

The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing another's pain

Some excerpts from Pope Leo XIV's letter on the occasion of the 34th World Day of the Sick

Dear brothers and sisters,

The thirty-fourth World Day of the Sick will be solemnly celebrated in Chiclayo, Peru, on 11 February 2026. For this occasion, I would recommend reflecting once again on the figure of the Good Samaritan, for he is always relevant and essential for rediscovering the beauty of charity and the social dimension of compassion. This reflection further directs our attention towards the needy and all those who suffer, especially the sick.

1. The gift of encounter: the joy of offering closeness and presence



We live immersed in a culture of speed, immediacy and haste – a culture of “discard” and indifference that prevents us from pausing along the way and drawing near to acknowledge the needs and suffering that surround us. In the parable,

when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he did not “pass by”. Instead, he looked upon him with an open and attentive gaze – the very gaze of Jesus – which led him to act with human and compassionate closeness. The Samaritan “stopped, approached the man and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs... [Above all] he gave him his time.” Jesus does not merely teach us who our neighbour is, but rather how to become a neighbour; in other words, how we can draw close to others. In this respect, we can affirm with Saint Augustine that the Lord did not intend to show us who that man's neighbour was, but rather to whom he should become a neighbour. Indeed, no one is truly a neighbour until they freely

draw near to another. Thus, the one who became a neighbour was the one who showed mercy.

2. The shared mission of caring for the sick

Saint Luke continues, noting that the Samaritan “was moved with pity.” Compassion, in this sense, implies a profound emotion that compels us to act. It is a feeling that springs from within and leads to a committed response to another's suffering. In this parable, compassion is the defining characteristic of active love; it is neither theoretical nor merely sentimental, but manifests itself through concrete gestures.

3. Always driven by love for God, to encounter ourselves and our neighbour

In the double commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27), we recognize the primacy of love for God and its direct consequences for every dimension of human love and relationship.

Let us raise our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick.

*Sweet Mother,
do not part from me.
Turn not your eyes away from me.
Walk with me at every moment
and never leave me alone.
You who always protect me
as a true Mother,
obtain for me
the blessing of the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.*

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