
WORLD DAY OF THE SICK



On the occasion of the World Day of the Sick which will be celebrated February 11, I want to draw your attention in a very special way to our sick brothers and my sisters. The Lord who came to bring good news to all wants to remind them of his goodness and love. For them I want to repeat to them words I spoke at the celebration of the Anointing of the Sick at Sainte-Anne-of-Madawaska, at the time of our Eucharistic Congress.

BELOVED OF GOD

My brothers and my sisters who are sick, you are beloved of God; happy are you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. You mean a lot to the Lord; you have much value in his eyes. You are asked to live a true ministry, the ministry of the suffering. Jesus' example before the suffering must inspire us to develop the same feelings, the same feeling, doing in all the will of the Lord. Consider the exceptional stations of cross which a local artist, Yves Daniel Thibodeau, painted on walls of this Shrine of Sainte-Anne-of-Madawaska, and you will understand the difficult path that the Lord followed before entering into his glory. « Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into his glory? » (Luke 24:26) Consider all those people who administered to him on this painful journey: his Mother Mary, his disciple John, the Holy Women, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, Do we not come across Simons and Veronicas, and the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Risen One, on our journey today? Look at Maurice Mauro's fresco: if it reminds us that our shrine of Sainte-Anne-of-Madawaska is an exact replica of the old shrine church at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré which burned to the ground in 1922, it shows us all those pilgrims who confidently call on Saint Anne: they come to pray to Jesus' grandmother.

A RENEWED FAITH

The example of saints can renew our hope and courage; our strength and our faith. As Vatican Council II stated, priests cannot bring bodily health or reduce the physical pain of the sick, which doctors and nurses and all who are dedicated to the sick strive to bring, but the Church has a message of hope to offer, the very words of Jesus: « *Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you* » (Mt. 11:28).

MYSTERIOUS SUFFERING

We have something deep and precious to give to patients, the only truth capable of responding to the mystery of suffering and of bringing them true relief: faith and union with the man of Sorrows, Christ the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins and for our salvation. Christ did not do away with suffering; he did not even deign to fully reveal its mystery to us. He took it on himself so that we might understand its great cost. All you who feel the heavy burden of the cross, you who weep and suffer, take courage; you are the beloved above all in God's kingdom, the kingdom of the hope, happiness and life; you are the brothers and sisters of the suffering Christ; and with him, you save the world, if you so wish!

AN UNMISTAKABLE PICTURE OF CHRIST

This is the Christian view of suffering, the only one which gives peace. Know that you are not alone, separated, abandoned, or useless: you are Christ's chosen ones, a living and unmistakable picture of him. This is the message of hope which Jesus repeats to you today through the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

« IF HOPE... »

« If hope has made you walk further than your fear, your eyes will look up. Then you will be able to hold on until the rising of the sun of God. If suffering has made you cry tears of blood, your eyes will be washed, and you will be able to pray with your crucified brother. If sadness has made you doubt, in the night of your rejection, you will know how to bear your cross, and then you will be able to die in the wake of God-made-man » May this religious song revive our hope. In the midst of our suffering, in the midst of life, may we witness to the continuous presence of Jesus who lived our human life, who suffered and died and who lives forever. May each celebration of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick renew in each and everyone of you faith in Christ, hope in a better life, and love that will never pass.

PRAYER

I invite you to often pray the following words for our sick, a most comforting prayer: *« Lord Jesus, you cured the sick, you gave sight to the blind, you made the lame to walk, you healed the paralysed paralytics and gave hope to the people; have mercy on the sick. Lord Jesus, by your cross and your resurrection, life has overcome the power of evil; you are our light and our only hope. Lord Jesus, you told the Apostles to lay their hands on the sick, hear the prayer of your Church for our sick brothers and sisters.*

In your love, Lord, you do not abandon the sick. Look down upon our brothers and our sisters who will receive in the faith the holy anointing. May they be comforted in their suffering and strengthened in their weakness. Through Jesus the Christ Our Lord.

Lord Jesus, saviour of the world, in your Passion you took our suffering on your self. We pray for our sick brothers and sisters. Since you purchased them at such a great price and through holy anointing you want to renew them by your grace, grant them the relief in their sufferings, comfort in their trials, and strengthen in them their hope of salvation.»

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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