

Editor's Notes for the *Coplas para el Septenario de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*

In the Roman Catholic tradition, a *Septenario* or Septenary is a seven consecutive-day cycle dedicated to devotion and prayer to God, the Virgin and the Saints to ask for grace or intercession, or to celebrate or honor a specific religious event in the life of the church. Although on the Catholic church calendar the Feast of our Lady of Sorrows (*Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*) falls on September 15th, in the Spanish Catholic tradition the Septenary of Our Lady of Sorrows is most frequently celebrated during the week immediately preceding Holy Week, ending on the Friday of Sorrows (*Viernes de Dolores*), a solemn remembrance of the sorrowful Blessed Virgin Mary on the Friday before Palm Sunday.

The *coplas* or verses used in the Septenary are meant to convey a sense of anguish while honoring a suffering Mary. The composition and meter of the *coplas* are very specific and are referred to as a *décima espinela*, as each stanza consists of 10 verses. Each stanza describes one of the seven *dolores* or sorrows endured by the Virgin, namely (1) The prophecy of Simeon that a sword would pierce her heart, (2) the flight into Egypt, (3), the three-day loss of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem, (4) the meeting on the road to Calvary, (5) witnessing the suffering of her Son on the Cross, (6) Jesus removed from the cross and placed in her arms, and (7) laying of her Son in the tomb. A Hail Mary is said at the end of each stanza. In the traditional Spanish iconography of Our Lady of Sorrows, these seven *dolores* are represented by seven daggers (or sometimes just one) piercing Mary's heart.

The original score for this piece by Hilarión Eslava came to us courtesy of the music archive of the Monasterio de Santa Isabel la Real of Granada, Spain. We are indebted to the Sisters of the Order of Saint Clare for their generosity. The manuscript score contained only the first stanza, with an annotation that all seven stanzas should be identically sung. The words for the other six *dolores* were reproduced from the website of the Hermandad de Nuestra Señora de la Soledad of Cantillana (Sevilla), at <http://soledadcantillana.blogspot.com/2009/11/coplas-de-dolores.html>.

The organ/keyboard accompaniment provided by Eslava here is quite simple, perhaps to make the piece accessible to any size church. I suspect the accompanist would have been given discretion to embellish it according to his ability and judgment.

1.	Si las dulces palabras del ángel inundaron de gozo tu alma, de un profeta la fúnebre calma la llenó de amargura y dolor. Te predijo que Aquel que en tus brazos presentabas al templo piadosa en la cima del Gólgota umbrosa le verías morir en la Cruz.	Just as the sweet words of the angel flooded your soul with joy, those spoken by a serene prophet, filled it with bitterness and sorrow. He foretold you that He whom in your arms you presented in the temple devoutly, at the summit of a darkened Golgotha you would watch on the Cross meet death.
Refrain	<i>Estribillo (se repite con cada estrofa):</i> ¡Por tus dolores ten compasión! Pide y alcanza nuestro perdón.	<i>Refrain (repeated with every stanza):</i> By your grief have mercy! Beseech and attain for us pardon.
2.	Si los Reyes de Oriente adoraron al Infante, Dios Hombre en pobreza, un tirano con odio y fiereza degollar los infantes mandó. Y del fiel corazón traspasado, las maternas delicias ostentas y al Egipto, Señora, te ausentas con el Hijo que al mundo salvó.	Just as the Magi from the East worshipped the holy Infant, God turned Man in poverty, a tyrant with hate and ferocity ordered infants beheaded. And with your faithful heart pierced, in your motherly care, to Egypt, Lady, you flee with the Son who saved the world.

3.	<p>¿Quién es esa Mujer que angustiada, vacilante y llorosa camina? ¿quién es esa Mujer tan divina? ¿quién es esa Mujer celestial?: esa triste Mujer es María que en el templo perdió a su Hijo amado y en su rostro divino ha grabado la congoja su huella fatal.</p>	<p>Who is that anguished Woman who so unsteadily and in such grief walks? Who is that Woman so divine? Who is that Woman from heaven?: That grieving Woman is Mary Who in the temple lost her beloved Son And in whose divine visage sadness has etched her fatal mark.</p>
4.	<p>Si en el Santo Lugar le perdiste a tu amado Jesús, hallas luego y conoces la voz que con fuego entre doctos, sapiente arguyó. En la calle Amargura, María, ya lo encuentras sangriento, agotado, con el peso del leño cargado de ese leño mortal do expiró.</p>	<p>Though in the Holy Place you lost Him your beloved Jesus you later found and recognized the fiery voice with which He with wise men argued. In the street of Bitterness, Mary, you now find Him bleeding, exhausted, under the heavy timber's burden, the heavy timber on which he expired.</p>
5.	<p>Del discípulo amado en compañía abatida a tu Hijo seguiste y de agudo dolor presa fuiste cuando al Monte Calvario llegó. Allí el eco repite el sonido de martillos, clarines y voces, lo suspenden, oh Madre, y entonces al Dios justo clavado se vio.</p>	<p>Accompanied by the beloved disciple, dejected your Son you followed, and deep pain you suffered when He Mount Calvary did reach. There the echo repeats the sound of hammers, bugles, and voices. They hang him, oh, Mother, and then our just God nailed to a Cross was seen.</p>
6.	<p>Oscurécese el sol de repente, se cumplió la fatal profecía. Mira, mira a tu Hijo, María, mira, mira, cadáver está. Ya descende del árbol sagrado y en tus brazos lo ponen, Señora. Tu pecho que amante le adora el puñal de dolor hiere ya.</p>	<p>The sky suddenly darkens, the fatal prophecy fulfilled. Behold, behold your Son, Mary, look, look at Him, only His body remains. He is lowered from the sacred tree and unto your arms he is brought, our Lady. Your breast, which lovingly worships Him has by the dagger already been wounded.</p>
7.	<p>Hijo mío, exclamaba, quién puede comparar tan terrible martirio. Quién al ver de tu Madre el delirio dura muerte intentara, traidor. Del sepulcro la losa te oculta a esos hijos que les riega el llanto. Sola quedo, Hijo mío, y por tanto sólo espero morir de dolor.</p>	<p>My Son, she exclaimed, who can bear such terrible torture. Who upon seeing your Mother in such agony could with a harsh death betray Her. The slab of the sepulcher conceals you from the children in their weeping. I am left alone, my Son, and therefore can only death in my grief await.</p>