



World Day of the Sick: Guest Comment

Dr. Saransh Srivastava 

Life in any form is considered the greatest gift of all. The great almighty made this world for a peaceful co-existence among all beings. The theme chosen for this year's The World Day of the Sick which is an awareness day, or observance, in the Catholic Church which was instituted on May 13th, 1992 by Pope John Paul II. Beginning in 1993, it is celebrated every year on February 11, the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is not a liturgical celebration, but it seeks to be for all believers "a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering".¹

The National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) organizations offer variety of resources – prayer cards, sample prayer services, homilies, video reflections and more – that will assist you to celebrate World Day of the Sick in your parish. The National Association of Catholic Chaplains has developed resources to help with the planning and celebration of World Day of the Sick. The resources include suggestions and prayers that can be used by individuals as well as by dioceses, parishes, health care institutions, and other organizations.²

Pope John Paul II had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease as early as 1991, an illness which was only disclosed later, and it is significant that he decided to create the World Day of the Sick only one year after his diagnosis.³ The pope had written a great deal on the topic of suffering and believed that it was very much a salvific and redeeming process through Christ, as he indicated in his apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris*.⁴

He chose the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes for the date of the observance because many pilgrims and visitors to Lourdes, France, have been reported to have been healed at the Marian Sanctuary there through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. The pope also venerated the sanctuary of Harissa in Lebanon.

In 2005, the World Day of the Sick had a special

significance since the ailing pope later died on April 2nd that year. Many people had gathered in St. Peter's Square in Rome to pray for him as he lay dying. In 2013, Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation on this day, and he gave his declining health as his reason for retiring.¹

The World Day of the Sick — in its preparation, realization and objectives — is not meant to be reduced to a mere external display centring on certain initiatives, however praiseworthy they may be, but is intended to reach consciences to make them aware of the valuable contribution which human and Christian service to those suffering makes to better understanding among people and, consequently, to building real peace.

Indeed, peace presupposes, as its preliminary condition, that special attention be reserved for the suffering and the sick by public authorities, national and international organizations, and every person of good will. This is valid, first of all, for developing countries — in Latin America, Africa and Asia — which are marked by serious deficiencies in health care. With the celebration of the World Day of the Sick, the Church is promoting a renewed commitment to those populations, seeking to wipe out the injustice existing today by devoting greater human, spiritual, and material resources to their needs.³

To sick people all over the world, the main actors of this World Day, may this event bring the announcement of the living and comforting presence of the Lord. For you, health-care workers called to the highest, most meritorious and exemplary testimony of justice and love, may this Day be a renewed spur to continue in your delicate service with generous openness to the profound values of the person, to respect for human dignity, and to defence of life, from its beginning to its natural close.³

In the end, I would like to thank the entire editorial



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team of IHRJ for providing me a platform to pen my thoughts on the important occasion of World Day of the Sick .

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AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS AND CORRESPONDING ADDRESS:

Assistant Professor, Department of Periodontics, School of Dental Sciences, Sharda University

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7708-4749>

e-mail id for correspondence: srnsh92[at]gmail[dot]com