

The Vatican City, January 2009

Prot. N. 34.447/09

Your Eminence/Excellency,

We are by now near to 11 February, the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes and the annual celebration of the World Day of the Sick, according to the institutive Letter of 13 May 1992 of the Servant of God, the late lamented Pope John Paul II.

In this regard, I would like to observe the instructions of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI who, through His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State, instructed that *“the annual celebration of the World Day of the Sick on 11 February remaining, I have instructed that this most solemn Celebration in the various continents, after that already celebrated in 2007 in Korea, will take place every three years, to conform to other similar Days, like that of Youth and that of the Family, and so that increasingly careful preparations can be engaged in”*.

Thus the next most solemn Celebration of the World Day of the Sick will take place in the year 2010, in a place to be established.

I emphasise, once again, the importance and the value of this Day, which must be celebrated each year in a way that takes into account local needs and circumstances. Initiatives should always be promoted that involve, in addition to dioceses, Christian communities and religious families that are involved in pastoral care in health, also health-care workers, volunteers and all those who work in civil society for care for, and assistance to, the sick.

It is specifically the sick who are the protagonists of the celebration of this Day; in appreciating suffering to the full, we help the sick to suffer their pain in full and absolute communion with Christ in his passion, death and resurrection, and thus as a source of redemption and happiness. In this way they complete in their own bodies what is missing in the passion of Christ (Co 1:24; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, n. 1). This is the principal meaning of this Celebration.

The Holy Father Benedict XVI in his Message of last year strongly called for a celebration of the World Day of the Sick throughout the Church and observed: *“I invite the diocesan and parish communities to celebrate the World Day of the Sick”* (Message WDS, 2008, n. 5). The various initiatives that will be taken in this field, according to a theme chosen locally and following the needs of the places that people work in, should always be essentially directed towards promoting the spiritual and moral formation of health-care workers and invoking the value of the importance of religious assistance for sick people in order to achieve full awareness of the salvific meaning of suffering.

I wish and hope, with the help and assistance of the Virgin Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*, that all those who are involved in the field of pastoral care in health will engage in a complete actuation of this Celebration so that 11 February 2009 will be, for the world of suffering, a Day of universal remembrance and of prayer



+ Javier Card. Lozano Barragán