

# The Shroud and the Sick

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## POPE'S MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

VATICAN CITY, 18 DEC 2010 (VIS) - Made public today was the Holy Father's Message for the nineteenth World Day of the Sick which will be held, as is traditional, on 11 February, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The Pope begins his Message by recalling his pastoral visit to the Italian city of Turin last May where, he writes, "I had the opportunity to pause in reflection and prayer before the Holy Shroud, before that suffering face which invites us to meditate upon the One Who took upon Himself the passion of mankind in all times and places, including our own sufferings, difficulties and sins".

Having noted that "suffering remains charged with mystery, and is difficult for us to accept and to bear", Benedict XVI mentions the case of the Apostle Thomas, who struggled to believe in the redemptive passion but, "faced with Christ showing His wounds, his reaction was transformed into a moving profession of faith: 'my Lord and my God'".

It is, the Pope goes on to explain, "through the wounds of Christ that, with the eyes of hope, we can see the evils afflicting humanity. ... God, Truth and Love personified, wished to suffer for us and with us. He became man in order to suffer with man, to suffer truly in flesh and blood. Hence in all human suffering we are joined by One Who shares and carries that suffering with us; all suffering contains 'consolatio', the consolation of God's compassionate love, and so the star of hope rises".

Referring then to the next World Youth Day, due to be held in Madrid, Spain, in August 2011, the Pope addresses himself to young people "who are undergoing the experience of sickness. Often the Passion, the Cross of Jesus, scares us because it seems to be the negation of life", he writes. "In fact, the opposite is true! The Cross is God's 'yes' to mankind. ... Only He is capable of freeing the world from evil, and of bringing His Kingdom of justice, peace and love, to which we all aspire".

The Pope also expresses his affection for all sick people, whom he tells of his "participation in the sufferings and hopes you experience every day, in union with the crucified and risen Christ, that He may bring peace and healing to your hearts. With Him, may the Virgin Mary also watch over you, the Virgin whom we trustingly invoke as 'Health for the Sick' and 'Consoler of the Suffering'".

At the end of his Message, the Pope calls on the authorities "to dedicate ever greater energy to healthcare structures capable of bring help and support to the suffering, especially the poor and needy". He also greets "the bishops and priests, consecrated persons, seminarians, healthcare workers, volunteers, and everyone who lovingly dedicates themselves to cure and alleviate the wounds of their suffering brothers and sisters, in hospitals, care homes and families. Always be aware that in the face of the sick you see the Face of faces: the Face of Christ".