



*“Jesus on the cross was a sight that filled heaven and earth with wonder: to see an almighty God, Master of the universe, condemned like a criminal and dying on a shameful cross between two criminals! It was a spectacle of justice: the Eternal Father, desiring that His justice be satisfied, punished the sins of mankind in the person of His only Son, whom He loves as much as Himself. It was a spectacle of mercy: this innocent Son endured such a cruel and ignominious death to save His guilty creatures. Above all, it was a spectacle of love: a God offers and gives his life to redeem slaves who are his enemies.”*

St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Meditations on the Passion*, chap. III, 4.



Yes, the crucifixion is a mystery of unfathomable love—a mystery that Christ shared with his Mother. Let us, then, turn to her and contemplate her at the foot of the Cross. *Stabat Mater dolorosa*: The sorrowful Mother stood there. She was there, very close by, facing her dying Son. In this contemplation—so painful that no words can describe it—her mind likely wandered, from time to time, to all that she had experienced with Him: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the flight into Egypt, the wonderful childhood in Nazareth, Jesus’ goodness, intelligence, and love, His preaching, and His miracles. Then, turning away from these memories, her motherly gaze returned to the reality of Jesus dying, and silent tears gently rolled down her dignified face.

Mary’s role in the mystery of the Cross is unique and essential. Saint John Eudes teaches that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary are so deeply united that, mystically speaking, they form a single suffering Heart. Saint Alphonsus described the Blessed Virgin’s role on Calvary as follows:

*“O Mary, where are you? Near the cross. I would say with even greater reason that you are on the cross itself, to offer yourself in sacrifice at the same time as your Son, as Saint Augustine affirms. Indeed,” adds Saint Bernard, “what the nails wrought in the body of Jesus, love wrought in the Heart of Mary. So much so, according to Saint Bernardine, that as the Son sacrificed his body, the Mother sacrificed her soul. The sorrows of Mary’s Heart were so intimately united with those of Jesus that they formed a single martyrdom: the two Hearts suffered the Passion together, one in the body, the other in the soul.”* Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *The Virtues of Mary*, Sorrow V.

Sister Lucia, the visionary of Fatima, also described this unique union in a letter dated September 16, 1970: *“In the closest possible union between two human beings, Christ began the work of our salvation in Mary. The beating of Christ’s Heart is the beating of Mary’s Heart; Christ’s prayer is Mary’s prayer. From Mary, Christ received his body and blood, which were respectively sacrificed and shed for the salvation of the world. (...) And we may think that the longings of Mary’s Heart were completely one with the longings of Christ’s Heart (...) and that the love of Mary’s Heart was the love of Christ’s Heart toward His Father and toward humanity. (...) Ever since the Father entrusted His Son to Mary, who carried Him for nine months in her chaste and virginal womb, and ever since Mary, through her free “yes,” placed herself at the disposal of God’s will as His handmaid for whatever He might wish to accomplish in her—ever since then, and by God’s will, Mary has become, together with Christ, the Co-Redemptrix of the human race.”*

On the Cross, Jesus addresses his Mother only once. Will she receive words of consolation from her Son? No. Christ will once again rely on her for our salvation. As He is in His agony and she is entirely turned toward Him in that terrible moment, Jesus suddenly entrusts her with a new mission: “Woman, behold your son” (Jn 19:26). In other words, it is as if He were saying to her: I am returning to the Father; from now on, you must love the people who crucified Me just as you have loved Me. What a mystical separation for the Blessed Virgin! She must let her divine Son go and, in the midst of the pain of this separation, welcome all people into her Motherly Heart from now on. Faced with this sublime testament through which Christ gives us his Mother, Mary responds with a new “Fiat.” The “Fiat” of the Annunciation is the Alpha of Mary’s mission. Her “Fiat” at the foot of the Cross is its Omega.

After entrusting humanity to his Mother, Jesus breathed his last. *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"* (Lk 23:46). And he bowed his head. At that moment, Jesus' Heart ceased to beat. The union of their Hearts remained intact in love, but death now brought about a separation of unspeakable sorrow between the Mother and her Son. And as if that were not enough, the spear of the soldier Longinus strikes the Heart of Jesus, just a few meters away from Her. The shock to Our Lady is unimaginable, and that spear pierces both Hearts at the same time. The prophecy of Saint Simeon has been fulfilled. Then Jesus is taken down from the Cross, and the Blessed Virgin receives His lifeless Body in her arms. Not the slightest rebellion, not the slightest murmur, not the slightest cry; only the silence of her love, her sorrow, and her total obedience to God's will: *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."* (Lk 1:38)

Mary's presence at the foot of the Cross did not end on Good Friday. On June 13, 1929, Sister Lucia of Fatima had a vision in which she saw, above the altar, a chalice and a host, with Jesus crucified just behind them and the Blessed Virgin at his side. This vision shows that the Blessed Virgin remains spiritually present at Mass, at the foot of the Cross, where her Heart was so intimately united with the Heart of Jesus.

Sister Lucia's vision is also significant because it reminds us that the one and only sacrifice of Calvary is made present at every Eucharist. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) teaches that the Eucharist is the bloodless renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross. Although the sacrifice offered by Christ on Good Friday is complete, perfect, and sufficient for our redemption, Jesus, in His goodness and love, willed that this same sacrifice—without the suffering or physical death—remain present in the midst of His Church until the end of time.

One might rightly ask: Why does Christ renew his bloodless sacrifice of the Cross at every Mass, since the sacrifice of the Cross on Good Friday is sufficient for our redemption? It is a mystery that can, to some extent, be illuminated when we consider that people continue to offend God every day. And Christ continues every day to offer himself to his Father as a perfect sacrifice, in order to save humanity and make amends for the offenses they commit.

*"And I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Mt 28:20) Yes, Jesus chose to remain with us in the most extreme expression of His love for us: the sacrifice of the Cross. This is the greatness of the Holy Mass, and this is why it stands at the pinnacle of the Christian life. We can understand why the Council of Trent condemned the errors that deny the sacrificial nature of the Mass by reducing it to a mere "meal," a mere "gathering," a mere "praise," or a mere "commemoration": "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and authentic sacrifice is not offered to God, or that 'being offered' means nothing other than the fact that Christ is given to us as food: let him be anathema. (...) If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is merely a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or a simple commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished on the Cross, (...) let him be anathema."

That is why our attitude during the consecration must be in keeping with this great mystery. If we had been at the foot of the Cross two thousand years ago, what would we have done? Would we have stood there, distracted or indifferent? Of course not. We would have prostrated ourselves in silent prayer to contemplate, with love and repentance, our sweet Jesus dying for us. Such must be our attitude today at the moment of consecration.

*"O good and most gentle Jesus, I kneel before You and I beg and implore You with all the fervor of my soul to deign to engrave in my heart deep feelings of faith, hope, and charity, true repentance for my sins, and a very firm resolve to amend my ways, as I consider and contemplate in spirit Your five wounds, with great affection and deep sorrow, keeping before my eyes these words that the prophet David already placed on Your lips, O good Jesus: 'They have pierced My hands and My feet; they have counted all My bones.'"*

*Salve Corda, Fatima First Saturdays for Peace.*