

World Day of the Sick

(Optional: Opening Hymn – *Healing River of the Spirit vs. 1-2*)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

God of Restoration, we set before you today the frailty of our humanity. Each of us gathered here lives with the experience, the memory, the fear, and the heartache of sickness. Through a loved one or a classmate, a friend or a coworker, a stranger or our very selves, we have all witnessed the limitations of the body. And yet, O Lord, in these stories of malady and illness, we witness even more the resilience of our human spirit and the heartfelt compassion you enable us to provide one another.

As we begin our prayer today, let us take a silent moment to hold in our hearts those who struggle with sickness and those who care for them. Bless these, your children, and give us the strength to support them. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Luke 5:17-26 (Friends Bring Jesus the Paralytic Man)

One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Reflection

Often in the miracle accounts of the Gospels, we hear a phrase like "Jesus saw her faith and..." or "Jesus was impressed by his faith." There is a constant emphasis placed on the afflicted human being's direct access to God's healing through an interaction with Jesus. It was and remains a startling component of

the Gospel to this day. As St. Paul so beautifully writes, “He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, *for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*” All people, saints and sinners alike, have a direct line to God through the Spirit because the Christ walked among us. It’s quite a marvelous thing to realize about ourselves.

Yet today’s Gospel flips that script, and hones in on what is an even more startling and magnificent realization of the early Christian communities, namely: Sometimes we need others to bring us to God.

When the roof caves in and the paralyzed man is lowered before Jesus, it is not the man’s faith which moves Jesus. It has nothing to do with who the man was or what his role was in arriving to that most unconventional scene. Rather, St. Luke notes that it was “*their faith*” which moved Jesus – the faith of the man’s friends, the faith of the ones who sought healing for another.

As we spend these next few moments contemplating the persons in our lives that suffer from sickness – those in our families, those for whom we care, those who might be half a world away – let us be inspired by the great lesson of today’s Gospel. God works wonderful things when people band together for the good of those who are ill. This goodness may not always come in the form of miracles

Intercessory Prayer

We now bring the prayers of hearts to God and to one another. Our response will be: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring you those who suffer from serious illness. May they receive the best care, swift recovery and the warm support of loved ones. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you those who suffer from chronic illness. May they experience a respite from their ails, and receive perseverance for their daily struggle. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you those who suffer from mental illness. May they experience the calm of God’s spirit, and the support and understanding of loved ones. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you those who suffer from the illness of addiction. May they be freed from the powers that bind them. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you those who research to find cures to illness. May their study and labor bring hope where there was once despair. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you those who administer medical care. May their skill and compassion shine forth in their work. May they know the gratitude of all who have benefitted from their work. Together, we pray: *Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.*

God, we bring to you countless friends, family and acquaintances who struggle with illness. We now take a moment to name them, and lift them up to you together.

(After everyone who wishes to share their names has finished) Together, we pray: Lord, see our faith; bring healing to your children.

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today. Let us leave this place inspired to bring about healing through cooperative efforts. Help us support our team members who work so hard on their craft to restore others to wholeness. Reward their good efforts and bring peace to all people in their care.

We conclude our time together, praying as Jesus taught us. Our Father...

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Optional Closing Hymn: Healing River of the Spirit v.3)