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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 220210c

Thursday 10.02.2022

## Video Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Webinar “World Day of the Sick: Meaning, Goals and Challenges” (10 February 2022)

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the Webinar organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, held today on the theme *World Day of the Sick: Meaning, Goals and Challenges*, on the occasion of the thirtieth World Day of the Sick:

### Video Message of the Holy Father

I address my greeting to all of you who are participating in this Webinar: “World Day of the Sick: Meaning, Goals and Challenges”, organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, on the occasion of the 30th World Day of the Sick. And my thoughts turn with gratitude to all those who, in the Church and society, lovingly stay beside those who suffer.

The experience of sickness makes us feel fragile, and it makes us feel in need of others. Not alone, not alone. “Sickness raises the question of life’s meaning, which we bring before God in faith. In seeking a new and deeper direction in our lives, we may not find an immediate answer”.[1]

Saint John Paul II indicated, beginning with his own personal experience, the path of this quest. It is not a matter of turning in on oneself, but on the contrary, of opening up to a greater love: “If one becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ, this happens because Christ *has opened his suffering to man*, because he himself in his redemptive suffering has become, in a certain sense, a sharer in all human sufferings. Man, discovering through faith the redemptive suffering of Christ, also discovers in it his own sufferings; he *rediscovers them, through faith*, enriched with a new content and a new meaning” (Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 11 February 1984, 20).

One must never “forget the uniqueness of each patient, his or her dignity and frailties”.[2] It is the person in his or her entirety who is in need of care: body, mind, affections, freedom and will, spiritual life... Care cannot be divided; because the human being cannot be divided. We could – paradoxically – save the body and lose humanity. The saints who cared for the sick always followed the Master’s teaching: heal the wounds of body and

soul; pray and act for physical and spiritual healing together.

This time of the pandemic is teaching us to view illness as a global and not a merely individual phenomenon, and it invites us to reflect on other types of “pathologies” that threaten humanity and the world. Individualism and indifference to others are forms of selfishness that unfortunately end up being amplified in the society of consumerist wellbeing and economic liberalism; and the consequent inequalities are found even in the field of healthcare, where some enjoy so-called “excellence” and many others struggle to access basic healthcare. To cure this “social” virus, the antidote is the culture of fraternity, based on the awareness that we are all equal as human persons, all equal as children of one God (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 272). On this basis, it will be possible to have effective treatments for everyone. But if we are not convinced that we are all equal, this will not work.

Always keeping the parable of the good Samaritan in mind (cf. *ibid.*, Chapter II), let us remember that we must be neither accomplices of the bandits who rob a man and abandon him wounded in the street, nor of the two religious officials who see him and walk on by (cf. *Lk* 10, 30-32). The Church, following Jesus, the Good Samaritan of humanity, has always done her utmost for those who suffer, dedicating great resources, both personal and economic, to the sick. I am thinking of the dispensaries and health care structures in developing countries; I am thinking of the many missionary sisters and brothers who have spent their lives caring for the poorest of the sick, sometimes even sick among the sick. And I think of the many holy men and women throughout the world who have established health care initiatives involving their companions and giving rise to religious congregations. This vocation and mission for integral human care must also renew charisms in the health care field today, so that there is no lack of closeness to the suffering.

I turn a grateful thought to all those who in their life and work are close to the sick every day. To the relatives and friends who assist their loved ones with affection and share in their joys and hopes, sufferings and anguish. To the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and all healthcare workers; as well as to hospital chaplains, the men and women religious of Institutes devoted to the care of the sick, and the many volunteers; there are many volunteers. I assure all these people of my remembrance in prayer, so that the Lord may grant them the capacity to listen to the sick, to be patient with them, to take care of them integrally, in body, spirit and relationships.

And I pray in a special way for all the sick, in every corner of the world, especially for those who are most alone and have no access to healthcare services. Dear brothers and sisters, I entrust you to the maternal protection of Mary, Health of the sick. And to you, and to those who take care of you, I send my heartfelt Blessing.

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[1] *Message for the 29th World Day of the Sick* (20 December 2020), 2.

[2] *Message for the 30th World Day of the Sick* (10 December 2021), 3.

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