

Bishop Cotta's Reflection of the Month:

February- The Importance and Value of Remembering Prayer Intentions

We have a great tradition in the Church to pray for special intentions, personally, and communally. It is an expression of faith and hope that our prayers will be heard and answered by our loving and merciful God. The question and challenge is: "Are we committed to remembering our prayer intentions throughout any given month?" For example: praying for vocations, personally; but even more importantly offering this intention during the Prayers of the Faithful at daily and Sunday Masses. This intention should always be included in our intercessions at Mass.

Also, we have been asked to remember in our intentions to pray for the gift of rain and snow that we desperately need throughout California. Do we keep that on our list? This is an ongoing need and should be a concern for all of us.

Another "given": pray for the respect for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. Praying and asking Our Lady's intercession for peace in our troubled world, especially, in the Middle East; for an end to terrorism, violence and the atrocities committed against our brothers and sisters all over the world; praying for God's mercy upon the victims and those committing these crimes against humanity. Are these on your list? These are the "given prayer intentions;" but we do have some special intentions that come to our attention during the month of February.

We began the month with the commemoration of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. The members of the Religious Life are remembered in a special way on this day. It is an opportunity for us to pray for them and all that they have contributed to mission of the Church over many years of service. We are to offer prayers of gratitude for all that is being accomplished by our men and women in "consecrated life" in our diocese and throughout the world. We are called to remember them in our daily prayer intentions, especially, as this year is designated as the Year of Consecrated Life.

In February, in connection with St. Valentine's Day, we are reminded of the importance of the Sacrament of "true" love and life-long commitment: Matrimony. World Marriage Day, celebrated during this month, offers the opportunity to pray for those who have entered the covenant of matrimony. Upholding the true definition of marriage, and the gift of family life, is an important prayer intention for the good of the Church and all of society. By offering prayers for the graces necessary for a Christ-centered married life is a way of supporting those who have chosen the vocation of married life. Our intentions can include those preparing for marriage and those who are encountering difficulties in their relationships or for our brothers and sisters who have had the difficult experience of the sad reality of divorce.

One other special intention within this month is brought to our attention by way of "The World Day of the Sick." Praying for the sick is encouraged and should be added to our list of special prayers during February. This special day of prayer was designated by Pope St. John Paul II in order to call to mind our sick and suffering brothers and sisters throughout the world. As we recognize this day, we are asked to turn to the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes, especially on her Feast Day of February 11, for those in need of healing and inner strength.

As we journey throughout this month of February, let us be mindful that in the center of the month is Ash Wednesday. As we prepare for the penitential season of Lent, let us remember that one of the three Lenten spiritual disciplines is: PRAYER. May our prayer intentions be ongoing and fervent as we place all of them in the merciful hands of our God during this second month of 2015.