



Praying for those who are sick or suffering

Christian prayer has always been closely associated with human suffering – and rightly so! There seems always to be a spontaneous spiritual affinity between the two. The sick person’s desire for healing is both deeply human and good, especially when it takes the form of a trusting prayer addressed to God. The Book of Sirach is explicit: “My son, when you are ill, delay not, but pray to God, who will heal you” (Sirach 38.9). During his own ministry, large numbers approached Jesus – either directly or through friends and relatives – seeking the restoration of their health. Jesus was always deeply “moved” by their petition, often commenting on their faith, as when he says: “Your faith has made you whole” (Mark 10.52). On other occasions, by contrast, disbelief and a lack of faith prevented healing from taking place (cf. Mark 6.5-6).

This relationship between prayer and healing remains a mystery. The lack of physical or emotional healing is not a sign that one’s prayer is in vain or that one’s faith is insufficient. It is simply a way of putting one’s ultimate hope in the Lord. This is why the Christian community has never ceased to ask the Lord for the health of the sick. In her ministry, liturgy and the Anointing of the Sick especially, the prayer of the Church is both trusting and emphatic: “Heal them, O Lord, in body, in soul, and in spirit, and deliver them from every affliction.”

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