



**Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows
Commemorative Celebration of the Servite Sisters**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

Riverton Parish, Our Lady Queen of Apostles Church
Saturday 16 September, 2017

In the Votive Mass for Our Lady, Mother of the Church, the prayer over the gifts asks that we, who celebrate her memory, might like her be more closely united to the work of our redemption. This prayer gives voice to something which stands at the heart of our belief about Mary. In the mysterious plan of God this woman has been drawn by the Lord into such an intimate relationship with her Son, Jesus, that his saving work cannot be separated from Mary's total gift of herself, in loving obedience, to God's plan. This gift, one of generosity, courage and faith, was expressed by Mary's "yes" to the angel at the time of the Annunciation, was renewed throughout her life as every mention of her in the Gospels testifies, was completed as she stood by her Son's cross as he give his life for us, and was confirmed and rewarded by God through the mystery of Mary's assumption into the fullness of life in heaven.

The Liturgy of the Church throughout the year on many occasions celebrates this unique relationship between Mary and her Son in the work of redemption. Just as the Feast of the Annunciation celebrates the virginal conception of Jesus, so the Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the conception of Mary. Just as we celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day so we celebrate the Nativity of Mary on September 8. Just as on February 2nd we remember the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple so on November 21st we recall the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. Just as we celebrate the great mystery of the Ascension of the Lord forty days after Easter, so we celebrate the Assumption of Mary on August 15. And just as we celebrate the Triumph of the Cross on September 14, so in the Church's calendar we celebrate the feast of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, the day after. And of course it is this Feast which we have transferred to today to enable the Servite Sisters, who have the Mother of Sorrows as the mother of their religious family, to celebrate together with their friends, their collaborators and the parish.

In having Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, as their special patron, the Servite Sisters are a living reminder for all of us that what is true for them is true also for us. Today's gospel makes this very clear. When St John, in his account of the Lord's death, tells of the Lord's entrusting of his mother and his beloved disciple to each other, he is trying to tell us so much more than that Jesus, as a dutiful son, wanted to make sure his mother would be looked after once he was gone. In St John's Gospel, and indeed in the whole gospel tradition, Mary is always presented as a woman of faith and as the great model of faith. At the same time the Beloved Disciple, who is never given a name in St John's Gospel, is presented always as the great example of faithful discipleship. He, after all, is the only one to stand by Jesus at his time of greatest need, and at the time of greatest



danger for his followers. All the other disciples, apart from Judas who had betrayed Jesus, ran away in fear once Jesus was arrested.

Mary and the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross therefore represent what the Church is called to be: a community of trusting faith and courageous discipleship. And in giving Mary and the Disciple to each other as he was dying Jesus was both establishing his Church in them and indicating what the Church was meant to be.

Because of this we look to the Servite Sisters, who have the faith-filled Mary at the foot of the cross as their special patron, to be a living and powerful reminder to us of what it really means to be disciples of Jesus. With his dying words Jesus established his Church as a community of faith and discipleship and gave to this Church, that is to us, his own mother to be our mother also. Just as Mary accompanied Jesus through his life, and to his death, and just as she joined the first community as they awaited the promised gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, so now, assumed into heaven through her union with her Son's resurrection and ascension, Mary accompanies and supports us with her presence, her prayers and her motherly concern for us in our own journey of faith.

May the Servite Sisters, and the whole Servite family, through their lives and ministries, continue to be a living reminder to us all of Mary's presence and of the love with which her Son has entrusted us to her care.