

## September Marian Feasts and Mary's Mercy

We celebrate the feasts of the Most Holy Name of Mary on September 12th, Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15th, and Our Lady of Ransom and Mercy on September 24th.

Where does the name of "Mary" originate? Many believe it originated from the Hebrew "miryam", though the name is not found anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures except for the name of Moses' sister, Miriam. Was it more Egyptian than Hebrew, since Moses, Aaron and Miriam grew up in Egypt? One translation is "rebellion," which might allude to Miriam and Aaron's rebellion against God in building the golden calf in Moses' absence. Such a meaning would never fit the Mother of Jesus who was the humble and obedient handmaid of the Lord. A common view holds that "Miriam" comes from the Hebrew word "mar" meaning "sea" and "yam" meaning "bitter", a meaning well suited to the bitter sea of sorrow that would be Mary's as Co-redeemer with Christ in His Passion and Death, a meaning that also alludes to Mary as our refuge in the valley of our own bitter tears. St. Jerome associated the name with the Latin phrase Stella Maris, "Star of the Sea." Mary is indeed a light to us on the sea of life's storms, the star that guides us to heaven's shore. Others suggest a Hebrew meaning of "wished for child." As the chosen people awaited the birth of the mother of the Messiah, that meaning might well apply to Mary. Still others trace the name Maria to the Egyptian "mer" or "mar", meaning to "love" and the Hebrew "Yam" or "Yahweh", meaning "one loving Yahweh" or "one loved by Yahweh." Mary is most certainly most loving and beloved by God.

The most important question with respect to Mary's name, however, is why did Anna and Joachim give Mary **that name**? Edward Healy Thompson in **The Life and Glories of St. Joseph**, page 105, says: **"Her name, we cannot doubt, came from heaven, and was revealed to Joachim, who gave it to her on the eighth day after her birth."**

Sacred Scripture cites numerous times when God Himself gives the name or a new name to those chosen for some special purpose. Does it not make sense, then, that Mary's name should have come directly from God, for her mission as Theotokos was greater than any other creature's mission on earth, save that of the Sacred Humanity. In the New Testament the name of the Virgin Mary is generally stated as Mariam, the archaic form, possibly used by the evangelists to distinguish Mary from others who bore the same name. Reference: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464a.htm>

As seen in the meaning of Mary's name, the idea of sorrow and bitterness is significant. It was in 1244 A.D. that the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows was first celebrated by the founders of the Servite Order to focus attention on the deep anguish of Mary's life. While seven sorrows are picked for emphasis, Mary endured sorrows too numerous to mention. The seven we honor are Simeon's prophecy at the Presentation of Jesus

that a sword would pierce Mary's soul so that the thoughts of many might be revealed; the flight into Egypt to escape Herod's massacre of the Holy Innocents; the loss of Jesus in the temple; meeting Jesus on the Way of the Cross; the crucifixion of her Divine Son; having Jesus' dead body laid in her arms; and the burial of Jesus with so little preparation and time to grieve because the Sabbath was about to begin

In Mexico Altars of Compassion and Grief were built for homes and churches and were carried through the streets as people prayed in honor of Mary's sorrows. Her statue would be accompanied by a cross, for her sorrow would forever be inseparable from Christ's bitter Passion and Death. Thus, the Church celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows the day after that of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. During processions with their Altars of Compassion, the people sang the traditional hymn written by Giacomone da Todi in 1306, the Stabat Mater.

*At the Cross her station keeping,  
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
Close to Jesus to the last. ...  
Is there one who would not weep  
Whelmed in miseries so deep  
Christ's dear Mother to behold?*

Reference: <http://www.mexconnect.com/our-lady-of-the-sorrows>

In his book **The Glories of Mary**, St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori speaks extensively on Mary's compassion and mercy for us poor sinners and ponders, phrase by phrase, the Salve Regina prayer, "Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy!". He says no sinner need ever fear rejection from this Mother. On page 9 he tells of a woman who lived a life of sin into old age, was banished by the people to a cave where she died in a state of corruption and was buried in a field like a beast. A nun who had the habit of commending to God the souls of those who died didn't bother to do so for this poor woman, believing she was damned. After four years a soul from purgatory appeared to the nun and asked why she had no pity on her and did not recommend her soul to God. When the nun asked who she was, she said she was that old woman who died alone in the cave. When the nun asked how she was saved, the woman answered, "**By the mercy of the Virgin Mary,**" for when she knew she had no one else, she begged Our Lady for help as her only hope. The woman then told the nun she needed to have Masses offered for her in order to be finally released from purgatory. She again appeared to thank the nun when she was released.

Our Lady further declared her mercy for poor sinners in these words to St. Bridget who had great devotion to Our Lady's sorrows...

**No matter how numerous a person's sins may be, if he turns to me with a sincere purpose of amendment, I am prepared forthwith to receive him graciously, for I do not regard the number of sins he has committed, but**

**look only upon the dispositions with which he comes to me; for I feel no aversion in healing his wounds, because I am called and am in truth the Mother of Mercy.**

How can we, when meditating on Our Lady's sorrows and these words, not hear ringing in our hearts those sad cries of Our Lady of America to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil?

**Behold, O my children, the tears of your Mother! Shall I weep in vain? Assuage the sorrow of my Heart over the ingratitude of sinful men by the love and chasteness of your lives. Will you do this for me, beloved children, or will you allow your Mother to weep in vain?**

**O my sweet child, when will my desires be realized? My Immaculate Heart desires with great desire to see the kingdom of Jesus my Son established in all hearts. How I have pleaded with my children to open their hearts to Him, but most are cold and indifferent. Has ever a mother shown more love and interest in her children's welfare than I have done? ... What am I to do, child of my heart, when my children turn from me? ... Will you do as I wish at last, my children?**

**Beloved daughter, you wonder at the sword and the deep wound it has made in my Heart. It is the sword of grief plunged therein by my children who refuse to let me teach them the true way. ... See, I weep, but my children show me no compassion. They behold the sword in my heart but will make no move to withdraw it. I give them love; they give me only ingratitude. Weep then, dear child, weep with your Mother over the sins of men.**

**(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, OH, Pgs. 12, 17, 18, 21, 23, and 34.)**

With respect to the name Maris Stella, Our Lady was truly a Star of hope for rescue on the seas when many of her children were kidnapped and forced into slavery in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Barbary pirates from North Africa raided the coasts of Spain and Italy and went on into England and Ireland, going ashore to take many of the local people captive. Often the villages were burned to the ground. Being captured by the Saracens became the fear of every coastal land. Religious orders sprang up to help these imprisoned Christians. Members would beg for funds to buy the release, the ransom of prisoners, from their captors. The Mercedarians, established in 1218 and dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy, known as Our Lady of Ransom in England, was founded by St. Peter Nolasco who devoted his life to ransoming Christians from the Moors, a society that depended on slaves. The money paid for the release of the slaves was called *ransom money*. Here again we see Our Lady as that merciful Mother, always weeping for her children and finding new ways to give hope and rescue to them on the stormy seas of their earthly journey. Maris Stella! Star of the sea!

Reference: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11770b.htm>

Mary again pledges to Sister Mildred her desire to deliver us from all evil and expresses her need for our help in ransoming so many trapped in slavery to sin.

**Have confidence, dear one, I am your Mother and will never leave you. (Diary, Pg. 46.) Help me save those who will not save themselves. Help me bring once again the sunshine of God's peace upon the world. (Diary, Pg. 15.)**

In a letter dated May of 1957 Sister Mildred describes Our Lady's appearance as the Mother of Mercy. With her arms extended and her blue mantle affording a safe refuge for the sinner, she said:

**I am the Mother of Mercy. Under my mantle I will hide my children. The justice of God will not reach them if they seek refuge beneath the protection of my mercy. My Son gives to me all those souls who come to me with confidence, calling upon my aid. Their salvation is in my hands. I will obtain for them the necessary graces to save their souls.**

**Come to me, poor, suffering and frightened ones. I am your Mother. Never will I forsake you. Only come to me with a wholehearted and loving trust. Place your souls into my keeping. I am that faithful Mother who never forsakes her children. Honor me by your confidence and love. This I desire and ask of you my poor children. Do not deny the wishes of your Mother.**

**Oh, how much greater is the love I bear thee than the love thou bearest me!**  
(Liguori, Words of Our Lady to Venerable Alphonso Rodriguez, SJ., Pg. 24.)



*Maria de Mercede, [fresco](#) by [Domenico Ghirlandaio](#), ca1472*

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Revised August, 2017.**

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