



Archevêque de Montréal

**Pastoral Letter:
WORLD DAY OF THE SICK**

**‘So that no one will feel alone!’
February 11, 2021, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes
(Title from Pope Francis’ message, no. 5, for the 29th World Day of the Sick)**

The exhortation to visit the sick of which Jesus speaks rings throughout the history of the Church and applies across the ages: “I was sick and you visited me” (Mt 25:36).

Women and men dedicate their lives to caring for the sick. Many religious communities, public and private institutions, and community organizations were founded precisely for this purpose. Family members and friends serve as natural caregivers or give of their time to assist a loved one.

During this pandemic that weighs heavily upon us, one of the most painful aspects is the enormous difficulty – frequently the impossibility – of accompanying a family member who is sick. The most natural response – visiting, listening, comforting – cannot be offered in many cases. What we wanted to do above all else – to be present to a loved one during their final days or hours – was not to be because our father, our mother, our brother or sister remained physically inaccessible.

We wanted to visit family members who were sick, but we could not. We wanted to visit the sick in various institutions or in their homes, but we could not.

We turned to prayer and we continue to pray. We beg God to reach out to our loved ones and to bring them his peace. Aware as we are of our own limitations, we beg Jesus Christ Himself to visit our loved ones and all those who are ill, knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God and that nothing can keep Jesus Christ from entering into the heart of those who are sick, filling them with his gentle light.

We have supported and continue to support all those who work in the field of health care: these women and men who have devoted themselves for almost a year now, without counting the cost, risking their health, their lives, confronting fatigue and a future shrouded in uncertainty. We pray for them and for their families who share the burden with them.

We look for many different ways to communicate with those who are sick, as circumstances permit: by telephone, videoconference, writing letters, visiting them while taking the required precautions, or requesting that a priest administer the Anointing of the Sick.

Again we are confronted with our fragility and our mortality. Could we perhaps learn to turn once again to the author of life: God? Turn as individuals and as a community, as a family, as the People of God and as a society, turn away from discounting God and turn toward God, to stand in God’s presence?

Are we willing to place our entire lives in God's hands: our hunger for love and happiness, our joys and sorrows, our plans and dreams, our successes and failures, our sins and our sufferings, our loneliness and our loved ones, our illnesses and our death, our ailing loved ones and all who are sick, and the dearly departed and their families?

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