Prayer Before an Image of the Mother of Sorrows

O most compassionate Mother, what bitterness filled thy heart when thou didst embrace the lacerated Body of thy Son with thy virginal arms, press Him lovingly to thy maternal heart, and cover Him with tenderest kisses. I remind thee of this inexpressible bitterness, in virtue of which I beseech thee to obtain for me forgiveness of my sins.

O Mary, pray for me, a poor sinner, to thy Jesus, Whom thou didst hold in thy arms. Take the wounded Body of thy Son into thy maternal arms and offer Him in this condition to the Heavenly Father for me. Offer His pierced Heart, His Passion and Death, and all thy own immeasurable sorrows to obtain grace and mercy for me, particularly (mention the favor you desire here).

Amen.

Holy Mother, pierce me through; in my heart each wound renew of my Saviour Crucified.

O Mary, our hope, have pity on us!
Pray:

Days 1-7 only: The prayer in honor of the sorrow corresponding to the day of the novena (e.g., day 1, First Sorrow)

All days:

(1) One Hail Mary
(2) The Prayer to our Sorrowful Mother for a particular grace
(3) The Memorare

Prayer to our Sorrowful Mother for a particular grace

O most holy and afflicted Virgin, Queen of Martyrs, who stood on Mount Calvary when your Son was in agony: by the sword of sorrow which pierced your heart, by the sufferings of your whole life on earth, by your unspeakable joy in Heaven; look down with maternal pity and tenderness as I kneel before you to sympathize with your sorrows, and to place my petition, with childlike confidence, in your wounded heart.

I beg of you, dear Mother, to plead for me with your divine Son, since he can refuse you nothing, and, through the merits of his most sacred Passion and Death, together with your own suffering at the foot of his Cross, so to move his Sacred Heart that I may obtain this request….

To whom shall I go in my need and misery, if not to you, O Mother most merciful, you who pity us poor exiles still sighing in this valley of tears? Offer to Jesus for us but one drop of his most precious blood, but one pang of his loving heart; remind him that you are our life, our sweetness and our hope, and your prayer on my behalf will be heard. Amen.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your clemency, hear and answer me. Amen.

Prayer in honor of the First Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most sorrowful Virgin, sorrow filled your heart when, on offering your divine Son in the temple, holy Simeon told you that a sword would pierce your soul, and you knew then that you would be asked to suffer with Jesus. I wish to join with you in this sorrow, and I ask you, O Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me the grace that I may always remember my death, which will help to keep me from all sin.

Prayer in honor of the Second Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most holy and sorrowful Virgin, sorrow filled your motherly heart when you saw your divine Son hated by Herod and you had to flee with him to Egypt, to save him. I wish to join with you in this sorrow and ask you, O Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me the grace to avoid all the temptations of my enemies on the difficult road to heaven.
Prayer in honor of the Third Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most sorrowful Virgin,
sorrow filled your heart when you were separated from your divine Son, who remained lost for three days in Jerusalem while you looked everywhere for him.
I wish to join with you in the sorrow you felt then, and I ask you, O Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me the grace never to lose Jesus your Son, but always to remain united to him by the help of his grace.

Prayer in honor of the Fourth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most sorrowful Mother, sorrow filled your motherly heart when you followed your dear Son to Calvary, and saw him falling under the weight of the Cross.
I wish to join with you in this sorrow, and I ask you, O Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me the grace to bear with patience whatever cross it will please God to send me.

Prayer in honor of the Fifth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most sorrowful Mother, the greatest sorrow filled your heart when you stood near the Cross of Jesus, and watched him die in suffering for the sins of the world, without being able to do anything to help him.
I wish to join with you in this sorrow, and ask you, O Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me the grace to fight against all my temptations, even though it costs me effort and suffering and death, so that, strengthened by his love when I am dying, I may obtain the grace of a happy death.

Prayer in honor of the Sixth Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most Sorrowful Mother, sorrow filled your heart when the adorable body of your divine Son was taken down from the Cross and laid in your arms.
I wish to join with you in this sorrow, and ask you to obtain for me the grace to receive Jesus into my soul before I die, so that I may be perfectly united to him for ever in heaven.

Prayer in honor of the Seventh Sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Most sorrowful Virgin, sorrow again filled your heart when the sacred body of Jesus was taken from your arms and placed in the grave.
I wish to join with you in this last sorrow of yours, and ask you to obtain for me, through the sufferings of Jesus, which were the cause of all your sorrow, a sincere sorrow for my sins, a burning love for God, and a tender and practical devotion towards you.
The Sorrows of Mary
St. Alphonsus Liguori

Mary was the Queen of Martyrs, for her martyrdom was longer and greater than that of all the Martyrs.

Who can ever have a heart so hard that it will not melt on hearing the most lamentable event which once occurred in the world? There was a noble and holy Mother Who had an only Son. This Son was the most amiable that can be imagined—innocent, virtuous, beautiful, Who loved His Mother most tenderly; so much so that He had never caused her the least displeasure, but had ever shown her all respect, obedience, and affection: hence this Mother had placed all her affections on earth in this Son. Hear, then, what happened. This Son, through envy, was falsely accused by His enemies; and though the judge knew, and himself confessed, that He was innocent, yet, that He might not offend His enemies, he condemned Him to the ignominious death that they had demanded. This poor Mother had to suffer the grief of seeing that amiable and beloved Son unjustly snatched from her in the flower of His age by a barbarous death; for, by dint of torments and drained of all His blood, He was made to die on an infamous gibbet in a public place of execution, and this before her own eyes.

Devout souls, what say you? Is not this event, and is not this unhappy Mother worthy of compassion. You already understand of whom I speak. This Son, so cruelly executed, was our loving Redeemer Jesus; and this Mother was the Blessed Virgin Mary; Who, for the love she bore us, was willing to see Him sacrificed to Divine Justice by the barbarity of men. This great torment, then, which Mary endured for us—a torment which was more than a thousand deaths deserves both our compassion and our gratitude. If we can make no other return for so much love, at least let us give a few moments this day to consider the greatness of the sufferings by which Mary became the Queen of martyrs; for the sufferings of her great martyrdom exceeded those of all the martyrs; being, in the first place, the longest in point of duration; and, in the second place, the greatest in point of intensity.

Saint Bonaventure, addressing this Blessed Virgin, says, "And why, O Lady, didst thou also go to sacrifice thyself on Calvary? Was not a crucified God sufficient to redeem us, that thou, His Mother, wouldst also go to be crucified with Him?" Indeed, the death of Jesus was more than enough to save the world, and an infinity of worlds; but this good Mother, for the love she bore us, was willing to see Him sacrificed to Divine Justice by the barbarity of men. This great torment, then, which Mary endured for us—a torment which was more than a thousand deaths deserves both our compassion and our gratitude. If we can make no other return for so much love, at least let us give a few moments this day to consider the greatness of the sufferings by which Mary became the Queen of martyrs; for the sufferings of her great martyrdom exceeded those of all the martyrs; being, in the first place, the longest in point of duration; and, in the second place, the greatest in point of intensity.

So great a love on the part of Mary deserves our gratitude, and that gratitude should be shown by at least meditating upon and pitying her in her sorrow. But she complained to Saint Bridget that very few did so, and that the greater part of the world lived in forgetfulness of them: "I look around at all who are on earth, to see if by chance there are any who pity me, and meditate upon my sorrows; and I find that there are very few. Therefore, my daughter, though I am forgotten by many, at least do thou not forget me; consider my anguish, and imitate, as far as thou canst, my grief."

To understand how pleasing it is to the Blessed Virgin that we should remember her dolours, we need only know that, in the year 1239, she appeared to seven devout clients of hers (who were afterwards founders of the religious order of the Servants of Mary), with a black garment in her hand, and desired them, if they wished to please her, often to meditate on her sorrows: for this purpose, and to remind them of her sorrows) she expressed her desire that in future they should wear that mourning dress. Jesus Christ Himself revealed to the Blessed Veronica da Binasco, that He is, as it were, more pleased in seeing His Mother compassionated than Himself; for thus He addressed her: "My daughter, tears shed for My Passion are dear to Me; but as I love My Mother Mary with an immense love, the meditation of the torments which she endured at My death is even more agreeable to Me."