



# The Holy See

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12th WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE SICK PERSONS  
ON THE MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES**

*Wednesday, 11 February 2004*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. Once again St Peter's Basilica has opened wide its doors to the sick: to you who are present here, and in spirit to the sick across the world. I greet you with deep affection, dear friends. From this morning, my prayers have been dedicated especially to you and I am now delighted to meet you. With you, I greet your relatives, friends and the volunteers who have accompanied you. I greet the members of National Italian Union for Transporting the Sick to Lourdes and International Shrines (UNITALS), as well as the directors and operators of the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi that is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. In particular, I greet and thank Cardinal Camillo Ruini who has presided at Holy Mass, the concelebrating Bishops and priests, the men and women religious and all the faithful present.

2. Twenty years ago on the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, I published the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* on the Christian meaning of human suffering. At the time, I chose that date thinking of the special message that the Virgin addresses from Lourdes to the sick and to all the suffering.

Today too, our gaze turns to the venerable image of Mary which stands in the grotto of Massabielle. At its base are the words: "I am the Immaculate Conception". These words have a special resonance this year, here in the Vatican Basilica where 150 years ago Bl. Pope Pius X solemnly proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. And it is precisely the Immaculate Conception, a truth that introduces us into the heart of the mystery of Creation and of

the Redemption, that inspired my [Message for today's World Day of the Sick](#).

3. In looking at Mary our hearts are opened to hope, for in her we see the great things God accomplishes when we render ourselves humbly available to doing his will. The Immaculate Virgin is a marvellous sign of the victory of life over death, of love over sin, of salvation over every physical and spiritual ailment. She is a sign of comfort and never-failing hope (cf. [Lumen Gentium](#), n. 68). What we admire already fulfilled in her is a pledge of what God wants to give to every human creature: fullness of life, joy and peace.

May contemplation of this ineffable mystery comfort you, dear sick people; may it illumine your work, dear doctors, nurses and health-care workers; and may it sustain your precious activities, dear volunteers who are called to recognize and serve Jesus in every needy person. May Our Lady of Lourdes watch over everyone as Mother. Thank you for the prayers and sacrifices that you also generously offer for me! I assure you of my constant remembrance, and affectionately bless you all.