

Opening Prayer

Let us pause to reflect on those who are suffering from sickness and various ailments throughout the world, especially those who are lonely and struggle to find meaning in their suffering.

Let us also reflect on those who have committed their lives to caring for the sick, especially those extending healing to the poor and marginalized of our society.

Reading

“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.” (Col 1:24)

Reflection

In his encyclical *Saved in Hope*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that, “It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather, by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love.”

The mystery of the gospel is that it is through the suffering of Jesus Christ that healing was brought into the world. Through Christ, God chose to walk in the darkness of pain in order to give it meaning, purpose and life. And God promises us that when we have to walk through the darkness of pain and sickness, we too shall find our deepest meaning, purpose and life.

The Apostle Paul understood this in a profound way. Through all of the trials, pain and sufferings he endured, he gained the perspective that these difficulties were not God’s curse, but instead, the means by which God was extending healing into the world through him. So, he writes, “*Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*”

Paul understood the healing power of afflictions. Our struggles, sickness and stumbles teach us, and we share those lessons with others. Vulnerability and humility are not a curse from God, but an invitation. When we walk through those afflictions in faith, hope and love, they become the path of healing, for ourselves and for others.

Intercession and Closing Prayer

(adapted from Catholic Health Services)

Leader: On this World Day of the Sick, God our Father, we bring before you today those who suffer from illness or disability—those whose lives are profoundly affected by their illness.

When they feel fragile and broken ...

All: Remind them that you call them by name and hold them in the palm of your hand.

Leader: When they feel devalued ...

All: Remind them that they are made in the image Jesus.

Leader: When they are reminded of different times in the past ...

All: Lead them to grow in the faith that you love them today, as they are, in the reality of their lives this day.

Leader: When they feel uncertain and fearful about the future ...

All: Lead them to that perfect love which casts out all fear.

Leader: When situations remind them not of what they can do, but of what they cannot do ...

All: Remind them that love never fails.

Leader: May all of us, whatever our circumstances, never be so taken up with our own concerns that we do not see or respond to the needs of others, especially those who suffer in our midst. May we live with courage to respond to the challenges that each of us faces. In your Son's name we pray, Amen.