



11 February 2024

My dear brothers and sisters,

Each year, the Catholic community worldwide remembers on the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, those who are sick and frail among us as we observe the World Day of the Sick (February 11, 2024). On this occasion, I wish to extend my prayers and personal closeness to all those in the Archdiocese of Toronto who may be ill, isolated or lonely. Be assured that our faith community is praying for you, asking for the comfort and consolation of Our Lord in your life each day.

We also give thanks for all those who have been called to the ministry of healing through our Catholic hospitals and health care organizations. Doctors, nurses, chaplains and support care workers and volunteers reflect the face of Christ in serving those living with ailments. I also express my gratitude to family members and friends who accompany the sick and the suffering through personal visits, ongoing care and most importantly, a prescription of friendship, love and presence.

As we strive to foster a culture of care and love, we know that many in our country still struggle to live with dignity, especially those with disabilities. It is particularly alarming to witness the unsettling increase in the number of medically assisted deaths in Canada, ever mindful of efforts underway to expand euthanasia in the years ahead even further to those suffering solely from mental health issues. The Church must offer clear alternatives to those who feel they are a burden on society or believe their lives no longer have value. Palliative care is the response to those persons on their final journey to eternity.

Every breath, from the moment of conception to natural death, is precious in the eyes of God. May we each recognize this reality in all those we encounter, especially those who are sick, frail, suffering and struggling to find hope. Let us bring light, joy and love to the sick and acknowledge that they bring the same gifts to us as valued and cherished members of our family. Those terminally ill need to know that they are loved, they have great worth, they are in no way of burden and that their life and their grave illness have meaning and purpose. We must be close to them and share with them the redemptive dimension of illness when united to the Cross of Jesus.

I echo the sentiment of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his message for the 2024 World Day of the Sick: *“The sick, the vulnerable and the poor are at the heart of the Church; they must also be at the heart of our human concern and pastoral attention. May we never forget this!”*

We humbly ask that Our Lady of Lourdes, Health and Refuge of the Sick, to intercede for us and strengthen the ill and lovingly accompany those who care for them with maternal closeness.

Sincerely Yours in Jesus with Mary,

Most Rev. Francis Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto