



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

ANGELUS

St Peter's Square
Sunday, 11 February 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, the Church recalls the first apparition of the Virgin Mary to St Bernadette, which took place on 11 February 1858 in the grotto of Massabielle, near Lourdes. It was a miraculous event which made that town, located in the French Pyrenees, a world centre of pilgrimages and intense Marian spirituality.

In that place, now almost 150 years ago, the Blessed Mother's call to prayer and penance resounds strongly, almost as a permanent echo of Jesus' invitation which inaugurated his preaching in Galilee: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1: 15).

Moreover, that Shrine has become the goal of numerous sick pilgrims who are encouraged by listening to Mary Most Holy to accept their sufferings and offer them for the world's salvation, uniting them to those of Christ Crucified.

Precisely because of the bond that exists between Lourdes and suffering humanity, 15 years ago our beloved John Paul II willed that, on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the World Day of the Sick would also be celebrated.

This year the heart of this celebration is in the city of Seoul, South Korea, where I sent as my representative Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán, President of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care. I address a cordial greeting to him and to all those gathered there. I would like to

extend a greeting to the health-care workers of the entire world, knowing well of their important service to the sick persons in our society.

Above all, I would like to express my spiritual closeness and affection to our sick brothers and sisters, with a particular remembrance for those struck by graver illnesses and pain: to them, our attention is dedicated in a special way on this Day.

It is necessary to maintain the development of palliative care that offers an integral assistance and furnishes the incurably ill with that human support and spiritual guide they greatly need.

This afternoon, in St Peter's Basilica, many sick will gather around Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who will preside at the Eucharistic celebration. At the end of Holy Mass, I will have the joy, as last year, to spend some time with them, reliving the spiritual climate that I experienced at the Grotto of Massabielle.

I would now like to entrust to the maternal protection of the Immaculate Virgin, with the prayer of the Angelus, the sick and suffering in body and spirit of the entire world.

After the Angelus:

To all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors I extend a warm welcome. In a special way I greet the music directors from the United States representing the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. In the Beatitudes which we hear in today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us the way to true happiness. May your time in Rome make you hunger and thirst more deeply for his justice and peace. Upon all of you, I invoke the abundant Blessings of Almighty God.

I wish everyone a good Sunday!

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