



MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS
FOR THE SICK, AGING
AND HOMEBOUND

My dear friends:

Sickness, suffering, and dying remain an inescapable part of life. To those without faith they constitute the "problem of evil." For centuries wise men and philosophers have tried to find some reasonable explanation for evil. They have yet no satisfying answer.

Christ, our Lord, though He wrote no book, revealed the meaning of the mystery by suffering Himself, and making pain part of His new order of salvation. In His passion and death on the Cross Christ made plain the significance of sickness and sorrow to all who believe in Him. "I was sick, and you visited me," He will say to each of us on judgment day.

Thus, the sick person is no longer a mere sinner, someone accursed and to be avoided, but an image and sign of Jesus Christ, Himself. In imitation of our divine Master we take pity on all who suffer. In serving the sick we know we serve Christ in His suffering members. "Bear the ills of everyone," St. Ignatius of Antioch tells us.

This is why Franciscan Mission Associates has prepared this booklet of meditations and prayers for the sick, the aging, the disabled, and shut-ins. All of us, whatever our condi-

tion in life, share in building the city of God that is to come. In that heavenly city the leaves of the trees along the river of life will cure us forever of all our mortal infirmities.

So please pray often for the sick and the suffering, visit them, and encourage them to walk worthy of their special vocation. Please induce them not to waste their pain, but to offer it to God for those of us who are struggling at home and abroad to make Christ's message of salvation known.

Ever gratefully,

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The Cover: The sea resumes its shape and keeps its form after it washes sandy shores and dashes against its rocky coasts. So, too, must our life accommodate itself to the pain and trouble of sickness without losing its identity, or purpose.

FOR THOSE TAKEN SICK

Reflection: How very few of us will ever voluntarily choose any form of sickness or suffering! When such a trial comes, you must try to view it as a sign of God's special mercy. "Whom the Lord loves, He also chastises." If you accept God's favors, must you not accept sorrow from His hands, too?

Petition: Holy Job, patient prototype of Christ, you remained as faithful to God in affliction as you were in prosperity. Please come to my aid now in this necessity, and aid me to bless His holy name, as you did. By God's power may I be restored to my former state as you were.

God's Word: We prove we are servants of God by great fortitude in times of suffering. 2 Cor. 6:4

Practice: With bodily activity curtailed you should be more ready in spirit to grow closer to Christ. So make good use of this short time of special grace.

FOR THE DISABLED, CONVALESCENTS, AND SHUT-INS

Reflection: Many hurry heedlessly past hospitals and convalescent homes, intent on their cares and business, with hardly a thought to those suffering within. Your impairment and confinement offers a heaven-sent chance to re-evaluate and become fully aware of life's real meaning. Now is an acceptable time to come to terms with God. It is never too late or too soon to love Him.

Petition: Archangel Raphael, who cured Tobias of his blindness and guided his son on his journey, please intercede now for me, and help all of us who suffer. Angel of light and love, assist us now, heal our infirmities, and implore God's mercy on us.

God's Word: We bear in our body the sufferings of the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be seen in our body.
2 Cor. 4:10

Practice: For those who love God all things work together for good. Study and pray how you may turn your present situation to best advantage before God.

FOR THOSE CONFINED TO BED

Reflection: How time drags on leaden feet when you are restricted to bed whether in a hospital or at home! Yet, you have a work to do for Christ and with Him even when you cannot move about. How many of those who are healthy are heedless of Him!

Petition: Lord, Jesus Christ, you once said, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavily burdened." In your mercy assist me to draw close to you now so as not to waste this moment of pain and physical confinement.

God's Word: It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to make up all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of His body, the Church. Col. 1:24

Practice: Trust today in God's ever watchful care of you since, as He told us, not a sparrow falls from heaven without His knowing of it.

**A Special Message to
those who suffer**

“The pain of grief is just as much a part of life as the joy of love; it is, perhaps, the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment.”

Colin Murray Parker

FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT EAT

Reflection: Nearly two-thirds of the people in the world never get enough to eat while the other third buys diet pills because it eats too much. Christ, our Lord, tells us, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

Petition: Lord, Almighty, your help has enabled many of your servants in affliction. Please help me to make a virtue of my present necessity. I implore your mercy that I may nourish myself on your word and Christ's promises.

God's Word: It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Jn 6:63

Practice: Since for your body's sake you must now fast, make of it a prayer that your fasting may also be spiritually effective.

FOR THOSE UNABLE TO SLEEP

Reflection: As bad as any bodily pain is the tired mind unable to renew and refresh itself by sleep. How slowly the night hours pass for those weary of wakefulness! The Lord, our God, never sleeps and watches always over you. He is close by you if you turn to Him in faith, and forget the cares and troubles of the day.

Petition: Heavenly Father, your servant, Joseph, protector of the Holy Family, often had his sleep interrupted for your work. May his example and fidelity help me now and all those who need quiet, repose, and restful sleep that we may awaken refreshed in body and spirit.

God's Word: In peace I lie down, and fall asleep at once, since you alone, God, make my rest secure. Ps. 4:8

Practice: If He comes unexpectedly, He must not find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to all, Stay Awake! Mk 13:37

FOR THE AGED AND INFIRM

Reflection: As you grow older, how much faster time seems to fly! You wonder, "Where have our years gone?" However old and infirm you may become, you can truly remain young at heart. The Lord renews our youth like the eagle's.

Petition: Remain with me, Lord God, in my old age and growing infirmity. Please comfort me when lonely and depressed. Teach me to remain ever young in heart and hope that you will restore the vigor of youth in the joy of your kingdom.

God's Word: My soul thirsts for God, the God of life. When shall I go to see the face of God? Ps 42:2

Practice: Let us imitate each day the example of St. Paul for whom, as he said, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." While you live, God still has a work, however humble, for you to do for Him.



“Christ is the only master; Christ is the only book, the book that contains all divine wisdom. My book should be Jesus Christ on the Cross: a book entirely written with His precious blood that is the price of my soul, and the redemption of the world. The five chapters of this book are the five sacred wounds. I want to study this one book alone, and other books only as they comment on it.”

FOR THE MENTALLY AFFLICTED

Reflection: We live in troubled times, an age of great anxiety. All of us are affected subtly by the climate of our age. You must try to learn emotionally as well as intellectually that God is truly very close to each of us. His peace He offers you in a way the world never can.

Petition: You are, O God, my rock and my fortress. Please grant me and all who are afflicted mentally and emotionally the peace Christ promised. Even as you comforted Jonah and Jeremiah, your prophets, be with us now. In your goodness help us to put all our confidence in Christ's love and care of us.

God's Word: Why so downcast, my soul, why do you sigh within me? Put your hope in God. I shall praise Him yet, my savior, my God, when my soul is downcast. Ps 42:5-6

Practice: Remain always aware of the presence of God in His creation, in all whom you meet, and within yourself.

FOR THOSE IN GREAT PAIN

Reflection: Christ, our Lord, learned to say the psalms at His mother's knee in Nazareth. As He hung in His agony on the cross for love of us, the same prayers sprung spontaneously to His lips. In your moment of pain you become one with the suffering Christ.

Petition: Father in heaven, faith in Christ has restored many to health. Send your Holy Spirit to comfort me even as you strengthened your Son, our Lord, in the garden at Gethsemane. Help me to seek your aid in your Son's own prayer, "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

God's Word: From the depths I call to you, God; listen, Lord, to my cry for help! Listen compassionately to my pleading. Ps 130:1-2

Practice: God knows how difficult it is to be patient while in pain. Christ learned this lesson as He was nailed to His cross. That is why you can be sure He will hear you now.

FOR DOCTORS, NURSES, AND ALL WHO TEND THE SICK

Reflection: We all depend on one another greatly. This truth you may forget when you are well. The vocation of doctors, nurses, and all who care for the sick is often trying. Remember to pray for your doctors and nurses. Be grateful to God when you are cured, but be sure also to thank the doctors, too.

Petition: By your mercy, Lord of life, assist all doctors, nurses, and all who tend the sick to heal my bodily ills. May your Son, the divine physician, heal me spiritually as well, and assist all in poor health.

God's Word: It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners.
Mk 2:17

Practice: The more we think of the needs of those around us, the less time we have to brood about ourselves. Doctors and nurses are human enough to appreciate a brave smile, and a kind, cheery word.

A TIME OF TROUBLE

At one time or another affliction forms part of everyone's life. Then, we can either make of the moment of pain a golden opportunity, or waste it. Three points may help us face the challenge of suffering:

1. Since Christ our Lord suffered and died for us voluntarily, pain still hurts but now it is suffused with new meaning. Love transforms the bitterness. So St. Peter assures us, "If you can have some share in the suffering of Christ, be glad."

2. To accept sickness with all its consequences requires a firm act of will and God's assisting grace. Then, we use pain as a penance for our sins and for others.

3. When we join our cross to Christ's, our illness takes us out of ourselves and adds a universal value to our private trial.

May you in sorrow show Christian courage, and cheerfully use your weakness to make the strength of God's grace manifest.

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