

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we prepare to welcome the season of autumn, we are blessed to have within the month of September several Marian feasts: September 8, the Birth of Mary; September 12, the Holy Name of Mary; and September 15, Our Lady of Sorrows. Also, in the middle of the month, on September 14, we have the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The month reminds us of Our Lady's role within the mystery of salvation. This role led her, and begs us to join her, at the foot of the Cross.

During this month, let us remember Our Lady's birth and uphold her holy name. Let us know we have a "blessed" Mother who accompanies us in all of our sorrows. She stands steadfast at the foot of the Cross of her Son as she stands at the foot of our personal crosses. With her at our side, let us uphold the triumphant Cross of Jesus. Let us know that our sins, the sins of the Church and of the whole world are nailed to the wood of the Cross. Let the light of the Cross of Jesus Christ be exalted! May it illuminate this present world which finds itself immersed in darkness and confusion. Even the Church has been impacted by this darkness!

The Body of Christ, the Church, is presently experiencing "a crucifixion," inflicted by this insidious darkness. To address it, to confront a darkness that is spiritually rooted, we must combat it with the spiritual. It is not enough, only, to confront it with more programs and policies of prevention. It must be integrated with the grace of vigilance which begs us to stay close to the victorious light that is Christ, Himself.

At this time, more than ever, our eyes must be "fixed" on the Crucified and Risen Jesus. He will get us through this. He will be the One to heal those who have been hurt and victimized. We pray these brothers and sisters of ours will be receptive to Christ's grace of deliverance and healing. It is his grace that will assist them to move forward with a renewed sense of wholeness. As we turn to his mercy, and pray for them, let us turn to Christ and say: "Jesus, only say the word and their souls, their whole being, will be healed!"

On September 15, as we acknowledge Our Lady of Sorrows, let us remember it is she who reminds all of us of the importance and value of repentance and ongoing conversion, prayer and fasting. She tells us all is to be done in reparation for our own sins, the sins of the Church and the sins of the whole world. In the midst of it all, let us never forget that "the Light" will always overcome the darkness-always!

May the Cross of Jesus be exalted now and forever! May the wounded Body of the Church rise above all that attempts to destroy it.

"We adore O Christ and we praise you. Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world."

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us. Be our refuge!

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Myron J. Cotta

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