

Our Lady of Sorrows

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"In one of the moments of greatest suffering in her life, Madeleine Sophie (Barat) went with her counselors to pray before an icon of Mary: a picture of Our Lady of Sorrows seated at the foot of a bare cross, which was on the outside wall of a great pavilion in the Villa Lante. It was a few days after the storm 1839 General Chapter. She was living through a situation of deep anguish and incomprehension. The words of her prayer to Mary reveal what was happening in her and her way of accepting such deep suffering:

O Mary, Mother of sorrows and of love, penetrated by the keenest gratitude for the numberless graces that you have poured out on this little Society, we come solemnly to acknowledge what we owe to your motherly protection, and the merits of your transpierced heart. Finish your work, O divine Mother...

Love gave you the cross, grant that the cross may give us love, and may there never be...any cross other than the cross of Jesus. May we bear about in ourselves the cross of Jesus Christ, the sufferings of His passion and the remembrance of His wounds. Grant that wounded and torn like him, we may be inebriated with the cross of His love (Margaret Williams, RSCJ, Madeleine Sophie: Her Life and Letters, 303)

When life was most difficult for Madeleine Sophie, when she had gone through tense days of opposition, when besides, persons she trusted were the cause of the conflict, when all the circumstances led to lament, to complaint, to imploring that "the hour" might soon pass away, Madeleine Sophie starts per prayer with words of thanksgiving. She forgets herself; she is capable of going further than the concrete situation and looking for direction in Jesus through that "sure access" that is His mother.

She leads Madeleine Sophie to Jesus, and from then on, her gaze will always be fixed on Him. He is the only one that counts. He is the only one that matters, and the remembrance of His wounds (today we would say her "compassion") makes her react once again with that generosity which is the foundational grace of the Society which makes each one able to "accept the cross for His love" and draw near to those who, today, live crucified."