

CCCB PRESS RELEASE

Pope Francis's Message for the 31st World Day of the Sick (11 February 2023)

Thursday, 12 January 2023

Earlier this week, the Vatican released [Pope Francis's message for the 31st World Day of the Sick](#), celebrated every year on 11 February, liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Holy Father's message is entitled: **"Take care of him" – Compassion as a synodal exercise of healing**. In light of the Church's synodal journey, Pope Francis invites "all of us to reflect on the fact that it is especially through the experience of vulnerability and illness that we can learn to walk together according to the style of God, which is closeness, compassion, and tenderness."

Pope Francis tells us in his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* that "we cannot be indifferent to suffering" (68), and he proposes that we read anew the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The condition of loneliness and abandonment of the sick in today's world only "takes a moment of our attention, of being moved to compassion within us, in order to eliminate it." In seeking the help of another to care for the sick man, the Samaritan asks the innkeeper to "take care of him." Only with the help, courage, and innovation of others in a "face-to-face encounter" can we organize care for the sick in a spirit of fraternity and resilience. Many healthcare workers, family members, and community volunteers are daily witnesses of this accompaniment and caring compassion.

The World Day of the Sick is an occasion to pray for individuals who are suffering, and to find concrete ways to draw nearer to them. Mindful of this call, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops recently published an open-source palliative care toolkit for parishes, families, and communities in order that they may deepen their understandings of illness, suffering, dying and death. Drawing on Catholic moral and pastoral theology, medical expertise, and the Compassionate Community model, the palliative care toolkit facilitates conversations and learning, grounded in the mercy and tenderness of the living Christ. Users of the toolkit are invited to organize group-based engagement according to the toolkit's four-module program so as to sustain and renew pastoral attention on the sick, lonely and abandoned. [Learn more about Horizons of Hope](#), its training videos, facilitator guide, social media images, and take-home resources.

Pope Francis reiterates that we are called to learn "how to be a community that truly walks together, capable of resisting the throwaway culture."

Ideas on how to promote the World Day for the Sick (11 February 2023):

1. Read and share [Pope Francis's message](#)
2. Watch and share the video: ["An experience of accompanying a loved one through palliative care"](#)
3. Visit a loved one or stranger who is shut in, lonely or sick
4. Offer gratitude to a healthcare professional or volunteer
5. Organize the [Horizons of Hope](#) program in your parish