

**'Bear Effective Witness to the Loving Concern of God, Our Father'**

*(Excerpts from the Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, for the XV World Day of the Sick, Feb. 11, 2007. For full text, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) or [www.cbcihealth.com](http://www.cbcihealth.com))*

Once again the Church turns her eyes to those who suffer and calls attention to the incurably ill, many of whom are dying from terminal diseases. They are found on every continent, particularly in places where poverty and hardship cause immense misery and grief. ... Sickness inevitably brings with it a moment of crisis and sober confrontation with one's own personal situation. ... Despite the advances of science, a cure cannot be found for every illness, and thus, in hospitals, hospices and homes throughout the world we encounter the sufferings of our many brothers and sisters who are incurably and often terminally ill.

The Church wishes to support the incurably and terminally ill by calling for just social policies which can help to eliminate the causes of many diseases and by urging improved care for the dying and those for whom no medical remedy is available. ... Here it is necessary to stress once again the need for more palliative care centres which provide integral care, offering the sick the human assistance and spiritual accompaniment they need. This is a right belonging to every human being, one which we must all be committed to defend.

I now turn to you, my dear brothers and sisters suffering from incurable and terminal diseases. I encourage you to contemplate the sufferings of Christ crucified, and, in union with him, to turn to the Father with complete trust that all life, and your lives in particular, are in his hands. Trust that your sufferings, united to those of Christ, will prove fruitful for the needs of the Church and the world. ... I ask ecclesial communities throughout the world, and particularly those dedicated to the service of the infirm, to continue, with the help of Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*, to bear effective witness to the loving concern of God our Father.

February 5-10, 2007  
**Healing Ministry Week**

February 11, 2007  
**15<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Sick  
Health Sunday**

Theme:

**'Healing the Broken and the Wounded'**

Bible Text, Reflections and Prayers



*Published by*

Commission for Healthcare  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of India  
and  
Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)

The Healing Ministry week is celebrated ecumenically, which has become a meaningful tradition. The Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) and the Health Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) together have selected the theme for the Healing Week, '**Healing the Broken and the Wounded**'. We hope that this booklet, with Bible passages, Reflections and Prayers will help you to arrange creatively your celebration of the Week.

## How to Celebrate the Healing Ministry Week?

### i. In Healthcare Institutions

Arrangements could be made for everyone in the hospital to follow the celebration, but with due discretion and full respect for those sick people of other faiths and those with no religious persuasion.

Inform the patient's relatives of the gathering. Printed materials, with inspirational texts and prayers could be distributed.

One or more of the patients, if willing and able to do so, may remain alongside the celebrant during readings and prayer; and a few symbolic gestures may also be planned.

Organize awareness programmes and meaningful celebrations for the staff engaged in healthcare.

### ii. Community/Parish level

In collaboration with committed volunteers, organize events such as: Eucharistic Celebrations, community celebration of the blessing and the Anointing of the Sick, liturgical celebrations, ecumenical Bible service, inter-religious prayer service for the sick, health awareness seminar, medical camps, cultural events, charitable events, etc

**Your Response:** We will be interested to know how you celebrated the Healing Ministry Week and the World Day of the Sick. Please write to us. We welcome your suggestions to continue to have meaningful programmes in the future.

CBCI Commission for Health  
1, Ashok Place, Gole Dakkhana  
CBCI Centre, New Delhi-110 001  
Tel. 011-23344470 / 23340774

Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)  
157/ Staff Road, Gunrock Enclave  
Secunderabad 500 009, A.P.  
Tel. 040-27868756 / 27848457

## First Day (5 Feb. 2007)

### God is Nearer to the Broken-hearted

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading: Mt. 25: 34 – 36:**

### Reflection

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe in Me." (Jn 14:1)*

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, assures the Psalmist (Ps 34:18). From Isaiah we know that God promises to "heal the brokenhearted ... to comfort all who mourn ... to give them ... a glorious mantle of gladness, instead of grief" (Is 61:1-3).

It is this mission that Jesus, the Divine Healer, announced, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce the Year of the Lord's favour." (Lk 4:16).

"And, He went about doing good." (Acts 10:38). Jesus healed the sick; consoled the afflicted; fed the hungry; freed people from deafness, blindness and leprosy.

He called his disciples and gave them the mandate to continue his mission to heal the wounded and the brokenhearted (Cf. Lk 9:1; Mt. 10:1). "They traveled throughout the villages, proclaiming the Good News and bringing healing to the sick" (Lk 9:6; Mk 6:13).

Every human being, and in a special way every Christian, has an inescapable duty to heal the broken and comfort the wounded, no matter who he or she is. Whether one is old and abandoned by all; a stranger or despised without reason, a suffering child or a patient with an incurable disease like HIV and AIDS, each one awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ, "As you did it to one of the least of these my people, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

### For further Reflections:

1. As a patient, as one who faces difficulties, am I convinced that God is nearer to me in my sufferings?
2. How can I be God's healing presence today?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Second Day (6 Feb. 2007)

### God's Healing Through Communities

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** Lk 10: 30-37

#### Reflection

*"Love the Lord your God with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbour as you love yourself." (Luke 10:27)*

We are often reminded today, through government claims and media reports that we live in an abundant world. The process of globalization is claimed to have contributed to economic, social, and intellectual advancement. However, our experiences tell us a different story. We have people around us who do not have the resources for one meal a day, to send their children to schools or to get sufficient medical attention. People are victimized and even killed because they belong to a different caste or ethnic origin. Our society today is populated by misguided young people, over-burdened parents, unsupportive spouses, broken families, single-parent families, neglected senior citizens, and people suffering with emotional and relational crisis. What do we do with the broken and neglected lot in our communities?

A recent event that got considerable amount of media and public attention is the Jessica Lal case. The earlier verdict acquitted the accused. However, the immediate public outcry which followed resulted in re-trial and the granting of fair judgment, providing justice to the family of the victim. Many a time, we are silent spectators to the innumerable sufferings of the people around us. The parable of the Good Samaritan takes us into a similar situation where the persons who were supposed to care and nurture remained as 'onlookers' without showing discernment to the needs of the suffering one. The Good Samaritan was moved with compassion that stimulated him into immediate action to save the life of the wounded man. Thus, the Good Samaritan became a healer.

The challenge for us today is to increase our 'sense-ability' in order to discern the struggles and pains of the suffering people. We, as the people of faith, have enough theological insights and practical information but are slack in our response and reaction to the needs of the community around us.

#### **For further Reflections:**

1. What are the issues in our communities that need an urgent response?
2. How do we discern the needs of others around us?
3. How can one assume the role of a 'healer' in a community?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Third Day (7 Feb. 2007)

### Preferential Option for the Poor, the Needy and the Broken

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** John 9: 1-11

#### Reflection

*The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man!" (John 9: 8-9)*

Kantha, a 26-year-old girl was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. The doctors in the hospital were quite aware of the family's poverty. They felt quite justified in not putting her on dialysis, believing that they were saving the girl's family from a financial burden.

Very often, people when they see someone in sickness and in pain, unable to afford a better medical care, consider themselves fortunate for being granted good health. Instead of trying to help them, they start analyzing the socio-economic situation of the family of the sick! They would rather explain how healthcare systems function in their respective societies than help the sick. The broken and the needy ones are often written off as dispensable in the communities they live in!

In the story in John 9, the blind man who was healed rejoices because he experienced liberation; from being written off as a worthless blind beggar, he becomes a whole person. Even though the people around him were quite comfortable with his blindness, Jesus responds to his cry, heals him and restores him to society. The people could not believe their eyes! Some con-tested the healing of the blind man, questioned the identity of the man who was healed, and also the veracity of Jesus as God-sent because He disobeyed the law and healed a person on a Sabbath day. Our insensitivity to the cries and needs of the broken make us go blind but our faith in the possibilities of the impossible can renew relationships in a broken world.

#### **For further Reflections:**

1. How can our systems and structures in society be challenged to respond to the health needs of the poor and the needy?
2. How can the Christian health facilities render care and treatment assuring that all life is equally important and worthy in the eyes of God?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Fourth Day (8 Feb. 2007)

### Healing is Meaningful When We Make Poverty a History

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** Luke 16: 19-25

#### Reflection

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into your house? (Is. 58: 6-7a)*

According to researchers, much of the healing done in our country by the private medical care system comes at such a tremendous cost that it impoverishes people. People either go into deep debt or have to sell some productive asset in order to pay for the medical bills that they have incurred. A recent review of national data shows that every year 35 million people in India are pushed below the poverty line because of medical expenses. Here, ironically, healing is leading to poverty. Healing is only meaningful when it is combined with efforts to remove poverty something that is talked about only in history books.

The prophets of the Old Testament stressed the fact that the concern for the poor was something that was central to doing the will of God; that pleased God more than the observance of religious rituals. Since poverty is very often the result of exploitation and injustice, it is God's will that the various structures of injustice, such as bonded labour, low wages for work, or high interest rates on urgently needed loans etc. be broken. The Letter of James reminds us that, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:27). In the context of growing number of people living with HIV and AIDS, ‘the will of God for us today’ is to prevent its further spread, fight the stigma, and involve in looking after a larger number of AIDS orphans and widows, and those with full-blown AIDS. According to an early teacher of the Christian faith, “God loves each person as if there was only one person in the world to love.” Holistic Healing then implies that each person must be treated equally and healing must be not only of the body but also of the social, economic, mental and spiritual situation of a person. Let us join hands to make poverty a history.

#### **For further Reflections:**

1. Do I think of myself as more worthy of God's love and concern than those who are worse off than I am in all aspects?
2. How can I make sure that the healing that I try and provide is not only physical but also mental, social, economic and spiritual?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Fifth Day (9 Feb. 2007)

### Healing... is Proclaiming the Year of Lord's Favour and Re-visioning a New World

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** Luke 4: 16-20

#### Reflection

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to let the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18)*

In Isaiah 65:20, the Prophet envisaged new creation where children will no longer die in infancy and all people will live out their life span. We believe that these prophesy are fulfilled from the time of Jesus' ministry. Now more than two million children below five years die every year in India. And millions of girl children never get the opportunity to see the light of the day because of female foeticide. Meaningful healing ministry should work towards the new world that the prophets envisioned.

The difference between the prophecy in Old Testament and the manifesto of Jesus in the New Testament is that the prophecies looked for a new creation and a new world order in the future whereas in New Testament, Jesus right from the beginning of His ministry on this earth, stood for the justice and peace for the marginalised, healed the sick and ushered in the Kingdom of God on this earth. He declared the year He began His ministry as the year of God's favour. Jesus responded to the needs of the people without delaying. But unfortunately, we, instead of addressing the problems immediately of those who are suffering, tend to pacify people saying that their problems will be solved in future.

The challenge God puts before us is to take up the responsibility of helping the vulnerable to experience justice and peace on this earth now, not later. We cannot escape by not doing anything positive, and instead, just by saying like “on earth you may have to suffer, in heaven things will be alright.” God will surely reward them. But, it is our responsibility to bring all possible assistance and support.

#### **For further Reflections:**

1. How can we in our context contribute in fulfilling what Jesus began in Nazareth? (Good news to the poor, liberty to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed)
2. Can we like Jesus proclaim clearly what we believe as our call and declare what we look forward to achieve?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Sixth Day (10 Feb. 2007)

### Mary, the Solace of the Sick, Our Hope and Cause of Our Joy

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** John 2: 1-11

#### Reflection

Jesus, before his most painful death on the cross, gave his mother as a source of solace and strength to everyone of us (Cf. Jn 19:26). It was Saint Bernard who once said, "God willed that we should have nothing which does not pass through the hands of Mary."

At the wedding feast of Cana, when the wine failed, Mary tells her son Jesus, "They have no wine!" This was a difficult situation for the young couple, and may indicate that they came from poor families. Among the Jews of that time, wine was frequently used in times of celebration. To run short of wine at a wedding feast was certainly a serious problem, particularly damaging to the reputation of the host and an ill omen for the newly-married couple. "They have no wine", Mary said. Wine can be taken as a symbol of joy, spirit of celebration, atmosphere of continued festivity, which is a sign of God's blessing (Deut. 7:13; Prov. 3:10). The Christian family has to be a place where there is constant celebration and festivity. It is the place where one is called to make sacrifices. Each one is invited to forgive and to live a life of reconciliation and peace.

"Do whatever he tells you!"- to have the 'wine' in abundance. This is the only piece of advice given by Mary as recorded in the New Testament, and it is a prerequisite for miracles in our families, and personal life. The Bible tells us how to do the will of God and effect salvific changes in our daily lives.

It is she, *virgo fidelis*, who helps us to overcome all the pains and difficulties and to attain the divine healing from her Son. May she constantly intercede for us!

#### ***For further Reflections:***

1. How can we make Mary as our role model in identifying the difficulties in the lives of others?
2. Do we follow the advice of Mary, "Do whatever he tells you"?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Seventh Day: 15th World Day of the Sick (11 Feb. 2007)

### To Witness of the Loving Concern of God, Our Father

**Introductory Prayer:** see page 10

**Reading:** Luke 6: 17-26

#### Reflection

Today, February 11th, when the Church keeps the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Fifteenth World Day of the Sick will be celebrated all over the world. The official international program is held in Seoul, Korea. Holy Father Benedict XVI has asked all of us, and particularly those dedicated to the service of the infirm, 'to continue to bear effective witness to the loving concern of God, our Father'.

Following the call of Pope Benedict XVI, we, in India, have chosen this year's theme, 'Healing the broken and the wounded'. "Sickness inevitably brings with it a moment of crisis and sober confrontation with one's own personal situation", tells the Pope in his Message. And, he continues, "Despite the advances of science, a cure cannot be found for every illness, and thus, in hospitals, hospices and homes throughout the world we encounter the sufferings of our many brothers and sisters who are incurably and often terminally ill."

As a response to this situation, Pope Benedict XVI, strongly advocates everyone, "to promote policies which create conditions where human beings can bear even incurable illnesses and death in a dignified manner", and "to provide integral care, offering the sick the human assistance and spiritual accompaniment they need."

Addressing all those who are sick, especially those who suffer from incurable and terminal diseases, the Holy Father encourages them, "to contemplate the sufferings of Christ crucified, and, in union with him, to turn to the Father with complete trust that your lives are in his hands."

May the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, comfort those who are ill and sustain all who have devoted their lives, as Good Samaritans, to healing the physical and spiritual wounds of those who suffer.

#### ***For further Reflections:***

1. Do our activities really manifest the loving concern of God, our Father ?
2. Do we show equal consideration for all when we are involving in the healing mission?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** see page 10

**Concluding Prayer:** see page 11

## Opening Prayers:

1. God, our Loving Father, as we come together for prayer and reflection, bless us with your presence. Send your Holy Spirit and give us true faith. Touch our lives and heal us. Help us to reach out to the suffering and the broken people around us. Transform our lives to be your effective witnesses of your loving concern towards everyone. Enable us to live in communion with one another. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

or

2. Heavenly Father, we have come before you to thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Healer of the broken and wounded. We pray that, our faith may lead us to a new life in you, and being transformed and liberated, we commit ourselves to the service of those people who are suffering due to various causes. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord, Amen

or

3. Gracious Lord, you made us in your image and likeness. Touch our lives and heal us. Strengthen us to continue your healing mission. Help us to recognize your image in the face of those who are sick and suffering. Tune our hearts to listen to the cries of the broken and the needy. Make us your instruments of your healing. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

## Prayer of Faithful

**Introduction:** With deep gratitude for the innumerable gifts we have received from God, let us thank him for creating us in His image and sustaining us with spiritual and bodily healing. Let us humbly place all our prayers and intentions to the heavenly Father, through Christ who is the source of our health and healing.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

◆ God of love and compassion, we pray for Pope Benedict XVI, all our Bishops and all the leaders of our communities, so that everyone may be led to your healing mission, with true compassion and love. For this we pray to the Lord.

◆ Merciful Father, we ask you to bless all the poor, marginalized, friendless, those who are in misfortune, abandoned, stigmatized due to incurable diseases, those who are fallen victim to drugs. Heal them with your mercy and strengthen their faith in your unconditional love.

◆ We pray for all the doctors, nurses and technicians and other healthcare providers and all those in our healthcare institutions. Help us to be faithful to our mission, committed to our duty and above all compassionate to the persons whom we encounter, especially the suffering. Empower us to be the channel of your healing power.

◆ Father in heaven, we pray for your constant guidance in our life. Help us to understand that you are our Divine Healer. Help us to be true, trustful and prudent in all our dealings. Help us to bring comfort to those in sorrow, and strength to those who find themselves weak. Help us to bring hope, cheer and encouragement to those who have lost hope, and are depressed and broken.

*(Please add other intentions)*

## Concluding Prayers:

1. Lord, may this coming together and sharing, transform our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. May our words, works and worship be visible signs of our faith in you! Help us to go forth and live as effective agents of love, compassion and healing. May Your Son, Jesus be visible in us! We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

or

2. God, our loving Father, give to your people the joy of continual health in mind and body. Grant, we beseech you that through the intercession of Blessed Mary, the mother of the Author of Life, all your children who are broken and wounded, experience your peace and healing power, and eternal happiness in the life to come. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.