

Finding comfort in the Blessed Mother's sorrow

My favorite images of Mary show her holding the Infant Jesus. I would rather stay in the stable under a starry sky full of angels than walk with her through the passion and death of her Son.

But there's a beauty and a strength to those images that show His pain and hers. And though I tend to be drawn to the joyful mysteries of the Rosary, there are times when the sorrowful ones really speak to me. And, over the years, I have come to love Lent and the darkness and depth of Holy Week.

Life is so good and full of so much wonder and joy. But life can also be difficult and painful and sad. When it is, we know we can go running to our Blessed Mother, and she will understand. She has comforted. She has carried grief. She loves us as a mother. She wants to be with us in those moments.

Maybe that's why I love today's feast of Our Mother of Sorrows. On this feast, we see Mary at her strongest and most vulnerable. She is pierced with sorrow after sorrow, and yet she stands strong, full of love, full of hope, full of faith for what lies beyond the sorrow.

My favorite image of Our Mother of Sorrows is the one that hangs in Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Centreville, Md. That was our first parish when my husband and I got married, and we return there from time to time when we visit my in-laws, who are still parishioners there.

The first years of our marriage in Centreville were such a gift. I didn't want to live on Maryland's Eastern Shore. I wanted to move back to Baltimore, closer to my parents, to a place with things to do and real Internet access and carry-out options (all things I understand that area has now, but didn't back in the olden days when we lived there), closer to what felt like home. But it was a beautiful place to begin our life as newlyweds. Looking back on that time, I know it was a perfect place for us. There was little to do except focus on our marriage. So that's what we did. And it

was where we needed to be.



It was also the time when we started realizing parenthood might not come easily—or at all. When we go back to Mass there and I look at the image of Mary, I think of the sorrow of infertility, how it can feel like being pierced, how I struggled to understand why we were carrying that particular cross when we wanted so much to be parents. I remember so well the loneliness and the disappointment and the worry that the path ahead was not at all the one we wanted to

walk.

When we visit that church now, our sons are at our side—sometimes squirming and whispering and asking when Mass will be over, the way children do. I think what a miracle and a blessing it is that John and I are parents to these two children born to other families on the other side of the world and yet ours today and forever. If we hadn't traveled that road of infertility, we might never have traveled to China twice to adopt these two children who are our whole world.

Good can come from pain. And it can be a good we cannot see with our shortsighted, human perspectives. I try to think of that today with the struggles within our Church. I try to think of that as I look at burdens my friends and family members are carrying. Often I cannot see the hope and the joy. It is easier to see the cross. But I am trying to trust that there is light beyond the darkness. And when I cannot see the light, I can go running to Mary and cry on her shoulder.

I don't know what your burden is today or will be tomorrow. But I pray that you, too, may find comfort in Our Mother of Sorrows and never feel alone.