



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HANDICAPPED AND SICK CHILDREN**

Izaak Walton Killam Hospital (Halifax)

Friday, 14 September 1984

Dear Friends, and beloved Children at Izaak Walton Killam Hospital,

1. As we begin this new day, a day when the Church throughout the world celebrates the Triumph of the Holy Cross, I am very pleased to pay you a visit at this hospital. I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ. I greet the doctors, nurses and staff, the handicapped and the sick, the children and their families. I am grateful to God for the opportunity of being with you. I come as a Pastor and friend, wishing to assure you of the great affection which the Church has for you. You have a special place in my heart. And my prayers of the whole Church are with you, particularly when you feel most helpless and weak.

2. I would like to recall, at this time, the special love which Jesus has for the handicapped and the sick, for children and all who suffer. For example, we find the following passage in the Gospel according to Saint Mark: "People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'. Then he put his arms around them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing" (*Marc. 10, 13-16*).

What a striking illustration of the tender love of Jesus for children! And at the same time, a model of loving service which we, the Church, seek to imitate in our own day. We, too, wish to assure all children, and all those who are sick or handicapped, of our deep concern and support. We wish to

bless them and lift them up to the Lord in prayer.

3. And now, I would address a few words to the doctors, nurses, parents and all who care for the sick and handicapped. I wish to thank you first of all, and commend you for your dedicated labours, for the countless hours of care and concern which you direct to these, God's little ones in need.

Jesus, during his life on earth, not only had a special love for children and for those who are ill or disabled. He even identified himself with them when he said: "I was sick and you visited me . . . as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Matth.* 25, 36. 40). These words recorded by Saint Matthew show the dignity and value of your work on behalf of these little ones. Your loving devotion, your generous service, your medical and professional expertise - all these are acts of love for the child or the patient, and are acts of love for Christ who is mysteriously present in them. And your charity and devoted care bear witness to the dignity and worth of every human being, even the tiniest and most helpless baby. May God bless you and sustain you with his grace.

With these few words, then, I assure all of you of the love and concern Of the Church and of my own pastoral affection in Christ. And I ask God to bless you with his gifts of peace and joy. May the Lord of life be with you all.

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