

TREASURES OF THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL

STAINED GLASS IN THE SANCTUARY window # 2

depicting

Mary, the suffering Mother of God

or

Mater Dolorosa

by Bernard Lauwyck



For more than 35 years, visitors and worshippers alike have looked at the (4) four colourful stained glass windows, behind the altar in the sanctuary of the Roseau Cathedral. They looked but all they could see was a mosaic of bright colours.

These windows are very different from the other stained glass windows in the Cathedral, which are beautifully painted or etched and convey a clear message. As these four Sanctuary windows are like burning flames, “flamboyant” or “rayon ante”, most of us do not know what they are depicting. This is a sad state of affairs, which I want to rectify with a few articles on them.

Today we look at the second window. We look at both the round top window and the lower rectangular window. Above depicts the PIETÀ and below is Mary depicted as the suffering mother or MATER DOLOROSA.

The PIETA is a familiar image in Christian art depicting the Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of her son Jesus. Michelangelo’s sculpture immediately comes to mind. There is also a similar sculpture in the Church of Our Lady of La Salette, Pointe Michel.

In the lower window of MATER DOLOROSA, her suffering can be discerned from the position of the hands, a cramp-like position and if one looks closely, in her the face.

In Christianity, there are three artistic representations of the sorrowful Mother of God. Besides the two images depicted here, the other is STABAT MATER or the mother standing under the cross.



For centuries God was a being far removed from us, human beings.

In the Old Testament God is described as a creator and family protector in Genesis, a liberator and lawgiver in Exodus, a conqueror in Joshua and Judges, the Holy One in Isaiah 40-66, the Ancient of Days in Daniel. However in Genesis 4-11, he is also a destroyer, a God of wrath, in Isaiah 1-39 an executioner and punisher.

This all changes with the incarnation or the birth of Jesus Christ “*the Word made flesh*”.

Part of our human experience is suffering and death. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, "I AM", is suffering just as any of us, dying just as anyone of us. God that suffered just like any human being.

But this is not the subject of our windows, Jesus' mother MARY is.

Mary following her son as disciple and through His passion. Mary, the mother under the cross, the mother taking her dead son from the cross, the mother taking her dead son's body in her arms and mourning over him, a mother burying her firstborn son.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church #964 describes it well: "*There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son, the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her*"

Many of us can deeply identify with Mary's suffering: The father and mother who lost their child. The parent who worries over his or her son or daughter.

However, the Catechism tells us that Mary is also the mother of the Church.

963 "MARY, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church".

Especially in the month of September we honour Mary as the suffering mother. There is no denying that the Church is in crisis, on the world scene and on the local scene. _Mary is weeping over her Church.

