



World Day of the Sick 2021

Themes & Reflections by the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

1. Acknowledging our vulnerability, our condition as creatures dependent on God

- The experience of sickness makes us realize our own vulnerability and at the same time our innate need for the others and even more so, our dependence on God
- Sickness can help us get closer or move away from God (some may see it as a time of grace or a time of misfortune)
- Sickness prompts a question for meaning, a search for a new meaning and a new direction for our existence
- Besides medical care, recovery and pain relief, we owe the sick and suffering person meaningfulness, compassion, consolation and hope
- Sometimes, friends and family can be a help or a hindrance

Discuss as a group: can you think of any examples/experiences either in your life or in society where you've witnessed the above aspects?

What are our feelings towards God in times of illness and/or suffering? And what aspects can be helpful when we're trying to deal/help with that feeling of vulnerability when we're sick?



Write your prayer intention for this category:

Response: Lord, come and heal us.

2. The faces of many sick and suffering people who feel ignored and rejected



Sickness has the face of every sick man and woman. Unfortunately, some feel ignored, excluded, victims of social injustices that deny their fundamental rights, including the right of access to the necessary care.

Discuss as a group:

1. How is access to healthcare/treatments and other fundamental services granted to the vulnerable people in our society?
2. How were the elderly assisted during the pandemic?
3. What could the State/policy makers do to promote health as a common primary good? (Political choices, administration and resource distribution in healthcare)
4. What can the Church, the civil society, our community do for the care and assistance of the needy who live among us (as they are alone, or physically, morally and spiritually challenged)?
5. How many of us devote some of their time to volunteering for our brothers and sisters in need?

What can we do to ensure that those that are sick and suffering do not feel ignored and rejected by the rest of society? What can the government, church and us, as individuals, do?



Write your prayer intention for this category:

Response: Lord, come and heal us.



3. Health care workers serve human life that is sacred, and the human person, whose dignity is inalienable

During the pandemic, we have observed the dedication and generosity of health care professionals, volunteers, workers, priests, men and women religious. They revealed to us important aspects of their profession:

1. They work with professionalism, self-giving, sense of responsibility and love of neighbour
2. They have treated, comforted and served many sick people and their families
3. In their profession, they are called to guard and serve human life that is sacred
4. They serve the human person, whose dignity is inalienable
5. Prompted by the Christian spirit, sometimes healthcare professionals go beyond serving the merely physical human aspect of suffering. They are called to ensure that their patients' mental and social well-beings are also cared for as well.

Discuss as a group: can you think of any examples/experiences either in your life or in society where you've witnessed the above aspects of healthcare workers?

Name some ways in which healthcare workers are called to protect the dignity of the person (i.e. it could be physically, mentally and socially).



Write your prayer intention for this category:

Response: Lord, come and heal us.

4. Fraternal solidarity is expressed in various ways to support our neighbour



Caring for our sick and suffering brothers and sisters is not a task only for health care/pastoral workers. To all the disciples, closeness is a precious aspect that provides support and consolation to those who suffer in sickness:

1. We are all urged to live in closeness and compassion, just like how the samaritan expressed his love for his neighbour
2. We are called to be merciful like the Father and to love our sick, weak and suffering brothers
3. We live this closeness personally, but also as a community. Fraternal love in Christ generates a healing community, that does not leave anyone behind, is inclusive and welcomes the most vulnerable brothers (to treat, care, help, console and comfort),
4. Hence, the importance of solidarity that is concretely expressed in the service for the others. “Service in great part means “caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people”

Discuss as a group: can you think of any examples/experiences either in your life or in society where you’ve witnessed the above aspects of closeness, compassion and solidarity?

Even though we know closeness to the sick and suffering can be a source of comfort, the pandemic has made it difficult to do so. Name some alternate ways in which we can still mimic that closeness, compassion or solidarity with those that are sick and suffering.



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Write your prayer intention for this category:

[Empty rectangular box for writing prayer intention]

Response: Lord, come and heal us.

5. Enhancing a trust-based relationship in caring for the sick



For a therapy to be effective, it must include the relational dimension, a good, caring relationship, because it provides a holistic approach to sick persons, and aims at their integral wellbeing:

1. The care for the sick is best performed in a daily interpersonal relationship, health care workers reach out to sick persons to help, and treat them with compassion
2. A person experiencing suffering and sickness trusts and has recourse to the knowledge and conscience of health care workers
3. An interpersonal, trust-based relationship is based upon the dignity of the person and the respect for any situation that the other is going through. Therefore, in the full respect of the person's autonomy, it demands availability, attention, professional skill and awareness,
4. It must express a deeply human engagement, not only a technical activity, but also dedication and love for our neighbour,
5. This interpersonal, trust-based relationship enables the health care personnel to care for those who suffer, accompanying them along a journey of healing. It offers the ideal atmosphere to better treat, help and accompany the person along the journey towards the full recovery of his/her integral health.

Discuss as a group: can you think of any challenges that could arise for both healthcare workers and patients in trying to establish this interpersonal and trust-based relationship?

Name some challenges that could arise for both healthcare workers and patients in trying to establish this interpersonal and trust-based relationship.



Write your prayer intention for this category:

Response: Lord, come and heal us.