



The Holy See

15th WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

**HOLY MASS FOR THE SICK
ON THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES**

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE SICK AT THE CONCLUSION OF MASS**

Vatican Basilica
Sunday, 11 February 2007

Dear Brothers and Sister,

It is with great joy that I meet you here in the Vatican Basilica on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the annual World Day of the Sick, at the end of the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Cardinal Camillo Ruini.

To him, first of all, I address my greeting, which I extend to all of you present here: to the Archpriest of the Basilica, Archbishop Angelo Comastri, to the other Bishops, the priests and Religious. I greet the heads and members of the UNITALSI, who dedicate themselves to the transportation and care of the sick on pilgrimage and in other meaningful events.

I greet the heads and pilgrims of the *Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi* and those who will take part in this 15th Theological-Pastoral National Convention, both from Italy and abroad. I further greet the delegation of representatives of *Cammini d'Europa* [European Ways].

But my most cordial greeting is directed to you, dear sick people, to your families and the volunteers who care for you and accompany you with love today. Together with all of you I want to unite myself with those who today take part in the various events of the World Day of the Sick held in Seoul, South Korea. There, Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán, President of the Pontifical Council

for Health Pastoral Care, presides at the celebrations in my name.

Today is the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, who a little less than 150 years ago appeared to a simple youth, St Bernadette Soubirous, showing herself as the Immaculate Conception.

Also in that apparition the Blessed Mother has shown herself as a tender mother to her children, recalling that the little, the poor are the beloved of God and to them the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven is revealed.

Dear friends, Mary, who with her faith accompanied her Son beneath the Cross, she who by a mysterious plan was associated to the sufferings of Christ her Son, never tires to exhort us to live and share with serene trust the experience of sorrow and sickness, offering it with faith to the Father, thus completing in our flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1: 24).

In this regard, I recall the words with which my venerable Predecessor Paul VI concluded the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*: "Contemplated in the episodes of the Gospels and in the reality which she already possesses in the City of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary offers a calm vision and a reassuring word to modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death" (n. 57).

They are words that shine light on our way, even when the sense of hope and the certainty of healing seem to vanish; they are words that I would like to be of special comfort to those who are struck by grave illnesses and pain.

And it is precisely to these our particularly tried brothers that today's World Day of the Sick is dedicated with special attention. We would like them to feel the material and spiritual closeness of the entire Christian community.

It is important not to leave them abandoned and in solitude while they try to face a very delicate moment in their life. Praiseworthy are those who with patience and love place their professional skills and human warmth at their service.

I think of doctors, nurses, health-care workers, volunteers, Religious and priests who without sparing themselves stoop down to them like the Good Samaritan, not considering their social condition, skin colour or religious affiliation, but only their needs. In the face of every human being, and still more if tried and disfigured by sickness, shines the Face of Christ, who said: "As you did it

to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40).

Dear brothers and sisters, in a short while, this evening, a meaningful candlelight procession will reawaken the atmosphere that is created among pilgrims and those devoted to Lourdes. Our thought goes to the grotto of Massabielle, where human sorrows and hopes, fears and trust, meet.

How many pilgrims, comforted by the gaze of their Mother, find at Lourdes the strength to accomplish more easily the will of God even when it costs renunciation and pain, aware that, as the Apostle Paul affirms, all works to the good of those who love the Lord (cf. Rom 8: 28).

May the candle that you hold alight in your hands be for you, dear brothers and sisters, the sign of a sincere desire to walk with Jesus, refulgence of peace, who shines in the darkness and urges us in our turn to be light and support for those near to us.

May no one, especially those who find themselves in the difficult situation of suffering, feel alone and abandoned.

I entrust you all this evening to the Virgin Mary. She, after having known unspeakable suffering, was assumed into Heaven, where she awaits us and where we too hope to be able to share one day the glory of her Divine Son, the joy without end.

With these sentiments I impart my Blessing to all of you present here and to those dear to you.

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