



My Dear People of God,

It is truly a blessing for us, as the Church, to have a beautiful Solemnity in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the midst of the summer season. On August 15, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption. On that day, we are reminded of the Dogma of the Church that Mary was taken up to heaven body and soul. As Our Glorified Mother, she intercedes for us always wanting the best for us, her children.

Now, during these unsettling and uncertain times, we need her prayers of strength and consolation. In this fragile world, Our Lady has asked us to be consistent in our daily prayer. She, specifically, asks us to be consistent in praying the Rosary, daily.

We are in need of God's intervention during these challenging times. Many are experiencing a great sense of uneasiness of being out-of-touch and isolated. Families are caught up in a darkness of worry and fear. Many are frustrated in the midst of the ever-changing impact of the Coronavirus on our daily life. People are overwhelmed about the future: civil unrest, unemployment, concerns about the new academic year, and the repercussions of the restrictions placed upon our parishes. The experience of "Covid-fatigue" has shrouded our dedicated healthcare personnel. Above all, in the wake of this virus, we have the presence of death, and with it, the burden of grief. The suffering has been overwhelming.

Yes - we are all concerned. Yes - many of us continue to express *our* opinions about the ongoing situation; but our reaction of frustration cannot allow us to *get stuck* there. Our Blessed Mother does not want us to be overwhelmed and disillusioned. Her desire for us is peace of mind and heart - hope!

We need to be *grounded* in God; and to be grounded in God, we need to be a people of prayer. Our lives must be centered in prayer- it is a priority! This goes for all of us: clergy, religious, laity and bishop! Throughout our diocese, we need *praying* families. During this pandemic, many parents have found creative activities in order to engage as families; but has *family prayer* been one of them? My friends, prayer will get us through this - it will provide hope for the hopeless.

So, with this in mind, beginning August 6, I invite all of us to start a novena in preparation for the Assumption. I ask that we, as a diocesan family, pray the Rosary. To assist in this, I encourage all parishes to provide a catechesis for their people on the Rosary. As the Diocesan Church: if we offer the prayers of the Rosary: Apostles' Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Hail Holy Queen; and reflect on the Mysteries: the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and the Luminous - they will provide the grace to evangelize and draw us into a deeper relationship with Jesus, the Son of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Brothers and Sisters, in the midst of our present challenges, as a people of faith, *grounded* in prayer, let us move forward in **hope!**

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Cotta