

□ *January 29, 2016*



HEALTH - This morning in the Holy See Press Office a press conference was held to present the 24th World Day of the Sick, to be celebrated in Nazareth in the Holy Land on 11 February, feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes, on the theme "Entrusting oneself to the merciful Jesus like Mary: 'Do whatever he tells you'", based on the account of the wedding at Cana according to the Gospel of St. John.

The panel was composed of Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers (Health Pastoral Care), Msgr. Jean-Marie Mate Musivi Mupendawatu, secretary of the same dicastery, Rev. Fr. Augusto Chendi, under-secretary, Rev. Fr. Pietro Felet, S.C.I., secretary general of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land and local referent for the organisation of the World Day of the Sick 2016.

The place where the Day will be held – Nazareth, in the Holy Land – is the first point to highlight, said Archbishop Zimowski. Nazareth is the place of the incarnation, where Jesus began His salvific mission and in Galilee cured many people, as is narrated in the Gospel of St. Mark, read in these days, in which Christ calls to the sick to heal them and, in turn, is called to by them. "In a certain sense we are all constantly called upon, although each person in a different way", explained the prelate. "The human being suffers in different places and, at times, suffers terribly. He calls to another person as he is in need of his help and his presence. At times we are intimidated by the fact of not being able to heal, of not being able to help like Jesus. Let us try to overcome this embarrassment. The important thing is to keep going, to stay beside the man who suffers. He needs, perhaps more than healing, the presence of another person, of a human heart full of mercy, of human solidarity".

"These are doctors, nurses, all the representatives of the healthcare professions.

They are the institutions that serve human health. ... We must support this great tradition at all costs: the work of doctors and nurses is treated not only as a profession but also and perhaps firstly as a service, as a vocation. Care for the physically impaired and the elderly, care for the mentally ill – these sectors constitute, more than any other aspect of social life, the measure of the culture of a society and the state".

Secondly, the archbishop remarked that the Day occurs in the context of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, and that there will be a visit to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and the Basilica of the Agony in Gethsemane, the places where Christ gave Himself to the Father for our salvation. "Jesus unites humanity through His Cross, and the celebration of the World Day of the Sick in the Holy Land will help us to realise the wish Pope Francis expressed in the Bull of Indiction, that is, that 'this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with [Judaism and Islam] and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination'. Every hospital and clinic, as the Holy Father reminds us, can be a visible sign and place for promoting the culture of encounter and peace, where the experience of sickness and suffering, as well as professional and fraternal help, may contribute to overcoming every limit and division".

Finally, the archbishop spoke about the role of servants at the wedding of Cana, who Mary told to do as Christ told them. "Naturally, the miracle takes place through Christ's work; however, He sought human help in completing the prodigy. He could have made the wine appear directly in the amphorae. But He wants to count on human collaboration, and asks the servants to fill them with water. How precious and pleasing to God it is to be servants of others! This, more than anything else, makes us similar to Jesus, Who 'came not to be served, but to serve'".

"The fruit of this Day must be concrete: the closeness of our hearts that is expressed in mercy towards the sick and needy, who must feel the closeness or proximity, material and spiritual, of the entire Christian community", he concluded. "It is important that they are not left abandoned or alone as they face such a delicate moment in their life".

Fr. Chendi explained that the programme of the Day is divided into three parts: liturgical moments; theological-pastoral insights, with the presence on 9 February in the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame Centre of Jerusalem of the Catholic Ordinaries and Patriarchs and bishops of the sister Churches of the Holy Land; and concrete gestures of charity, such as visits to

various hospitals and healthcare structures present in the area.

The under-secretary also mentioned that plenary indulgence granted by Pope Francis to those who participate in this Day, with the explicit intention that, through corporal and spiritual works of mercy "they will encounter a renewed and authentic witness and discover the Christian meaning of suffering and its sharing among brothers".

With regard to the theological and pastoral dimension, the congress of 9 February "will offer the opportunity to identify problems, also of an ethical and pastoral nature, that are urgent from both a legislative and a clinical and care-related point of view. In particular, in the name of the inviolable value of every human life and the unique dignity characteristic of every person, attention will be paid to issues regarding the end of life and the care of people with different pathologies, both physically and psychologically invalidating".

In relation to the charitable dimension, Fr. Chendi explained that the visits to various entities working in the Holy Land, both Catholic and non-Catholic, will constitute "a tangible sign of what Pope Francis describes in his message as Mary's tenderness in Cana of Galilee, which translates into a predisposition towards serving those in need and in particular our brothers and sisters in sickness".

Source: Vatican Radio, January 28, 2016