

May 1, 2018

My dear People of God,

As we welcome the month of May, we are reminded of the annual celebration of Mother's Day. It is a time to give thanks to God for our moms, and for the gift of "motherhood." It is a time to reflect on all that motherhood entails: selflessness, sacrifice, commitment and the nourishing love that only a mother can give.

It is amazing to see, in the plan of God the Father, that "motherhood" would be intimately connected to the gift of salvation. It was through the cooperation of the faith and humility of a young girl, Mary of Nazareth, that the Son of God would become incarnate, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the sanctuary of her womb.

Her "call" was to be mother, to be the Eve of the "new creation." It is she, who was to bring into this world, for you and me, the "New Adam," Jesus. This Mother, blessed among all women, would nourish and care for his basic needs with all the love of her Immaculate Heart.

We also know, as Queen and Mother of the Apostles, Mary was present on the day of the birth of the Church on Pentecost. This event of the descent and empowerment of the Holy Spirit gave the Church the ability to fulfill its purpose and mission to proclaim the Gospel of the Risen Christ to the world.

As the Church moved forth from the Cenacle out into the world, Our Lady, as Mother of the Church, protected and encouraged the Apostles through her maternal presence and prayerful intercession. Her presence and intercession continues to be present to us as we are sent as the missionary disciples of the 21st century.

Because of the importance of the presence and role of Mary in the life of the Church, we are grateful to Pope Francis for acknowledging the Monday after the Solemnity of Pentecost as a new Memorial in honor of the Blessed Virgin: "Mary, Mother of the Church. May Pope Francis' proclamation of this new Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, grace us as the Body of Christ, the Church, with her motherly prayers of comfort and protection.

As we acknowledge this special day, I ask the prayers of Our Lady as I begin my episcopal duties as your bishop. On Monday, May 21, I invite you: the clergy, religious and laity of the Diocese of Stockton, to offer a prayer of consecration of our Diocese of Stockton to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady, "Mary, Mother of the Church".

May we, throughout this month of May, and along with this year's annual celebration of Mother's Day, be mindful of the maternal presence of Our Lady. May she intercede for all women, especially, those called to the sacred role of motherhood.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

Prayer of Consecration of the Diocese of Stockton to Mary, Mother of the Church