

Earth Dolours



Plants grow, plants bloom and plants die! What happens then? They are graciously taken in by the soil and added to the nutrients of the earth, so that other plants may take life and continue the cycle of growth.

There is a similar pattern in our own lives and in the lives of all creatures — life, death and re-birth! The re-birth for humans is what we know as Resurrection. Through Mary's life journey we see this pattern many times. No events are more poignant than Mary's seven sorrows or dolours.

1st Dolor: Prophecy of Simeon

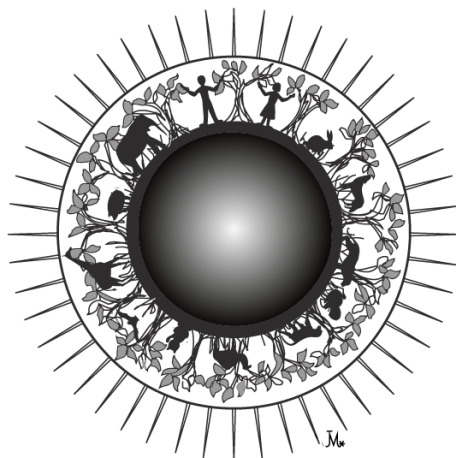
At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, the old man, Simeon, reveals to Mary that a sword will pierce her heart. Mary did not understand but she listened. She listened to God's word through Simeon. God speaks to us in various ways. God speaks through the things of nature. As we look at bare trees in the winter, we may think them dead, but we know that in spring the leaves will burst forth, revealing to us that what looks like death may not be that at all. Something is happening in the darkness of the tree's interior. We do not always know or see or understand what God is doing in us, just as Mary did not understand. She trusted that God was doing powerful work in her.

How am I attending to the stirrings within?

2nd Dolor: Flight into Egypt

Mary was called to lead her son from possible death to life. She was called to safeguard what was most precious to her—the life of her son and her God-given mission. How do we safeguard what is precious to us? We must safeguard our spiritual growth and rid ourselves of all that hinders that growth. Our spiritual lives go beyond personal prayer and devotion. How are we caring for and safeguarding the earth for our future? How aware are we that earth is in crisis, in peril, and unless we work together to preserve it, we will all perish together. I think God is calling us to be in union with Jesus as we seek to unite our efforts for the safeguarding of humankind.

How can I make life better for my brothers and sisters and other creatures of the earth?



3rd Dolor: Jesus lost in the Temple

Sometimes we, too, are separated from Jesus. We lack the union that we desire and seek. One of the three principles of the universe is “communion!” Each reality of the universe is connected (in union) with every other reality. All physical reality has some attraction to the other. The challenge for us is to recognize the “communion” that is innate to all reality including me/us. We cannot ignore other creatures and the earth realities and then expect to have a union with God. We’re all in this together: plants, animals, land, sea, sky, stars, humans, and God is in all creatures. We must cooperate with one another in building the kingdom.

How am I challenged to become more aware of my union with God and all creation?

4th Dolor: Mary accompanies Jesus to the cross

For Mary, it was a journey of the inevitable death of Jesus. It required death to self. She was helpless to reverse the situation and each step cost her. Her deep love for her son gave her the strength to continue to let go of her hopes and desires for her son. Without letting go, the results of her mission would not come about. She was hopeful that, with death, re-birth would come in some way. This process reminds us of the reality of all creation—life—death—re-birth. All is not lost with death. As plants die they go back to the earth from which they came, go through certain processes of decay and from that rich soil other plants come to birth. The same process occurs in other creatures, including humans.

What needs to die within me for new life to come forth?



5th Dolor: Mary at the foot of the cross

Mary remained with Jesus even though it was painful. She could have run away or become bitter, but instead she chose to endure the weight of her pain. There is an ancient story—

When wild geese are migrating, they are very aware of one another and care for each other. When one is sick or unable to continue flying, another goose goes down with the disabled one, and stays with the companion until health returns or until death takes the sick one. If and when the goose is able to return to the flock, then the two of them will resume their flight and try to catch up with the others.

How willing am I to sacrifice for another on a daily basis?

6th Dolor: Mary receives the body of Jesus

We are called to embrace our cross, just as Mary was. We, like Mary, are confident that there is something beyond death, desolation and emptiness. All creatures succumb to death. Although some do not know what lies beyond, we have our faith to rely on.

In the evolution of creatures throughout billions of years, we have seen how violence in nature is necessary and has been useful to create something new, to renew some part of creation or nourish other creatures. This is a natural phenomenon, but humans have interfered and created unnecessary violence in trying to control the processes of nature. This has resulted in destruction of forests to obtain natural resources, thus depriving earth the balance that is needed for creatures to live healthy lives. Global warming has also occurred because of the greed of humans, resulting in disastrous effects for earth. Are violence and greed affecting my spiritual life as well as the earth?

What concrete actions can I take to change this trend?

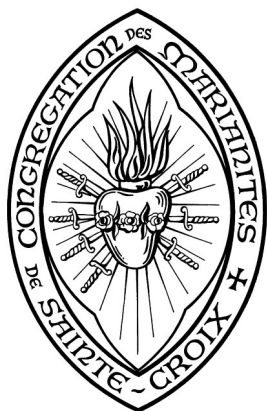
7th Dolor: The burial of Jesus

As Mary witnesses the burial of her son, she is filled with emptiness, loneliness, separation, anxiety. "What is this all about?" "What's going to happen to me?" We all feel this way from time to time. We feel it with the death and departure of loved ones. Only hope in God's promises keep us going. Besides feeling the separation from loved ones, we sometimes feel alienated from Mother Earth. We don't know how to be with her or what to do to mend the wounds inflicted on her. Perhaps we can begin in small, simple ways: becoming aware of the abuse being thrust upon her, trying to accept and respect each creature as part of God's kingdom.

How can I assist in mending the Earth as I seek to mend my life?

Finally, we pray that God will direct us to do what can be done and to trust that God will lead if we listen. Mary listened and trusted, and God led her throughout her journey and beyond. As we pray these dolors, may we be led to be more loving to the earth and all of God's creation.

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