

# Stabat Mater: The Sequence for the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady

The 'Sequence' known as the *Stabat Mater* – as we celebrate it – is connected to the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady on September 15<sup>th</sup>, but its history is a little more complex than that, and this union of the two is by no means all of the story in relation to this particular sequence.

As concerns the *feast*, it is well to realise that September 15<sup>th</sup> is not in fact its 'traditional' date or, perhaps more accurately, is not the *only* date upon which the Seven Sorrows are commemorated. Up until 1960, the Mass of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary was also celebrated on the Friday of Passion Week and, in the Missal of 1962, it is still an optional Mass on that Friday. This Mass in Passiontide began, and retains, the use of the sequence *Stabat Mater* in a formal way in the Roman liturgy. It was in 1727 that the Seven Sorrows was officially added to the Breviary of St. Pius V (on the Friday of Passion Week). The September feast of the same name, originally the patronal feast of the Servite Order, was added to the general calendar in 1814, and remains in its last reform in the 1960s. Both, then, use the sequence *Stabat Mater* (although, practically speaking, the Seven Sorrows tends to be the Mass of the day only on September 15<sup>th</sup>).

This naturally leads to a further historical consideration. We would assume, quite naturally, that the sequence in question was composed for the feast (as was the case, for example, with the *Lauda Sion*, composed by St Thomas Aquinas for the feast of Corpus Christi). But this is not, in fact, the case; the *Stabat Mater* is actually much older than the feast of the Seven Sorrows, at least in terms of the formal date of that feast's origin.

The sequence may be traced back to the earliest years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was probably composed by a Franciscan friar by the name of Jacopone da Todi (died 1306); it was certainly being used in various processions from the 1380s. By the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it had found its way into a number of missals within Europe, although, curiously enough, not in England. Obviously, its presence in these missals is ubiquitously connected to the celebration of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. However,

outside of this the connection to 'para-liturgical' processions and celebrations is not without significance.

From a very early point in time, the *Stabat Mater* was connected to the devotional praying of the Way of the Cross, forming an aid to the faithful in entering into that mystery. The use of a liturgical text in devotional exercises is not an isolated thing – we may consider, for example, the use of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> verses of the *Pange Lingua* at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (*Tantum ergo...*) – the *Pange Lingua* of course being the hymn composed for First Vespers of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Seen in this light, the preservation and extension of the *Stabat Mater* in this manner gives voice to the *sensus fidelium*, and to the many fruits derived from the devout recitation, or singing, of this beautiful medieval poem.

The sequence describes the sufferings of Our Lady at the foot of the cross, where she stands by her beloved Son, nailed to the wood for our sins. To paraphrase Fr Armand de Malleray FSSP, author of the excellent little work 'Meditations on the Stabat Mater', in presenting this to our minds, it becomes a meditation on compassion; it is how the new Eve, Our Lady, teaches us through her own suffering and love, to gaze upon the Lord Jesus on the cross, and to allow for the redemption He wrought for us to touch us, to benefit us, to save us.

If we truly desire to plumb the depths of knowledge of Christ's Passion, the *Stabat Mater* encourages us to go to His Blessed Mother. There is no other created being in Heaven or on Earth that understands the sufferings of Our Lord better than the one who had a sword pierce her own heart. If we wish to know some of what Our Lady teaches about her Son's Passion, let us contemplate the great depths and richness of the words of this beautiful medieval poem, which has enriched the lives of so many of our ancestors in the faith. Because in this sequence we encounter a sorrow filled with hope and the journey of the soul from the fall to the rise.

'Let me mingle tears with thee,  
Mourning Him who mourned for me,  
All the days that I may live.'

Fr Brendan Boyce, FSSP



## Priestly Fraternity of St Peter Newsletter

District of Oceania – Feast of the Assumption 2022



### From the District Superior...

Last month we welcomed three new candidates to Ezechiel House to begin their studies and to continue their discernment of a vocation to the priesthood. Please keep these young men in your prayers over the coming months. Last year we also had three men at Ezechiel House, two of whom, Andrew George and Israel Alfante, both from New Zealand, are now continuing their studies at our seminary in the United States, Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary. This is encouraging, and is due to the dedication and prayers of many people. One individual in particular, however, deserves a mention in this regard. Fr Wong's tireless work as both the director of Ezechiel House and also as the Parish Priest at Maternal Heart, deserves our gratitude. To be in charge of forming young men who wish to become priests is a delicate and challenging task—a task (and at times a burden) which Fr Wong assumes with both prudence and enthusiasm. Thank you Father!

We are also looking forward to the arrival of Fr Noel Soares in the coming months, once his Australian visa is approved. Fr Soares began his studies at Ezechiel House in 2016, and was ordained in May this year in the USA. We hope to have him back among us soon!



Fr Noel Soares celebrating his first Holy Mass at the Carmel of Valparaíso, Nebraska.

### A Vocational Story

Noel Armando Soares was born in August, 1988 in Goa, India. His parents, being good Catholics, brought up Noel and his older brother Leon in the Catholic faith in the port city of Vasco-Da-Gama. His parents pious example played a key role in his own priestly discernment later on in life.

Noel did most of his early schooling in Vasco-Da-Gama completing his higher secondary education in 2005. In pursuit of higher education, he moved to Bangalore completing his Bachelors and Masters in Microbiology in 2010.

Continued over page...

Continued over page...



#### PHILOSOPHY CAMPS:

Fr Thomas Sofatzis and his helpers lead another very successful and enjoyable Philosophy Camp in Sydney in the July school holidays. Over 70 children took part in the 4 day event. The Sydney camp was followed by one in Adelaide which was attended by 38 children.

For more information about the Fraternity of St Peter please visit our website [fssp.net](http://fssp.net) or contact us via email at [enquiries@fssp.net](mailto:enquiries@fssp.net) or phone (02) 9688 4287

## From the District Superior

...Continued from front page

In June of this year I attended a meeting in Germany of those in leadership in the FSSP from around the world. There were a number of topics discussed, but the issue of ongoing formation for newly ordained priests (and older priests too) was a particular theme. Every priest is expected to have a Spiritual Director and go to confession regularly of course, as well as to continue his theological reading and reflection. There is, however, also a need to develop the skills needed to run the material aspects of parish life. I was pleased to be able to report to the meeting that in the Oceania District, thanks to the expertise and contacts of Fr Sumich, we have instituted a series of regular formation sessions for the recently ordained to help equip them with some of these more practical aspects of life in our apostolates. Being organized and productive does not make a saint of course, but it can certainly help, and we are striving to equip our priests in every way possible for the task that Our Lord has entrusted to them.

August is the month when we think particularly of Our Lady and her glorious Assumption. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin represents the fulfillment of her earthly life lived in perfect conformity to God's Will, as well as the beginning of her eternal life in the presence of the Blessed Trinity. Her assumption reminds us that a life of holiness is within the reach of all of us, whatever our state in life, not solely under our own effort of course, but by cooperating with the graces that Almighty God makes available to each of us, most especially through the sacraments. By the intercession of the saints, most especially Our Blessed Mother, we are able to live lives of sanctity in this world, while waiting for the next. At this time in the life of the Church, what is needed most is the sanctity of her members. Let us ask Our Lady during the month of August, by her intercession to obtain for us the graces we most need to become saints.

*Maria in caelum Assumpta, ora pro nobis!*  
May God bless you and your loved ones,  
Fr. Michael McCaffrey, FSSP

## A Vocational Story

...Continued from front page

During his Masters program, he first began discerning his vocation to the priesthood. While he was eager to join the seminary at the conclusion of his Masters degree, he was advised by two priests to pursue a career while at the same time continuing to discern his vocation.

Following their advice he returned to Goa and found his first job with TEVA pharmaceuticals. He worked with them until August 2014 before moving to Tulip Diagnostics, a bio-diagnostic company. Within a year of working with TULIP, he decided that he was ready to join the seminary.

In 2010, while he was working, he was first introduced to the Latin Mass. He continued to attend the traditional Mass for four years, which deeply influenced his vocational discernment leading him to seek out a traditional community. It was at this time that he contacted Fr. Duncan Wong, the vocations director in Australia for the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. His first communication with Fr. Wong took place in 2012, but it was not until January 2015 that he first visited Ezechiel House and was accepted as a candidate. He began his first year at Ezechiel House, Sydney later that year.

While at the major seminary in America, Noel was a member both of the schola and the polyphonic choir. Some of his favourite summer apostolates include his trip to Nigeria (to assist at the ordination of Fr. Charles Ike), two months of COVID apostolate at Naples, Florida, and his mission trip to Australia and assisting at the philosophy camp in Sydney in 2018.

Fr. Noel Soares was ordained to the priesthood on 27 May, 2022. He has been assigned to serve at Maternal Heart parish in Sydney, and is currently waiting for his Australian visa approval to enter the country. Kindly keep him in your prayers as he commences his priestly ministry.



### NEW SEMINARIANS:

*We welcome to Ezechiel House our new seminarians: Andre Kurkcu, Binil Chacko, and Alexander Kurkcu who began their discernment & formation at the end of July. Please keep them in your prayers.*



## Auckland Van will help the community to grow

The Auckland Latin Mass Chaplaincy is expanding and growing in the "City of Sails". After two years of Covid restrictions, the Community is emerging from the confines of social distancing and anonymity, bringing with it a new sense of enthusiasm and excitement.

But there have also been some growing pains! While the growth in the apostolate has been steady, there have been restrictions imposed by the limitations of the size of St Anne's Chapel and Mount St Mary's Chapel. Initially after the first lockdown ended, there was the hope that these limitations would be a thing of the past. The Community began using the school chapel at St Paul's College, a more beautiful and dignified (and larger!) space for the liturgy, with a resultant increase in number of worshippers. Sadly some heavy rains during the second lockdown caused part of the ceiling in the school chapel to collapse, with the result that it has been labelled unsafe by Health and Safety officers. So we are, for the moment, back to square one.

But the Almighty has not forgotten us! An unexpected turn of events took place shortly after the loss of the use of the chapel. It began one day with a casual conversation between the Chaplain and a parishioner. This parishioner said that he was a member of a charitable trust, and that he felt our chaplaincy could make a request for funding from this trust in order to help grow our sphere of work. Apparently many of the activities we undertake fall under the categories that the trust supports, such as assisting the underprivileged, aiding the elderly and infirm, helping schools with formation of the youth, and also with parochial activities such as choir training, retreats and Masses outside of Auckland. So we made an application to the trust for funding and (thanks be to God!) we were granted a very generous donation, sufficient to purchase a new 12-seater van. The van arrived just before Easter and has already been used for its first outing, taking the choir and



some servers north to Hikurangi for the monthly Mass on the Sunday evening. The availability of the van meant that the choir and servers were able to stay the night, which in turn meant that there could be a Sung Rogation Mass with Litany of the Saints and procession the next day. There was also the time to have a training session with six boys to prepare to become Mass servers.

Thus the van has already proven to be a great success, very comfortable and practical. In future it will be used to help parishioners who do not have transport or who need assistance getting to Sunday Masses. The van will be able to go around Auckland and collect those who lack transport or mobility, and bring them to Mass, returning them home afterwards.

So, while we wait for a new location for our Sunday Mass to become available, because of this new van, we hope to be able to continue to grow the apostolate, to care for the less-fortunate in our community and to contribute to the overall promotion of the Latin Mass Chaplaincy. *Deo gratias!*

Fr Anthony Sumich, FSSP



### PARISH DINNER:

*Maternal Heart of Mary parish had an enjoyable and long awaited post-lockdown parish dinner on Saturday July 9. The 165 attendees enjoyed meeting old and new friends while listening to fine music from a string quartet.*