

WORLD DAY OF THE SICK 2006

*“I hear you
and am
reaching out...”*



A Word from the Primate of Canada

Who, among us has not been, on a daily basis, confronted with illness and its many unanswered questions – questions which arise out of the illness of a close relative, a friend, as well as an unsuspected personal illness? Suffering is always a real upheaval as it dramatically changes the life of a person as well as the life of those who are close to that person.

Supporting the sick – “*listening and being attentive to the needs of that person*” (which is this year’s theme) – is a manifestation of Christ’s presence whose word can offer a meaning to a situation that seems meaningless. It is living the Gospel values of compassion and loving presence on a daily basis with those who are distressed and feel abandoned.

On the occasion of the *World Day of the Sick*, whether it is in a parish, a hospital, a homes for the elderly, the palliative care centres or other centres, I wish that each christian community environment entrust to God the sick who are under their care by holding various celebrations or prayer groups. I encourage them to emphasize the magnificent work accomplished by the caregivers, reminding them of their mission to be signs of Christ who is personally knocking at the door of each and everyone to say: “*I am with you*”.

It would also be meaningful to encourage sick people in your community to participate actively in the celebration as well as to promote those who bring support to the sick by introducing them to the community. Are they not ambassadors of Christ and of his compassion to those who suffer? I will never encourage you enough to keep on supporting the sick and to use the tools presented in the insert in order to celebrate the Lord with them.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet - Primate of Canada

I hear you ...

You are unique and irreplaceable

My love for you is everlasting

I am there for you ...

... *when you are lonely*

... *when you believe that*

I am far away or absent

... *when you call me*

... *when you forget me*

... *when you yearn for my presence*

I will never forget you.

Upon the palms of my hands

I have written your name...



WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

February 11, 2006

We suggest that the *World Day of the Sick* be celebrated this year on the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary time. Since the usual day falls on a Saturday, we suggest that the theme for the World Day of the Sick be used for the Sunday celebrations. The readings for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time are conducive to reflection on suffering. We would also suggest that you encourage sick people in your community to participate actively by accepting a responsibility during the celebration.

Opening and greeting

We are gathered today, with our brothers and sisters who are afflicted with illness, to meet Christ who is holding out his hand to us and reaching out to us in his love.

May the Lord, in his everlasting love, be always with you.

Penitential rite

At the beginning of this celebration, let us open our hearts to Christ's love by coming to him just as we are :

- You were the living example of the Father's love for us, Lord have mercy.
- You are full of compassion for the people in need, Christ, have mercy.
- You are close to the sick and commission us to be there for them, Lord have mercy.

God of everlasting love, reach out to us so that we can revel in the freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Opening prayer

God of love and mercy, through your Son, you have given us a Saviour who watches over us constantly and touches our troubled hearts. May your Spirit remind us of his kind gestures; may He awaken our hope in times of suffering and illness and may he reveal to our community the power of salvation through Christ, your Son.

Readings from the word of god

Leviticus 13: 1-2, 45-46

For the Levites, the leprous disease and all skin infections were a real threat for the people who came close to the sick. These illnesses were a real social problem. Today, despite the progress made in medicine, certain illnesses isolate those who are afflicted and force the people in their surroundings to stay away. But the Lord remains very close.

Psalms 101

A person who is ill, distraught, addresses his/her prayer to God in complete confidence. God hears him/her and makes himself close to that person. Jesus will hear the cry of the leper and be close to him.

1 Corinthians 10: 23 - 11:1

Paul invites his brothers to turn to God, to do everything for his glory. He has modelled his own life on Christ.

Mark 1: 40-45

Jesus hears the request of a leper and heals him.

HOMILY SUGGESTIONS

1 - More than an illness

Illness often leads to a very painful physical state. It also has psychological and spiritual consequences that go beyond the first image that can be perceived from this illness. While it is very distressing for the person who is ill, it also has an impact on the people close to that person and may sometimes push them away. The leper in today's Gospel begs the Lord to make him clean because he is irremediably separated from his family. Still today, many people who have been diagnosed with a serious infection must leave and remain in a controlled isolated environment. An illness is a deep pain that brings forth a variety of battles that need to be fought by calling it into question and by searching for a meaning. It is sometimes an opportunity to discover unsuspected strengths, to renew with forgotten convictions.

2 - More than a recovery

For the people of the First Covenant, good health was considered an absolute gift from God. It is not surprising to see the officials in charge of upholding the law and the crowds consider the illness as the curse of God. Leprosy threatened the normal life conditions of the people and only God could deliver them from it. The priest was the person responsible to diagnose the illness and to confirm complete

recovery in order for the person to return to the community. Those who were contagious were shunned by everyone. Like many of his contemporaries, Jesus hears the leper's cry for help. He is moved by it. "Moved with pity" he stretches out his hand, touches him and heals him. More than fear of contamination and confrontation with this evil reality (symbol), Jesus leans toward him, shows him compassion and by making him clean, reveals the power of the Son of God. He shows him the kindness and mercy of God his Father who, far from being the source of evil that paralyzes him, is close to him and surrounds him with love. He discloses his mysterious presence by being attentive to his prayer and his longing for happiness.

3 - A loving and compassionate presence

In deep communion and love with his Father, Jesus goes beyond his fears and the constraints of the law. He takes care of the poor man with leprosy because he cares for the well-being of his neighbour. That is how God is present to the sick; he wants to support them on their roads of uncertainty and frailty. True to himself, he wants to touch them with his Word and bring them his peace, forgiveness and hope. By calling us to be his witnesses, he wants our cooperation to bring his presence and his affection to the sick. As followers of Jesus, are we not called to be more sensitive to the needs of those in poor health, to find new ways to welcome them and be compassionate, to share with them our common hope in The One who, beyond all suffering and death, brought life in abundance? Like the leper in the Gospel who allowed himself to be touched and healed by the Lord, let us not be afraid to allow him into our own wounds and spread the good news that he is constantly present and can heal our inner self.

Prayer of the faithful

Like he did for the leper in today's Gospel, the Lord touches us with his Word. Confident in his power, let us pray:

- For the sick: may they be touched by the Lord and may they be filled with hope and serenity, we pray to the Lord.

God of love, hear our prayer.

- For all the people who feel excluded: may they always know that they are loved and acknowledged by the Father, we pray to the Lord.
- For all the people we are unable to love and for those whom we are afraid to meet in their suffering: may they never feel that they are alone, we pray to the Lord.
- For all Christians, united by the same baptism: may they all work constantly toward a deeper communion, we pray to the Lord.

- For all of us gathered here today; may we be able to see beyond the suffering and reach out to others like Jesus did, we pray to the Lord.

Gathered in your name, Lord, we know that you are among us. Knowing you better help us to believe in your love even more.

It is with this same faith that we ask you to hear our prayers, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Prayer over the gifts

God almighty, we come to you as present the bread and wine. They are the symbols of the work of human hands and the sign of all that you have given us. Accept them so that we can receive them again as the fruit of the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before the Lord's Prayer

Jesus comes close to us and reaches out his hand so that we can come together and pray as one.

Communion

This is our God who is close to our pain and our anguish. This is the Lamb of God

Addition to the celebration

Distribution of the reflection card on the World Day of the sick to all the participants.

(Encourage them to take some for the sick people they know or to offer it to a sick person.) A person who is ill could proclaim the text for the World Day of the Sick.

Prayer after communion

Glory to you God Creator!

In this Eucharist, your Son came close to us and touched us with his love. May his presence heal us and give us strength. We will then be witnesses of your compassionate love on a daily basis. God of mercy, we pray to you for ever and ever.

Dismissal

May the Word of God help us see beyond physical appearances. AMEN



May this Eucharist bring us the real healing in Jesus Christ. AMEN

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN

Go in peace, joy and health in Christ.

Song suggestions

Please choose appropriate music from the CBWII or any other source you have available to you.

The Red Fish ...

Mark is sitting at his desk on the second row. All of a sudden, he discovers a puddle of water between his feet and... the bottom of his pants is wet. He does not understand what happened to him. The poor boy is so embarrassed that he wants to die. This has never happened to him before; he does not even understand how it happened. When the other boys see that, they will ridicule him for ever. And the girls, they will never talk to him again.

He prays insistently: *"Please God, I really need your help. I am in a bad situation here. Please help me."*

While he prays, he lifts his eyes and sees Suzie, a classmate, who is holding a fish bowl with a red fish in it. All of a sudden, her hands slip from the bowl, drops it and the water falls directly in Mark's pants. He does as if he is very upset but he continued his prayer:

"Thank you Jesus, thank you ! Now, instead of being ridiculed by his peers, he is the object of sympathy. The teacher runs to get him a clean change of clothes while his pants dry. His classmates wipe the floor.

During this time, everyone feel nothing but contempt toward Suzie. She wants to help but she is ordered to stay away:

"You are too clumsy. Look at the mess you made!" And this goes on for the rest of the day; The boy gets everyone's sympathy while Suzie is excluded.

After class, Suzie and Mark are both waiting for the bus. Suzie is alone. Mark goes to see her and whispers:

"You did this on purpose, did you? It's Suzie's turn to whisper: "The same thing happened to me one day".

(Connections, October 1996)

Meditation and questions

I become aware of God's attentive love ...

Are God's features visible in me when I am with someone?

Is there a specific reading in the Bible that talks to me in a particular way?

Prayer

*Lord, I never thought you loved me so much
You make me want to dream
again!*

*I never thought your peace would be so deep
You help me conquer my fears !*

*I never thought you were so close
You breathe within me !*

*I never thought your Resurrection would
give me strength for the future.*
You are my hope !

The theme for the Eucharistic celebration that will be televised on *"Le Jour du Seigneur"* on Sunday, February 12, 2006 will be the *World Day of the Sick*. It will be broadcasted from the chapel of the Sacred Heart Residence of the Augustine of the Mercy of Jesus at 1, Sacré-Coeur avenue in Quebec City. This celebration will gather the sick as well as care givers: health care staff, administrators, pastoral care givers and people involved in the health care system in the Quebec region.

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