

18th World Day of the Sick

February 11, 2010

Prayer Service

Call to Prayer

Since 1992, Pope John Paul II and now Pope Benedict XVI have called the world wide Church to raise its awareness of the faith community's role in the work of health care. In his message for this day, Pope Benedict hopes to raise "the ecclesial community's awareness to the importance of pastoral service in the vast world of health care." For Catholic health care, pastoral service shapes the nature of the clinical service we offer with attention to the whole person, body, mind and spirit.

This day also coincides with the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. For many around the world, Lourdes is a place of hope, a symbol of the promise of healing offered by Jesus. And so the hope that brings so many pilgrims to Lourdes each day brings us together today. We pray in solidarity with those who are sick and those who serve the sick around the world. We renew our commitment to heal as Jesus healed.

[An opening hymn may be sung]

Reflection on Scripture

Let us listen to a reading from the Gospel of Luke (10:25-37)

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test Jesus and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him. "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, "Take care of

him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim? He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

[Moment for Silent Reflection] After a moment of silence, a reader says:

Let us listen to a brief reflection on this Gospel passage by Pope Benedict XVI, taken from his message for this day:

“At the end of the parable, Jesus said: “Go and do likewise.” With these words he is also addressing us. Jesus exhorts us to bend over the physical and mental wounds of so many of our brothers and sisters whom we meet on the highways of the world. He helps us to understand that with God’s grace, accepted and lived out in our daily life, the experience of sickness and suffering can become a school of hope. In truth, as I said in the Encyclical *Spe salvi*, ‘it is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love’. (n. 37)”

- *from the Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the Eighteenth World Day of the Sick*

Anointing of the Sick and/or Blessing of Caregivers

[At this point, if a priest is available, the community may celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Alternatively, a blessing for the sick that are present may be offered in the following way:

The congregation is invited to extend their hands in blessing over the sick while a prayer leader leads the following blessing:

Leader: May the God of all consolation bless you in every way and grant you peace.

All: Lord, bless your people.

Leader: May God free you from all anxiety and strengthen your hearts in love.

All: Lord, bless your people.

Leader: May God enrich you with gifts of faith, hope and love, keeping you close to him even in the midst of illness.

All: Lord, bless your people.

Caregivers of the sick may be called forward to receive a blessing or anointing of hands using olive oil. The blessing or anointing may be accompanied with the words “May God bless you and keep you strong in service to those most in need.”]

Prayers of Petition

Let us now continue our prayer for the sick who are with us, and for the needs of people around the world.

Our response to each prayer is: Lord, strengthen your people.

Together with people around the world who suffer from famine, poor housing and lack of clean water, we pray that their governments, aided by developed nations, will work to address their basic human needs, we pray...

All: Lord, strengthen your people.

For doctors, nurses and other professional caregivers everywhere, that they will remain committed to their role as healers and supported in their chosen vocation, we pray...

All: Lord, strengthen your people.

For the President and Congress as they work for health care reform, that their work may be guided by true concern for the least among us and rooted in true justice for all, we pray...

All: Lord, strengthen your people.

For pastoral care chaplains who are symbols of God’s healing touch among us, that they continue to be a gentle presence to patients, families and staff, we pray...

For all communities of faith in our area, that they see us as an extension of their ministry, a holy place of healing, and a support for their service to others, we pray...

All: Lord, strengthen your people.

On this Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes we pray that Mary, help of the sick, will remain for us a model of compassion and generous response to those in need, we pray...

All: Lord, strengthen your people.

Closing Prayer

Gentle and loving God, we thank you for this gathering today.

We stand in solidarity with people around the world, all part of your creation.

We stand with healers and those in need of healing.

Bless our work. Confirm in us our commitment to be help for the sick and hope for all who suffer in any way.

We ask this of you, our creator, our healer, our hope, now and forever, Amen.

[A closing hymn may be sung]