

Healing Ministry Week 2009: February 5-11
17th World Day of the Sick: February 11
Healing Sunday: February 8

Theme:

*'Righteousness and Justice
In the
Healing Ministry'*

Bible Text, Reflections and Prayers



Published by

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

Introduction

We continue the tradition of celebrating the Healing Ministry week ecumenically. 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 this year's Healing Week Theme: 'Righteousness and Justice in the Healing Ministry'. We are happy to inform you that the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) has also become part of this initiative. CMAI has prepared the Bible Study and Prayers for their Churches. This booklet is meant for the Catholic Church. It contains Bible text, Reflections and Prayers to make the celebration of the Healing Week more meaningful.

How to Celebrate the Healing Ministry Week?

i. In Healthcare Institutions

1. Prayer Meetings
2. Eucharistic Celebrations
3. 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 Blessings and 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

*The last paragraph in each reflection and the last question is specific to the healthcare sector and can be omitted for the community / parish gatherings.

Your Feedback

We will be interested to know how you celebrated the Health and Healing 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 Healthcare
1, Ashok Place, Gole Dakkhana
CBCI Centre, New Delhi-110 001
Tel. 011-23344470 / 23340774
Email: info@cbchealth.org

Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)
157/ Staff Road, Gunrock Enclave
Secunderabad – 500 009, A.P.
Tel. 040-27868756 / 27848457
Email: chai@pol.net.in

Acknowledgements

- Dr Vijay Aruldas of CMAI and his team
- Rev Fr George Plathottam SDB, Executive Secretary of the CBCI Commission for Social Communication
- Sr Janet Varghese, DCC Library, New Delhi
- Mr Vineet Jerry Samuel, Designer
- Mr James Veliath, Ms Sonia Sharma and Ms Rosemary Thomas

We gratefully acknowledge all of them for their valuable contributions.

***Fr Dr Mathew Abraham CSsR
Executive Secretary - Health Commission, CBCI***

First Day (5 February 2009)

GOD IS COMPASSIONATE AND STANDS BY HIS PEOPLE

*“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied”*

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Matthew 5: 1-10

Jesus' Beatitudes decisively hit their mark like a well-thrown dart. Matthew's words do not soften the blunt force of Jesus' words but rather extend their meaning in a profound way. Jesus' blessing now reaches all those who long for God's "righteousness," whether they are physically hungry themselves or heart-stricken on behalf of those who are.

A key word here is "righteousness," derived from the Greek term *dikaiosune*, which can be translated as "righteousness" or "justice." In modern English these terms can have a variety of connotations. To be "righteous," for example, can even have a negative connotation, referring to those who are too sure of their virtue and not hesitant to let others know about it. "Justice" can be thought of in legal terms, as when we say someone is "brought to justice"—that is, punished for evil deeds.

But the biblical term "justice" or "righteousness" has a very different connotation. God does what is right in all cases. Therefore, the biblical peoples would pray that God would be "just" or "righteous" towards Israel, meaning that God would be faithfully compassionate and stand by his people. In turn, "justice" or "righteousness" in the human realm should mirror God's justice, being faithful to one's obligations and doing the right thing.

*In the Healing Ministry also, we are bound to face instances or people who promote injustice, who do not practice righteousness towards those who suffer hunger, thirst, *illness*. If we are care providers who stand for justice and for those who suffer, Jesus assures us that abundant blessings are ours – now and in the world to come.

Reflection:

1. Do I realize my obligation towards those in need?
2. Do you accept others unconditionally?
3. Do I stand for justice in my role as a healthcare provider?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Second Day (6 February 2009)

I MUST FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Let them thank the Lord for such kindness, such wondrous deeds for mere mortals”

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Mathew: 25:31-46

As in every one of the Beatitudes, Jesus' words echo throughout the Gospel. The very first words Jesus speaks in Matthew's Gospel are a commitment to this kind of justice: "...I must fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). And he warns his disciples that their "righteousness" must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20). In the end, we will be judged by God on the basis of our commitment to justice, as Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats makes clear: giving food and drink to the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting the prisoners. Jesus' vision of a just world expresses a fundamental longing of the whole Bible.

The searing prayer of Psalm 107 (5-9) may have stirred in Jesus' heart as he preached this Beatitude to his disciples: "They were hungry and thirsty; their life was ebbing away. In their distress they cried to the Lord, who rescued them in their peril...Let them thank the Lord for such kindness, such wondrous deeds for mere mortals. For he satisfied the thirsty, filled the hungry with good things."

Jesus was not an impractical dreamer looking in vain for an ideal world but a tireless worker for justice. He would give his life healing the sick, feeding the multitudes and confronting those whose sense of justice had died within them.

*In the healthcare ministry, we continue Jesus' ministry as if He was still with us. We, more than many others, truly fulfil his mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and care for the sick. "Your kingdom come" was the heart-beat of Jesus' ministry and as healthcare providers we ensure that his Kingdom is experienced every day at our hands.

Reflection

1. Do we trust in God's way of rescuing us in our distresses?
2. Are we grateful to God for His kindness?
3. Are we convinced, as healthcare providers, that we continue Jesus' mission and are instrumental in ensuring His Kingdom comes?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Third Day (7 February 2009)

GROWING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

“The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love”

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Luke-15: 11-24

Young people seem to develop a sense of righteousness at an early age, but it is usually centered on themselves. As they grow, they become concerned about fair treatment for friends and loved ones. As they reach maturity, this concern often extends to people they don't know and even those who have wronged them. Our job as parents is to make sure their understanding of justice also expands.

We can help youngsters appreciate basic justice by rewarding and disciplining them fairly, but we must also foster a broader understanding and a more active approach. Listen intently as they talk about their own experiences of injustice and those of their friends. Call attention to injustices in the larger community and then point them to Jesus' attitude towards justice. Help them figure out how Jesus would deal with the situation and why. His justice goes beyond rewarding the good and punishing the bad. It never deals in revenge or extracting restitution. When Jesus spoke of justice he was talking about treating people fairly, honouring commitments, setting things right - in other words, "justice for all." His sense of righteousness went beyond a legalistic understanding of reward and punishment. It involved healing relationships, relieving suffering, making sure everyone was fed – a compassionate justice.

*Taking our children to see the suffering of the sick, the poor and helpless will inspire this compassion in their hearts. They will realise why Jesus reached out and touched people. Why he healed them and felt pity for them. They will understand Jesus and then aspire to be like Him, at least some of the time. And that will make them more compassionate, loving people.

Reflection:

1. Do we give enough opportunities to the youngsters to understand the importance of justice in their life?
2. Do we set good examples to our children with our own life?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Fourth Day- Healing Sunday (8 February 2009)

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE COMMUNITY

“Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—righteousness and justice.”

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Mathew 7: 24-28

Righteousness is often viewed through the lenses of individualism. It becomes a matter of personal accountability. We see this in the oft reference to Christ as our “personal savior.” Justice tends to cause us to see humanity not just as a collection of individuals, but as a community. The issue of accountability then rests on the shoulders of the community. God has always been concerned with a people as the focus of His redemption. “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Even the weight of original sin is not vested on the shoulders of an individual, but on the smallest unit of community—the married couple.

The truth is, we need both righteousness and justice to fully effect the purposes of God in the earth. Personal responsibility must be factored into the accountability of the community. We must embrace the holism of both if we are to be His witnesses in the world. In the building of His House among people, righteousness is the plumb line and justice is the level. A structure that is not plumb and level is said to be “out of true.” If it lacks this integrity, it cannot bear the weight of testing.

*The same is true for any healthcare community. While the world shows us that ‘anything goes’ and profit is the ultimate foundation, we must realise that such a structure will lead to falling standards of society. Profit, technological advances and modern change are good, but only if built on the foundation of His words – of righteousness, justice, truth, compassion and love. “Because of God’s special favor to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any other foundation than the one we already have—Jesus Christ”

Reflection:

1. Do we have integrity in our responsibility to the society?
2. Do we consider Jesus Christ as our foundation?
3. What is the underlying foundation of our role in the healing ministry? Is it only money, prestige or also a desire to be a presence of justice?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Fifth Day (9 February 2009)

BEYOND COMPASSIONATE CARE

“You are much more valuable than they!”

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Mark 6:30-34

“Instruct the ignorant” is one of the spiritual works of mercy and has always inspired us to pass on the truth of Christ. Today, so many people are lost, they don't know the purpose of their lives, they go from one pleasure to the next so as not to confront the most fundamental questions of existence; however, today we rejoice at the loving kindness of our heavenly Father for us. Jesus is our shepherd sent by the Father to care for us.

In order to be able to give people the greatest gift of the Lord, first we need to “have” the Lord with us. In order to be capable of bringing Christ to others, we need first to bring ourselves to Him, to spend time with Him, to be fed by Him so that we can in turn feed others. In His formation of the apostles, He first taught them how to be good sheep. “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” They were so busy feeding others that they had no leisure to eat. We, too, need to heed the Lord's command to “come away to a deserted place and rest a while.” This, of course, refers to prayer, spending time with the Lord, resting in Him, being strengthened by Him so that we can bring Him to others refreshed. The busier we are, the more we need prayer.

A real Christian life, a life worth living, is a life that balances action and prayer, work and contemplation. We see it in the life of Jesus, who went about doing good, but then would retire all by Himself in prayer to His Heavenly Father.

*In the healthcare field, stress, tension, lack of sleep, a punishing workload - all affect our attitude. How can we practice justice, when we face injustice? How can we have ‘compassion for the crowd’ when we are exhausted? Jesus shows us the solution – ‘Come away and rest for a while’. Jesus – who was God felt the need to spend time with His Father. How much more, do we - as mere humans - require His strength, guidance and shoulder to lean on? All our experiences, our struggles and difficulties of life should bring us to God and help us to bring many more to the Lord.

Reflection:

1. When someone is in need of some kind of help, how do I respond to that?
2. As a Christian what is my role to be a compassionate person like Jesus?
3. Do I spend time rejuvenating myself with the Lord for at least a few minutes everyday?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Sixth Day- 10 February 2009

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE IN THE LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR

"...I am the Lord who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things."

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Mathew 22: 34-40

In response to the inquiry of the lawyer who represented the religious hierarchy He asserts that these two commandments are the alpha and omega of all that God has revealed. "But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:29) The lawyer wanted to prove that he was a doer of justice. However wrong his motives may have been, at least he got the point!

Matthew 9:8 "But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men" Jesus' deed of justice in healing the paralytic man authenticated His act of righteousness. Jesus erased the misconception of a disconnect between righteousness and justice. This is the new wineskin - it is supple, that is to say, it is compassionate.

*The love of God is an issue of righteousness. The love of our neighbour is an issue of justice. But again – who is my brother? Who is my sister? Is it only someone who can return the favour? Is it something that will benefit me later? Or is it the helpless patient who depends solely on me to relieve his/her suffering? The person who can pay me nothing other than gratitude? Let us attempt, at least sometimes, to employ Jesus' standards in our jobs. Then we will be able to "Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory (righteousness) and strength (justice). Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness." Psalm 29:1-2.

Reflection:

1. Is the love of our neighbour an issue of justice for us?
2. Who is my neighbor? Can I attempt to consider my patients as my neighbor?

Prayer of the Faithful: see page 10

Concluding Prayer: see page 11

Seventh Day – World Day of the Sick (11 February 2009)

HEALTH OF THE SICK AND MOTHER OF THE LIVING

‘She is fully involved in the human condition, in its joys and in its sorrows’

Introductory Prayer: see page 10

Reading: Luke 1:39-45

The Christian community has always paid particular attention to the sick and the world of suffering in its multiple manifestations. In the wake of such a long tradition, the Church instituted the World Day of the Sick on the date of the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Our Lady of Lourdes is the most famous shrine of Our Lady with numerous healing miracles attributed to it. The story of Gabriel Gargam is one of the most famous. After an accident, for two years he was in bed, not able to do anything for himself. He had not gone to church for 15 years before that. When convinced to finally go to Lourdes, he was completely & miraculously cured during a procession of the Blessed Sacrament. He lived a healthy and faith-full life after that until the age of 83. A physical and spiritual cure.

Even during her lifetime, Mother Mary was a great care provider. When she heard of Elizabeth, she rushed there to care for her. Elizabeth, and even more her baby, was overjoyed at Mary’s presence. In the face of social stigma, physical discomfort and the struggle of having a baby in her old age, Elizabeth received joy when Mary appeared.

*As health care providers today, we are faced with patients who go through similar circumstances. While healing them physically, we also have the potential to bring them joy. Our institution can be the next Lourdes where Mother Mary appears and heals.

At this time, let us remember with gratitude one health care worker we have encountered who provided us comfort. Let us also try to remember one person who may have hurt us and let us try to forgive them for it. May this day be a day of blessing for all health care providers to follow in Mary’s example.

Let us also remember the people of Orissa, Mumbai, Kashmir and Palestine. Their sufferings, accepted and borne with unshakeable faith, when joined to those of Christ take on extraordinary value for the life of the Church and the good of humanity.

Reflection:

1. Do we willingly share the pain of others?
2. Do we hesitate to utilize the opportunities we get to bring comfort to the suffering people?
3. Can we be Mother Mary to our patients, bringing joy along with physical healing for them?

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. Transform our lives to be your effective witnesses of faith and messengers of harmony. Help us to understand Your Righteousness and Justice. Enable us to live in communion with one another. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Or

2. Heavenly Father, as we humbly come today for prayer and reflection, bless each one of us. Send forth your Holy Spirit upon us that our faith may be strengthened to follow your Son. We pray that, our trust in you may help us to lead a positive life inspired by Your Righteousness and Justice. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord, Amen

Or

3. 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 source of all abundances. We pray that you continue to bless us abundantly so that we are able to overcome all the troubles we face in our daily life. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord, Amen

Or

4. God, our Loving Father, You made us precious in your sight, bless us with your presence. Touch our lives and heal us. Inspire and strengthen us to continue your healing ministry. Make us your instruments so that we can be part of your Healing Ministry. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Prayer of Faithful

Introduction:

We have come together to celebrate this Holy Eucharist, a community united by kinship and friendship. Let us now offer our humble prayer to the God of all healing.

Heavenly Father, bless us with true faith! Strengthen us. Give us grace to contemplate on thy Word, and to live what we believe. For this we pray to you Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Response: Lord, Hear our Prayers.

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

Response

- Father, Our Holy Father Benedict XVI, our Bishop.....and all the leaders of the Church so that they may lead Your people in continuing Your healing ministry.

Response

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

Response

- For our nation that we remain united, for our leaders that they may be led by God's wisdom in responding to the needs of the people.

Response.

- We pray for the victims of the various calamities we have faced. They have experienced a lot of agony. Many of them are shattered. Heal them Lord. Restore their confidence in you so that they will put their hope in you and continue to live sharing in your abundance of life.

Response

- We pray for our brothers and sisters who became victims of communal violence especially our brothers and sisters in Orissa. Lord protect them from the violence. Give serenity and wisdom to the people who spread hatred and violence so that every one lead a positive life in love and harmony.

Response

(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 Your love, compassion, healing, righteousness and justice. 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 precious children who are distressed, experience your peace and healing power, and eternal happiness in the life to come. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



**“I have come that they may have life and life
in its fullness” – John 10:10**