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PASTOR

My dear Kirkland Catholics,

The Virgin Mary gets kind of neglected on the Church calendar this year. When a Feast Day falls on a Sunday, Sunday takes precedence, and the Feast is *not observed* (with very few exceptions). This year The Birthday of Mary (September 8), Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15) and The Immaculate Conception (December 8) all fall on Sunday. The first two are not observed at all then, and The Immaculate Conception moves to the following day, but is not a *Holy Day* this year.

Speaking of the Immaculate Conception, have you ever wondered why we observe this during Advent when it can be confusing since *Advent* is about *Jesus'* birth, not Mary's own conception and birth? I had wondered...until I realized that Mary's Birthday has been observed on September 8 since the sixth century, and exactly nine months before that is yep, December 8.

Long preamble to share a bit about Our Lady of Sorrows, and a way to ask her intercession.

Our Lady of Sorrows focuses on Mary as a sorrowful mother who felt deeply and experienced much spiritual and emotional suffering in her life, especially connected with Jesus. The seven sorrows include: The Presentation in the Temple, The Flight into Egypt, the Finding in the Temple, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Deposition from the Cross, and placing Jesus in the tomb.

Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows is often recommended for difficult family situations, and in connection to generational trauma. Sometimes family stuff seems hopelessly complicated and messy, and we often mess it up more when we try to "fix" things. Along with the devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots, bringing this to Our Lady of Sorrows surrenders things out of our hands.

More specifically regarding family troubles, a priest friend recently shared with me that in situations where a child has cut off contact, or is otherwise somewhat estranged, he suggests that – every day – the parents ask the Blessed Mother to "visit" their child (and grandchildren) as she visited St. Elizabeth, and for Mary to provide the parental (grandparental) care or support that the parents are not able to give because of the estrangement. Asking Mary to "visit" could also apply to other situations where – for whatever reason – one is not able to be in contact with a loved one.

The Saints have been unanimous in their awe about their experience of the mysterious power of Mary's intercession. I encourage you not to neglect "best practices," but rather often invoke Our Lady asking for her powerful prayers, especially regarding difficult family situations. Next month is dedicated to Mary and the Rosary. Maybe it's a good time to grab our rosaries, and pray hard for the healing and strengthening of our families.

With love in Christ,
Fr. Brad