



January 23, 2017

Dear Clergy and Parishes,

Greetings of peace to you as the month of January soon gives away to February. Hope is in the air and spring will soon be here!

On Saturday, February 11, we celebrate the World Day of the Sick. However, this year, most of us will be observing this important celebration on Sunday, February 12. This special occasion brings to mind the apparitions that took place in Lourdes, France. It also brings to mind the mission little Bernadette was given many years ago to build a shrine for the sick, elderly, and vulnerable.

We are far from Lourdes but we can continue to bring hope to our sick by showing them merciful gestures of love. When we offer a thousand-and-one services: a comfortable environment, nourishment, time to listen to stories and life experiences, offer forgiveness, or assist those in need in any manner, we are showing God's mercy and love. Being present with someone who approaches the final call from this world is truly a moment of blessings not only for them, but for us.

In the context of today, it is good to remember that from the beginning of times we were given the breath of life by God, the Creator. In good stewardship, we are to promote this gift of life to natural death. However, some would like to have control of when our last breath is expended. As we know, modern medication and methods offer different ways of controlling our suffering and pain. Unfortunately, they also offer different ways to end life. Is this decision really ours to make? As we know, the palliative care system has been established to help us during these challenging times.

Again, the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) has prepared a package to help us celebrate this feast day in our parishes. We have included the package with this letter. I encourage you to carefully review the material, as it will help facilitate this task. As well, it would be good to take this occasion to read and share our Holy Father's message and to collect names of individuals you would like to pray for and place them in front of the Altar for a special blessing.

We all know someone who is suffering through health issues, who is elderly or vulnerable, and needs our prayers and concern. Therefore, I encourage you to make this day a special day, and in our celebrations may our preparations, liturgies, and homilies express our mercy, our love, and our intentions.

May the healing hands of the Lord, through the intercession of Mary and St. Bernadette, teach us of the Mercy the Father has for each one of us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Albert Thévenot M. Afr.

Bishop of Prince Albert

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*To help our people rediscover Christ, the incarnate word of God because we are all called to holiness'*