

Bishop Cotta's Reflection of the Month

April- A Season of New Life



Wishing all of you a Happy Easter within this beautiful season of Spring. As we embrace this season of "risen life," we also notice that we are surrounded by a "rebirth" of nature. With spring, there is a dramatic transformation: the bleak and stark season of winter blossoms into a "season of new life".

At this time of year, as residents of the Sacramento Valley, we find ourselves surrounded by a variety of agricultural activity of preparing the fields for planting and irrigating for this year's crops, orchards & vineyards. For the farmers, and those who assist them as "laborers of the fields," we thank God for them and all they do as growers and stewards of the fruits of the earth.

As we thank God for all of this, let us call to mind another important factor: the need to continue to pray for the life-giving gift of snow in our mountains and rain in our valley that is so necessary for a successful and bountiful harvest in the fall. In order to be a farmer, one needs to be a person of faith and prayer; for so much of what the farmer does, in relation to the cycles of nature, is out of his control.

As we move through the months of spring, summer and eventually arrive at the season of harvest, we are reminded that there are special blessings in regard to agriculture. These prayers of blessings were acknowledged, in the Church's liturgical calendar, as "rogation days". Rogation days, which are no longer prescribed in the universal Roman Catholic liturgical calendar, were an occasion of prayer and fasting instituted by the Church to appease God's anger at man's transgressions, to ask protection in calamities, and to obtain a good and bountiful harvest. The Rogation Days were April 25 and the three days before the feast of the Ascension. *Rogation* comes from the Latin verb *rogare: to ask*. Today, Rogation days are associated mostly with prayer for blessing on the harvest. Whether our food comes from our garden or the freezer at the supermarket, someone had to grow it; and before that God to plant the mystery of life in the seed, or even the most skillful farmer could not make it yield.*

While our parishioners involved in agriculture immerse themselves into their demanding work, we might inform them that the Church is here to spiritually support them with special annual blessings and prayers asking God's blessing upon their specialized work; the blessing of the fields; the farming equipment, and the seasons of planting and harvesting of crops. I encourage you to read on rogation days and refer to the Book of Blessings for a variety of prayers and blessings related to agriculture.

As we journey through this Easter Season of "new life," let us be mindful, as we travel through this fertile valley of ours, of the marvel of the variety of crops and of those who tend the fields. Let us pause and offer a prayer of blessing and gratitude for them and for God's generosity. As this agricultural year progresses, let us be grateful for the fruits of the earth and always be mindful of our call and duty to be good stewards of God's creation.

Wishing all of you a blessed Easter Season as we continue our Paschal journey toward the great feast of Pentecost. Let us prayerfully await, not only, a bountiful harvest of earthly fruits, but also the spiritual fruits produced and nurtured by the gracious Holy Spirit.

*Source: *Year and Our Children, The* by Mary reed Newland, P.J. Kennedy & Sons, New York, 1956.