



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I believe Mary is with us as we feel frustration, anger, pain, and uncertainty during these days of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and increasing civil strife as we struggle with the scourge of racism and seemingly ever-increasing polarization. Mary understands and will intercede for us if we ask her.

During the month of September we celebrate two feasts of Mary:

September 8: The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows

In Mary's birth, we as Christians understand a great moment in the history of salvation, reaching the final steps before the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. In the moment it did not seem like anything momentous for humanity, and in it we can remember that God's saving plan is always unfolding, even if we do not see it in outwardly momentous ways.

Throughout Scripture we read several accounts of Mary and her understanding of motherhood and her gift of intercession. She understood fear, pain, suffering, frustration, and she intercedes on behalf of those who experience the same. When her Jesus remained in the Temple at the age of twelve without letting her know, Mary searched and searched for him, feeling the fear of losing him (Luke 2:41-52). When she attended the wedding feast at Cana and the host ran out of wine, she interceded by asking her son to assist at this embarrassing moment (John 2:1-12). As we remember her under the title Our Lady of Sorrows we see her at the foot of the cross, holding the body of her son, feeling the pain of death, loss, and letting go (John 19:25-27). In all these things, despite uncertainty, her trust was always in God.

During this month of September I invite each family, each parishioner of the Diocese of Stockton to spend a moment each day offering a prayer to Mary asking her, begging her, to intercede for us to bring an end to racism and to this pandemic and everything which afflicts us and our neighbors. Mary, our Mother, will hear our prayers. Mary, our Mother, will intercede for us.

Attached are suggested prayers to ask Our Lady's intercession. Please feel free to use these or other prayers or offer a prayer in your own words. May we, as a diocesan family, be together each day in a moment of prayer during this month of September.

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Cotta

Suggested Prayers - See stocktondiocese.org/marian-prayers

Hail Mary
Memorare
Hail Holy Queen
Litany of Loreto
The Rosary

Seven Sorrows Chaplet
Prayer to Our Mother of Sorrows
Prayer of Pope Francis to Mary during the
Coronavirus Pandemic
Prayer to Overcome Racism