



# The Holy See

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XIV WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

HOLY MASS FOR THE SICK

IN MEMORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF LOURDES

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO THE SICK AT THE END OF THE MASS***

*Saturday, 11 February 2006*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I join you with great joy and I thank you for your warm welcome. I greet you in particular, dear sick people who are gathered here in St Peter's Basilica, and I want to extend my greeting to all the sick who are following us on radio or television, and those for whom this is not possible but who are united with us by the deeper ties of the spirit, in faith and in prayer.

I greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini who has presided at the Eucharist, and Cardinal Francesco Marchisano, Archpriest of this Vatican Basilica. I greet the other Bishops and priests present. I thank the National Italian Union for Transporting the Sick to Lourdes and International Shrines (UNITALSI) and the *Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi*, which arranged for and organized this meeting with the help of numerous volunteers.

I am also thinking of Australia on the other side of the globe, where Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán, President of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care, presided a few hours ago in Adelaide at the main celebration of the [World Day of the Sick](#).

Fourteen years ago, 11 February, the liturgical Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, became World Day of the Sick. We all know that the Virgin expressed God's tenderness for the suffering in the Grotto of Massabielle. This tenderness, this loving concern, is felt in an especially lively way in the world precisely on the day of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, re-presenting in the liturgy, and especially in the Eucharist, the mystery of Christ, Redeemer of Man, of whom the Immaculate

Virgin is the first fruit.

In presenting herself to Bernadette as the Immaculate Conception, Mary Most Holy came to remind the modern world, which was in danger of forgetting it, of the primacy of divine grace which is stronger than sin and death. And so it was that the site of her apparition, the Grotto of Massabielle at Lourdes, became a focal point that attracts the entire People of God, especially those who feel oppressed and suffering in body and spirit.

"Come to me all of you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11: 28), Jesus said. In Lourdes he continues to repeat this invitation, with the motherly mediation of Mary, to all those who turn to him with trust.

Dear brothers and sisters, this year, together with my collaborators at the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care, we wished to focus attention on people affected by mental illness. "Mental health and human dignity" was the theme of the Congress that has taken place in Adelaide, at which the scientific, ethical and pastoral aspects were also examined.

We all know that Jesus stood before man in his wholeness in order to heal him completely, in body, mind and spirit. Indeed, the human person is a unity and his various dimensions can and must be distinguished but not separated. Thus, the Church too always proposes to consider people as such, and this conception qualifies Catholic health-care institutions as well as the approach of the health-care workers employed in them.

At this time I am thinking in particular of families with a mentally-ill member who are experiencing the weariness and the various problems that this entails. We feel close to all these situations, especially where legislation is lacking, public structures are inadequate and natural disasters or, unfortunately, wars and armed conflicts are producing in people serious psychological traumas. These are forms of poverty which attract the charity of Christ, the Good Samaritan, and of the Church, indissolubly united with him in her service to suffering humanity.

I would like today to present symbolically to all the doctors, nurses and other health-care workers and all the volunteers involved in this sector the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, in the hope that God's love will always be vibrant in their hearts so that it will enliven their daily work, projects, initiatives and especially their relations with the sick.

By acting in the name of charity and in the style of charity, dear friends, you also make a precious contribution to evangelization, for the proclamation of the Gospel needs consistent signs that reinforce it. And these signs speak the language of universal love, a language that is understandable to all.

In a little while, to recreate the spiritual atmosphere of Lourdes, all the lights in the Basilica will be

switched off and we will light our candles, symbols of faith and of the ardent invocation of God. The singing of the *Ave Maria* of Lourdes will invite us to go in spirit to the Grotto of Massabielle, to the feet of the Immaculate Virgin.

With profound faith let us present to her our human condition, our illnesses, a sign of neediness that is common to us all as we journey on in this earthly pilgrimage to be saved by her Son Jesus Christ. May Mary keep our hope alive so that, faithful to Christ's teaching, we renew the commitment to relieving our brethren in their sickness. May the Lord ensure that no one is alone or abandoned in a time of need, but, on the contrary, can live illness too in accordance with human dignity. With these sentiments, I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all: sick people, health-care workers and volunteers.

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