

Him Who Strengthens

A prayer for those who are sick and those who care for the sick

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CALL TO PRAYER

LEADER: We gather as a community of women and men who care for the sick, reminded that each one of us bears some sickness or suffering in our own lives. As participants in Christ's healing ministry of Catholic health care, we believe that all that we do for the sick and suffering we do to Christ. Let's listen to the words of our late Holy Father, John Paul II, speaking of the saving power of suffering.

READING

From Pope John Paul II's Salvifici Doloris, Feb. 11, 1984

Suffering, in fact, is always a trial — at times a very hard one — to which humanity is subjected. The gospel *paradox of weakness and strength* often speaks to us from the pages of the Letters of Saint Paul... Paul writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." In the Second Letter to Timothy we read: "And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed." And in the Letter to the Philippians he will even say: "*I can do all things in him who strengthens me.*"

Those who share in Christ's sufferings have before their eyes the Paschal Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, in which Christ

descends... to the ultimate limits of human weakness and impotence: indeed, he dies nailed to the Cross. But if at the same time in this weakness there is accomplished his *lifting up*, confirmed by the power of the Resurrection, then this means that the weaknesses of all human sufferings are capable of being infused with the same power of God manifested in Christ's Cross. In such a concept, to *suffer* means to become particularly *susceptible*, particularly *open to the working of the salvific powers of God*, offered to humanity in Christ. In him God has confirmed his desire to act especially through suffering, which is man's weakness and emptying of self, and he wishes to make his power known precisely in this weakness and emptying of self. This also explains the exhortation in the First Letter of Peter: "Yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God."

RESPONSE

Listen reflectively to the traditional spiritual, "There is a Balm in Gilead."

ALL: Lord God, we thank and praise you for the gift of our call to care for the sick. We rejoice at

your power to comfort and to heal. Strengthen us for our labors so that, with you, we can bring balm to those who suffer and "make the wounded whole." We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother, who suffered for each one of us. Amen.



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