

REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS

February 2012

Editor's Note: Apostleship of Prayer receives monthly prayer intentions from Pope Benedict XVI and urges Christians throughout the world to unite in prayer for those intentions. The reflections below seek to illuminate the Holy Father's concerns.

General Intention - Access to Water

That all peoples may have access to water and other resources needed for daily life.



An estimated two-thirds of the earth's surface is water. For most of us all we need to do is turn on a tap for clean water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. Water seems so cheap and available that we tend to take it for granted and waste it. Yet lack of access to water kills more children annually than AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. The United Nations declared 2005 to 2015 as the "International Decade for Action: Water for Life."

This month Pope Benedict draws our attention the need to take care of this precious resource so that all people will have the water they need to live. The Holy Father maintains that access to water is part of every person's right to life. In a message for the 2007 World Water Day he wrote: "Water, a common good of the human family, constitutes an essential element for life...Access to water is in fact one of the inalienable rights of every human being." He repeated this message a year later saying that water is not "an economic commodity" and the right to water "is founded on the dignity of the human person."

Water also has a profound religious significance. The Sacred Scriptures use water as a symbol of purification and of life. God, the Creator, uses water to sustain and clean all that lives. In Baptism water purifies from sin and gives new life.

We pray this month that the nations, communities, and people of the world will value God's gift of water and use it in a way that makes it accessible to every one of our brothers and sisters in the human family. We join St. Francis of Assisi in his prayer: Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Reflection:

In what ways do I value and conserve the water that I consume each day?

Reading:

Ezekiel 47:12 Wherever the river flows every sort of living creature shall live.



Mission Intention - Health Workers

That the Lord may sustain the efforts of health workers assisting the sick and elderly in the world's poorest regions.



Every year on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, we celebrate the World Day of the Sick. On this day we pray for our brothers and sisters who are carrying the cross of illness.

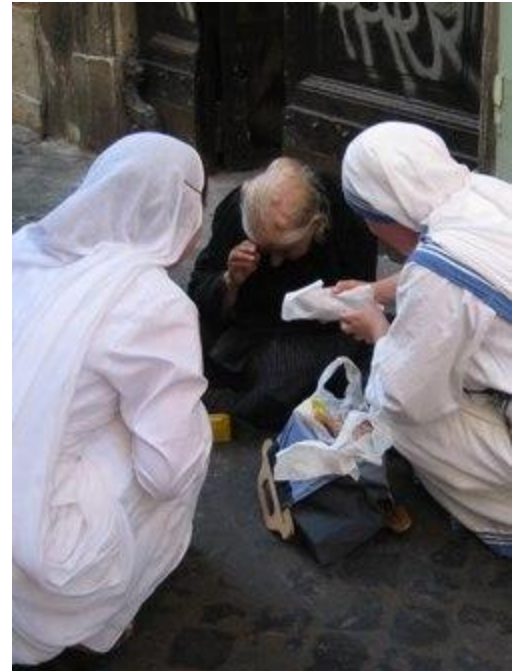
With that in mind, this month Pope Benedict asks us to join him in praying also for health workers, especially those in the poorest regions of the world. Health workers in poor countries are truly missionaries as they offer people the Gospel not so much with words as with their actions of love.

Caring for the sick is extremely challenging. The work is hard, especially without adequate medicine and equipment. The work is also dangerous, as health workers are continuously exposed to infectious diseases. Even diseases that are easily prevented and treated are rampant in many

of the poor areas of the world. Health workers in these areas are often exhausted and tempted to hopelessness. We join Pope Benedict in praying that God may sustain them.

Blessed John Paul II called the work of health workers "the apostolate of God's mercy." Health care is, in Pope Benedict's words, "central to the mission of the Church." In some areas of the world, the only health care available is provided by the Church. The Church as the Body of Christ carries on Jesus' healing ministry for the benefit of all, without discrimination.

Jesus commanded us to care for the sick when he told the parable of the Good Samaritan and said: "Go and do likewise." We pray that the Lord may strengthen health workers to continue to serve God's poorest children throughout the world.



Reflection:

What are some of the qualities that you have appreciated in health care workers who have cared for you or a loved one?

Reading:

Luke 10:25-37 You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Prayer of the Month



God our Father, you sent your Son Jesus to reveal the great love you have for each one. Look upon the world's health care workers—doctors, nurses, administrators, and all who serve our brothers and sisters who are sick. They share in your Son's ministry of healing. May they continue his work with respect for the sacredness of life and with the compassion that filled the Heart of Jesus when he met anyone who was sick.

Amen.

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