



LENTEN REFLECTION #2

TO: THE DIOCESE OF STOCKTON

FROM: BISHOP MYRON J. COTTA

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Conversion - “to turn”

Lent is about turning our lives in the right direction. Is the direction of our lives leading us and our loved ones toward eternal life? Are we heading in the right direction? Are we choosing to turn toward that which is true, ordered, and life-giving? Are we choosing that which is God-intended and guided by the Holy Spirit?

The grace of the season of Lent assists us with God’s grace and positions us to confront sin and spiritual darkness face to face. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines sin as: “An offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth, and right conscience. It is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God.” So, given this definition, let us ask ourselves: “In what direction are we headed?” Is the direction of our lives:

- **Leading us closer to God and toward everlasting life - Heaven?**
- **Autonomously driven and replacing God with self?**
- **Respecting the sanctity of life?**
- **Determining how we define and identify who we are?**
- **Supporting God’s definition of marriage?**
- **Determining who is to be: tolerated, respected and treated with dignity?**
- **Encouraging us to proclaim *our* word over *God’s* word?**
- **Concerned in giving others *our* piece of mind instead of taking on the peace of the mind of Christ?**
- **Determining what we say is sexually moral, ethical and just versus that of the teachings of Jesus and his Church?**
- **Creating laws that substitute for *the* Law?**

This Lent, let us take into account the following: If we choose to follow a direction that is grounded in autonomy, it will ultimately lead to an unfulfilled life. As Christians, we cannot be the center of our universe. That place and position belongs to God alone! The thoughts, words and actions that individuals enthrone upon the pedestal of autonomy must de-throne and the pedestal given back to its rightful Owner. In all of this, Lent reminds us: God is God and we are not! He is the one who is all merciful. Only he can save us from our sins.



When we turn, listen and respond to the call of conversion, then, and only then, will we find true fulfillment and joy. We must truly listen to Jesus. This is well expressed in the following words of Bishop Robert Barron: “Jesus urges his listeners to change their way of knowing, their way of perceiving and grasping reality, their mode of seeing - all has to be opened up, turned around, revitalized.” It all comes down to our commitment to the prophetic words of Ezekiel: “...make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.” (Ezekiel 18:31)

Desiring holiness, accepting God’s will and embracing love of God and neighbor encompasses the purpose and goal of the season of Lent. As we continue our Lenten journey, let us turn in the right direction; a direction affirmed in the following prayer:

**Father,
without you we can do nothing.
By your Spirit help us to *know* what is *right*
and to be eager in *doing your will*. Amen.**

“Harden not your heart!”

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Myron J. Cotta