



**DIOCESE OF STOCKTON**  
**Message from Bishop Myron Cotta**  
**March 2019**

My Dear People of God,

The month of March is a very significant month for me. It is the month of my birthday; the month of my ordination as a bishop; and the month of my installation as the Bishop of the Diocese of Stockton. These are all milestones in my life, and my faith journey, for which I am very grateful.

Also, March welcomes the season of spring with its promise of transformation and new life. Within March, we are gifted with a penitential season, Lent, that focuses upon conversion and the call of all the baptized - a life of holiness.

In order for us, clergy and laity alike, to become more Christ-like we need to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” We are to renounce the obstacles that have no business in the life of a baptized individual. Those spiritual stumbling blocks need to be removed, and we do so by humbly approaching the Sacrament of Penance.

As parishes begin to prepare for the celebration of the Easter Mysteries by providing special times for Confession and Penance Services, I invite and encourage parents to set an example for their children by attending and participating in the Sacrament of Penance. As the principle educators in the way of the Faith, parents have a responsibility to teach their children about the importance of this sacrament of mercy. It is sad to hear many of our youth who are preparing for Confirmation, for example, mention that the last time they experienced Confession was for their First Holy Communion! When we neglect the Sacrament of Penance, we lose a spiritual foothold of healing that can benefit the life of Christian families.

With the support of the Church, individuals, spouses, parents, and their children are called to a Christ-centered life. All of us: Bishop, Clergy, Religious and Laity must be open to ongoing conversion and evangelization in our lives. Having an encounter with the love and mercy of Jesus, in the Sacrament of Penance, will help direct our lives to the road to holiness.

It is all about knowing Jesus and living his Gospel teachings. It is not only having a knowledge of Jesus but having a living relationship with him as the Risen Lord of our lives that is essential. Bringing our shortcomings, imperfections - our sins - to the foot of the cross, in the Sacrament of Penance, is where we find transformation and new life.

Let us be encouraged, with the help of the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the confession of our sins to experience a spiritual renewal, a new springtime during the month of March. During the forty days of Lent, let us prepare for the Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

May Our Lady help us to foster a closer relationship with her Son, Jesus, as we prepare our hearts to grow in holiness by way of the gift of his grace and mercy.

A grace filled Lent to all!

In the Peace of Christ,

*Bishop Cotta*