

It is a special honor to celebrate with you here at Our Lady of the Lake on this special occasion on the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows. We have the blessing of honoring Veronica and Ruben today. They are such great friends to the University, and they are wonderful examples of discipleship as members of the Body of Christ.

Today's memorial falls immediately upon the celebration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Historically, the Feast of the Holy Cross celebrates the discovery of the true cross of Christ by St. Helen in the fourth century. But more deeply, mid-way through the liturgical year we are called back again to a reflection on the meaning of the cross of Jesus in our own lives, and in the life of the Blessed Mother. Also, I have taken this occasion to offer my Pastoral Letter, *Transformed by Hope*, to the People of God in this Archdiocese and beyond. As contemplation at the foot of the cross can transform our hearts and souls in union with Christ, so too, in the crucifixion of this moment of our history with the pandemic and other social ills, we are called to a deeper transformation into the heart of Christ.

How can this transformation be accomplished? We turn first to the example of Blessed Mary, Jesus' mother and our mother. As we see her in today's gospel proclamation she is standing faithfully at the foot of Jesus' cross. She does not abandon him. She does not turn away from the pain of the situation in which she finds herself. She does not collapse in self-pity and self-absorption. No. She stands at the foot of the cross in silent but bold witness to the reality with which she is confronted! She has understood that sorrow, while we do not seek it, is nonetheless transformative when we embrace it for good cause! And she has embraced it for the salvation of the world!

Note also that at this moment she is joined to the Apostle John, and he to her! Through water, blood, and spirit they joined together as a new family! Mary will be there for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the moment of Pentecost. Mary will be with the Apostle John as he goes forth in mission, eventually dying at Patmos off the coast of Ephesus. Tradition holds that Mary’s Assumption occurred at a small house in the hills above Ephesus, where she had lived close to John.

This idea of being part of a new family in Christ is extended by the Apostle Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. He speaks of being parts of the living Body of Christ. Each of us joined together and each of us contributing in a special way to the mission of the Risen Christ in this world. And this brings us to this moment, as we honor and thank Veronica and Ruben, who have joined together with the Sisters of Divine Providence, in the ministry of the University of Our Lady of the Lake. Like our Blessed Mother they do not shy away from the demands and sufferings of Christ in this world. Rather, they stand resolutely and with purpose, as Mary did, at the foot of the cross. The sorrows of our times are not something from which they will run, but rather, they are something that they will embrace. The future lives of thousands of students depend on it!

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, earlier this year in April referred to Blessed Mary as “both disciple and mother.” Let us stand with her at the foot of the cross. Let us take the message of Christ to the world. Let us take this opportunity in the sorrows of our time to transform our world for a better tomorrow for all God’s children! Amen.