

## **‘Take Care of Him – Go and Do the Same Yourselves’ World Day of the Sick 2023**

### **Introduction**

February 2023 marks the 31<sup>st</sup> celebration of World Day of the Sick instituted by Saint John Paul II. We will reflect on the tender and challenging letter of Pope Francis for this occasion intertwined with the scripture he chose for our nourishment, in particular the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan’.

‘Illness is part of our human condition. Yet, if illness is experienced in isolation and abandonment, unaccompanied by care and compassion, it can become inhumane.’ (Pope Francis 2023)

In that spirit, we place those who are sick in mind, body or spirit at the centre of our time of prayer with God who is charity and love. Let us surround them with compassion.

**Song**                      **Ubi Caritas (Taizé)**

**Opening Prayer**    **Let us pray**

Loving and compassionate God,  
Be with all who reach out to you in their illness.  
May we keep them always in our hearts.  
Encourage us to hold them when they feel abandoned.  
Enfold them in your divine circle of care.  
We pray this in the Spirit, through Christ, our living Lord. Amen.

**Song**                      **You Are the Centre (Margaret Rizza)**

**Reading**                **Luke 10:29-32**

‘But wanting to justify himself, he (the lawyer) asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.’

*Pause*

**Reflection**            **WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)**

‘Here it is especially important to recognize the condition of loneliness and abandonment. This kind of cruelty can be overcome more easily than any other injustice, because – as the parable tells us – it only takes a moment of our attention, of being moved to compassion within us, in order to eliminate it.’

**Song**                      **Shelter Me, O God (Michael Joncas)**

**Reading**                **Luke 10:33-34**

‘But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.’

*Pause*

**Reflection**            **WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)**

‘Two travellers, considered pious and religious, see the wounded man, yet fail to stop. The third passer-by, however, a Samaritan, a scorned foreigner, is moved with compassion and takes care of that stranger on the road, treating him as a brother. In doing so, without even thinking about it, he makes a difference, he makes the world more fraternal.’

**Song**                      **He Ain't Heavy He's My Brother (Bob Russell/Bobby Scott)**

**Reading**                **Luke 10:35-37**

'The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'<sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

*Pause*

**Reflection**            **WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)**

'Indeed, the conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan suggests how the exercise of fraternity, which began as a face-to-face encounter, can be expanded into organized care. The elements of the inn, the innkeeper, the money and the promise to remain informed of the situation all point to the commitment of healthcare and social workers, family members and volunteers, through whom good stands up in the face of evil every day, in every part of the world.'

**Song**                      **Healer of my Soul (John Michael Talbot)**

**Reading**                **Ezekiel 34:3-4**

'You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them'.

*Pause*

**Reflection**            **WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)**

'The above-quoted prophecy of Ezekiel judges harshly the priorities of those who wield economic, cultural, and political power over others. The World Day of the Sick calls for prayer and closeness towards those who suffer. Yet it also aims to raise the awareness of God's people, healthcare institutions and civil society with regard to a new way of moving forward together. God's word is always illuminating and timely; not only in what it denounces, but also in what it proposes.'

**Song**                      **Stand Beside Me (Columba McCann)**

**Reflection**            **WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)**

'As I noted in *Fratelli Tutti*, "The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good".

Indeed, "we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love.

We cannot be indifferent to suffering".

*Pause*

'These past years of the pandemic have increased our sense of gratitude for those who work each day in the fields of healthcare and research. Yet it is not enough to emerge from such an immense collective tragedy simply by honouring heroes. Covid-19 has strained the great networks of expertise and solidarity, and has exposed the structural limits of existing public welfare systems. Gratitude, then, needs to be matched by actively seeking, in every country, strategies and resources in order to guarantee each person's fundamental right to basic and decent healthcare.'

**Song**                      **Ave Maria (Jacques Arcadelt)**

## Reflection      WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)

On 11 February 2023, let us turn our thoughts to the Shrine of Lourdes, a prophetic lesson entrusted to the Church for our modern times. It is not only what functions well or those who are productive that matter. Sick people, in fact, are at the centre of God's people, and the Church advances together with them as a sign of a humanity in which everyone is precious and no one should be discarded or left behind.

## Prayer      Hail Mary

## Reflection      WDS 2023 (Pope Francis)

'To the intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick, I entrust all of you who are ill; you who care for them in your families, or through your work, research and volunteer service; and those of you who are committed to weaving personal, ecclesial, and civic bonds of fraternity.

To all, I impart my heartfelt blessing.'

## Song      A Mhuire Mháthair(Traditional)

## Closing Prayer

**Let us pray,**

God of tenderness and compassion,  
You sent your Son to share our human nature,  
to restore all people and to heal the sick.  
Look with love on all who ask for prayers.  
Support them with your power,  
give them hope in times of suffering  
and keep them always in your care.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Song      The Bells of the Angelus (Lesbordes)

