Lady was so great that we might also say she suffered not seven, but all sorrows. She is Our Lady of All Sorrows since no one suffered more.

Sorrow pierced her own soul when her Divine Son was crucified, making her a martyr without dying. When sorrow enters our lives, it is a proof of God's love. There has never been a saint who did not experience some forms of suffering.

Some of them endured great suffering. It is in sorrow that our tenacity is tested. Moreover, one finds a note of maturity, stability and rationality in those who suffer and who suffer much. And so we should understand that when adversity, difficulties, misunderstandings, bad health and conflicts visit us, we must not see them as things that should never happen.



To suffer is inevitable (unavoidable) in this valley of tears. If Our Blessed Mother whom God loves so much, suffered, how much more should we not run away from our daily crosses. Temptations, trials, stress, pain, grief are part and parcel of life. We can pray for these sufferings to go away, but when they persist, we must look to Jesus and Mary and thank them both for giving us strength to carry on.

We must remember that everyone, even the sinless Virgin Mary, endures suffering on this earth, and that our patient and cheerful endurance can produce much fruit and assist us in our salvation and in the purification of our sins. Meditating on and considering the Seven Sorrows of Mary can give us strength and consolation in knowing that she walks beside us as she walked beside her Son during His Passion. We are not alone in our difficulties; Jesus and Mary accompany us and help us to carry our crosses.

Jesus says to His mother, *“Women, this is your son”* (John 19:26). These words convey that Our Blessed Mother is more than just Jesus’ own mother. When Jesus says to John the Evangelist, *“This is your mother”* (John 19:27). Jesus expressed that Our Lady is the mother of all people. Sorrow and grief are emotions that are common to the human condition. And Our Blessed Mother shares in that experience with us. As she mourned for her Son who died on the cross, she feels with us as we go through suffering and pain that are beyond our control, like accidents, sickness, and death.

Compassionate Intercessor

Our Lady of Sorrows is the compassionate intercessor who interceded to God for us, as she knows the pain that can come with human existence. However, her suffering was not one of despair, it was a suffering of love. Her sorrow was not a sadness; rather, it was a profound sharing in all that Jesus endured. This is true love on the deepest and most beautiful level.

Living in union with our Blessed Mother

We are called to live in union with the Blessed Mother’s sorrow. As we love her, we find ourselves feeling the same pain and suffering her heart still experiences for the sins of the world. Those sins, including our own sins, are what nailed her Son on the Cross.

When we love our Blessed Mother and her Son Jesus, we will also grief over sin; first our own and then the sins of others. But it’s important to know that the sorrow we experience over sin is also a sorrow of love. It’s a **holy sorrow** that ultimately motivates us to a deeper compassion and deeper unity with those around us, especially those who are wounded and those trapped in sin. It also motivates us to turn away from sin.

Reflect today upon the perfect love of the heart of our Blessed Mother. That love is capable of rising above all suffering and pain and is the same love God wants to place in our hearts.

1. Does our delight in God waken sorrow for how easily we desire other things more?
2. Is our the sorrow of our repentance a “godly sorrow” that does not produce the death of discouragement and paralysis 2 Corinthians 7:10, but produces a life of hope that God will be merciful to us because Christ died for us, and will forgive us and help us make progress in putting to death the old self with its evil desires Colossians 3:5?
3. When we have suffered in our life, how have we sensed the presence of God?
4. What helps us to know that God is with us even in hard times?
5. How is it possible to rejoice amidst our suffering? Can we continue to give praise and thanks to God?