



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This month I direct my reflection to the parents of the 35 parishes within our Diocese of Stockton. As Bishop, I am blessed to serve you, our Catholic families, from Lodi to Newman; from Mammoth Lakes to Tracy, and all the communities within the 10,000 square miles of our Diocese of Stockton.

The Catholic Church has contributed to the rich history of this region of California. It has blazed trails providing and fostering the Christian faith in the Northern San Joaquin Valley. It has upheld and provided Catholic school education and faith formation for countless families. The Church has also provided quality hospital and medical care, as well as outreach ministries such as Catholic Charities. Our outreach ministries have provided many life sustaining services to countless families. This has, and continues to be, the “mission call” of our Diocese.

As today’s parents, you, along with your children, make up the *Body of Christ*, the Church of the Diocese of Stockton. You have the dignified role to continue the faith legacy of our diocese. This legacy continues by building up what is known as the *domestic church*. As the head of the domestic church, you must never forget, nor abandon, your duty to be the principle educators of your children in the *ways of the faith*. With your example, your children will come to know the Lord Jesus, live his gospel message, and grow in the knowledge of the Teachings of the Catholic Church.

As practicing Catholics, you and your children will uniquely encounter Jesus in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Attending Mass on Sunday must be seen as a priority for you as a Catholic family. Participating in the Liturgy of the Mass, the *summit of our faith*, will nourish and strengthen your spiritual life, and that of your family.

But, with the impact of Covid-19, we are experiencing an upheaval of challenges and inconveniences in our daily lives, and the Church has not escaped it. It is unfortunate but the pandemic has impacted many areas of parish life. One of these areas is in regard to Sunday Mass attendance.

Presently, as a precaution, parishioners who are at high risk and more vulnerable to the virus, are recommended to remain home and to participate in the Mass by way of live streaming. Technology has been a blessing and it has served us well under these unique circumstances, but it is a temporary fix. Live streaming of the virtual Mass is not to be seen as the norm for those who are capable of attending Mass.

It is important to understand that, for families who are not at risk, you are encouraged to physically attend Sunday Mass. Presently, parishes are providing the celebration of open air Masses. I invite you, as a family, to attend the outdoor Masses that are available to you at your parishes. As you plan to do so, I recommended that you contact your parish office for details.

Please, do not miss the graced opportunity to attend Mass on your own parish grounds along with your fellow parishioners. In the meantime, I ask that we unite in prayer asking God to deliver us from this pandemic so as to return to worship within our parish churches.



Parents, even while in the midst of all of this turmoil, remember, when you attend Mass as a family, you are nourished and strengthened by Word and Sacrament. When you receive the Holy Eucharist, you are empowered by God's grace and mercy to fulfill your vocation and call to parenthood. As father and mother, the Holy Spirit will help and guide you in forming a home that is Christ-centered and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus, the *Good News!*

May God bless you, the parents of our Diocese of Stockton. I as your Bishop, need families who are *evangelized*, who are alive in Christ and who know him as the Lord of their lives and homes. My friends, together respond to the promptings of the Spirit to the call to be evangelized. It is in the environment of the Liturgy, when gathered as a family, that you come to recall and realize the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This Sunday, plan to personally attend Mass to encounter the love, forgiveness and hope of the Risen Lord.

My dear parents, may God bless you and your families. Let us not only celebrate our faith, but let us live it! Together, as we acknowledge Sunday as the primary day of the week, and with a renewed commitment to Christ and his Gospel, let us faithfully *Keep holy the Lord's Day!*

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Cotta