



**DIOCESE OF STOCKTON**  
**Message from Bishop Myron Cotta**  
**October 2018**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

I don't know about you, but as for me, I welcome the month of October. It is a month where we encounter the amazing season of fall with its brilliant explosion of color which surrounds us during this time of year. God, Our Creator, really "puts on a show" for us. I believe He does so solely to amaze us!

Another beautiful aspect of this month is that it is the month of the Holy Rosary. This month reminds us of the message of Our Lady that was given at the Cova da Iria in Fátima, Portugal. She encourages us to pray the Rosary every day for peace in the world and for the conversion of sinners. It is a powerful prayer which Our Lady told us has the capacity to change the outcome of history. The Rosary is truly needed at this time. It can help bring about healing and reconciliation among those hurt by clergy. It can help all of us as members of the Church, to grow in holiness as we move forward.

If that isn't enough, October is the Month of Respect Life. If anyone ever respected the mystery of life, it was Our Lady. She, chosen as the one to conceive the Lord of Life in the sanctuary of her womb, embraced life to its fullness. It is a Life that has saved and redeemed us of the fate of eternal death.

This year's theme for the Month of Respect Life is: "Every Life: Cherished, Chosen, Sent." We are reminded that all human life is to be cherished. The innocent, the vulnerable, the unborn, and all those born into this world who are not respected: the marginalized, the victimized of our society and Church. To fail to see the image of God in these brothers and sisters of ours is sinful.

Taking all of this into consideration, it is no surprise that Our Lady has been chosen as the central figure of this year's theme under the title of "Our Lady of Guadalupe." We know that the story of the apparitions of Guadalupe would have no purpose if it was not for the role, and the presence, of St. Juan Diego.

In 1531, God the Father sent his Handmaiden to visit this poor and humble indigenous person. The “civilization of death” of his ancestors, the Aztecs, was to be transformed into a “civilization of life” by means of the intervention of Heaven. The Queen of Heaven would bring about this transformation of a broken and conquered people. She would be the instrument of hope for the them. Our Lady’s tender, motherly, words affirmed Juan Diego that he is her “cherished” son. She comforts him by reminding him that she is “his” Mother and there is nothing to fear – she will protect him!

Our Lady mentions to him that he has been “chosen” by God to be His messenger. God has entrusted him with a mission. As a person with a God-given mission, he is then “sent” by God to the Bishop to reveal the heavenly message of the Blessed Virgin. He becomes “active” in mission. He becomes a “missionary disciple” of Christ.

We are reminded that when Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, she appeared as a young maiden who is shown to be “with child,” which is signified by the black cincture around her waist. She is the “New Eve,” the “true” mother of all the living. It is Our Lady of Tepeyac who reveals to Juan Diego that he is “cherished,” “chosen,” and “sent” to do God’s will. God “respects” him.

My brothers and sisters, as we acknowledge this Month of Respect Life, let us never forget that we are all “cherished” by God from the moment of conception to death. We, as “the baptized,” know that we are all “chosen” to be disciples and called to proclaim the sanctity of life in a world that is hostile to it.

Last, but not least, we are a people “sent” into the marketplace to announce the joy of the Gospel. As we proclaim this Gospel of Jesus, it is He who is the “Cherished” Son of the Father; the “Chosen” One; and the One who was “Sent” by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is this Jesus who is the Lord of Life and the One who saves and sustains it.

As we promote and celebrate this “Month of Respect Life,” let us allow the words of Our Lady of Guadalupe to speak to our hearts as they spoke to the heart of St. Juan Diego: “You are my messenger, in you I place my trust.” May the Mother of the Lord of Life, Our Lady of Guadalupe, be our hope. May she assist us in transforming our present-day civilization of death to one that is life giving. Let us not forget, as we faithfully pray the Rosary during this month, that we are affirmed, in knowing, that Our Lady places her trust in us!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Our Lady of Hope, pray for us.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us.

In the Peace of Christ,

*Bishop Cotta*