



THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS: ALL-ENCOMPASSING LOVE

TO: THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF STOCKTON

FROM: BISHOP MYRON J. COTTA

DATE: 07/06/2021

RE: JULY REFECTION

During the month of July, which is dedicated to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, we have a graced opportunity to reflect on this holy and precious gift. The unconditional love and mercy which flowed from the wounded and glorified heart of the Savior has redeemed us and has restored our relationship with God.

All members of the human family are invited to encounter Christ's unconditional love which has the capacity to move the sinner to repentance and conversion. This redeeming love of the Precious Blood of Jesus places within the depths of our hearts, a desire for holiness and the pursuit of the truth. It is Divine Truth, Jesus, who will guide and help us to turn away from sin and its destructive power.

Brothers and sisters, the reality is: we are all sinners; we are all loved by God; and we all share in the dignity of being called children of God. If we are to acknowledge this, then it is important that we reflect God's love as we respect the dignity of all people from *all walks of life*, no matter what race, ethnic group, color, creed, sexual identity, etc.. We, as Catholics, uphold that all people are created in God's image and likeness. All should be treated with dignity. But we must be reminded that treating people with dignity doesn't always mean we are to accept and be supportive of certain types of conduct that may be contrary to God's divine law.

Dark and sinful conduct which attack and undermine justice, peace, morals and ethics, such as: the taking of innocent human life; hatred and violence; discrimination and racism; abuse of power and wealth; abuse of young people and vulnerable adults; sexual immorality, etc.; all are contrary to the Truth and are never acceptable.

Separation from the Law and Truth brings disorder and confusion. It fosters what has been termed as a *diabolical disorientation*. In our day and age, we find ourselves confronted with the confusing and disorientating proclamation of the world's gospel of *relativism* and *autonomy* of which exists no absolutes and there is the common acceptance that anything goes! Within this type of environment, an individual's world becomes a *self-centered one*.

Within this self-centered world, there is an attempt to ignore and redefine Divine and Natural Law, especially, in regard to the areas of sexual morality, marriage and family. This attempt to redefine the basic building blocks of society is in direct conflict to God's will and his love for us. This disregard of God and his Commandments and laws challenge his sovereignty. Jesus addresses this as he states: "Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven." Also, in the words of St. Cyprian we are reminded -

"But in our prayer we ask that God's will be done in us, because the devil throws up obstacles to prevent our mind and our conduct from obeying God in all things. So, if his will is to be done in us, we have need of his will, that is, his help and protection. All Christ did, all he taught, was the will of God."



So, if we profess that Jesus is the Lord of our lives, then we should, with his help, seek to do his will in **all** things. Jesus tells us: *“Either you are with me or you are against me.”* The Gospel challenges us to answer this question with sincerity and clarity.

We have heard and know that Jesus commands us to love God above all things, and to love our neighbor as ourselves; but does this really mean that we are to recognize the God-given gift of human dignity in everyone? - the unborn, the poor, the immigrant, the incarcerated? Does this include people who are our enemies and persecutors? Are we to respect the human dignity of members of the LGBTQ community, political adversaries, or people who instigate hate, violence and war? **Yes!** Jesus says we are to love them all! He is the Judge, we are not. That’s not our job. Our responsibility, as disciples of charity, is to entrust them to God’s mercy and pray for their conversion. We are called to lead them to the Truth - Jesus!

Jesus is the crux of the matter- the intersection of the vertical realm coming down to meet the horizontal realm- heaven with earth. It is the intersecting point, the encounter, of Infinite Love with the finite. God meeting us where we are. It is there where we come face to face with - the Cross!

When we experience this crossing of our sinful lives with the presence of divine grace, we are left with a decision: *Are we willing to allow our sinfulness to be nailed to the Cross of Jesus or not?* If we respond to this graced moment, then, we will discover mercy and forgiveness and know that Jesus did not come into this world to condemn us, but to save us! But if we remain obstinate in our sin, then the words of Psalm 36 hauntingly rings true: *“Sin speaks to the sinner in the depth of his heart. There is no fear of God before his eyes.”*

Brothers and sisters, as we return to Mass, and reconnect with our faith communities, and refocus on who we are as the Church, let us remember, that we come to know the power of the Precious Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. As we return to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, it is there that we will experience reconciliation, healing and renewal. The sacramental life of the Church, along with the written Word of God and his Law, will lead us to the Truth and reveal God’s will for us. And his will for us is that we love him above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. It is in this selfless love that we will come to know the - *all-encompassing love of God* encountered in Jesus and his redeeming Blood.

Most Precious Blood of Jesus, have mercy on us.

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Myron J. Cotta