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Sr. Mary Joseph

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What is Tragedy?

The small, common trials of life: the ponderous daily duties, the inconvenience of illness - are these tragedies? No - great catastrophes, world-changing disasters, are tragedies. One solitary man's mishap, unknown to all but he; is this tragedy? Not this, but the calamities which befall multitudes, which strike nations, are tragedies. The misfortunes which last but for a time, spending themselves in short, sudden fury; are these tragedies? No, for tragedy is that which leaves its scar over centuries.

Tragedy was the fall of Adam and Eve, the committing of Original Sin, the loss of Sanctifying Grace, the close of Heaven for centuries! Tragedy was the Protestant Revolt, the ruin of so many souls, the swerving of nations from the Faith, the destruction of Catholic kingdoms! Tragedy was World War I, the loss of millions of lives, the impoverishment, the weakening, the annihilation of Christian empires!

Oh cruel Tragedy, who brings misery and death to the innocent, as with the Communist revolution of terror; how many thousands did you torture, kill, condemn to lives of hard labor in prison camps! Oh heartless Tragedy, who destroys towns, as with the bomb which flattened Nagasaki to the ground; how many families who, because of you, will never be seen again, and how many friends separated forever! And oh merciless Tragedy, who ends the reigns of glorious monarchies, as with the death of Franz Josef; you it was who obliterated the Catholic monarchy of Austria, who cut short the reign of the Holy Roman Empire! Shall the world never have peace, and will you always remind its inhabitants, Oh Tragedy, of your lurking, death-like presence?