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In the mystery of his Passion, death and Resurrection, human suffering takes on meaning and the fullness of light. In his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, the Servant of God John Paul II offers enlightening words in this regard. "Human suffering, has reached its culmination in the Passion of Christ", he wrote. "And at the same time it has entered into a completely new dimension and a new order: it has been linked to love... to that love which creates good, also drawing it out from evil by means of suffering, just as the supreme good of the Redemption of the world was drawn from the Cross of Christ, and from that Cross constantly takes its beginning.

The Cross of Christ has become a source from which flow rivers of living water" (n. 18).

Every Christian is called to relive, in different and ever new contexts, the Parable of the Good Samaritan who, passing by a man whom robbers had left half-dead by the roadside, "saw him and had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.(cf. Lk 10: 33-35).

At the end of the parable, Jesus said: "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10: 37). With these words he is also addressing us. Jesus exhorts us to bend over the physical and mental wounds of so many of our brothers and sisters whom we meet on the highways of the world. He helps us to understand that with God's grace, accepted and lived out in our daily life, the experience of sickness and suffering can become a school of hope. In truth, as I said in the Encyclical *Spe salvi*, "It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love" (n. 37).

In this Year for Priests, my thoughts turn in particular to you, dear priests, "ministers of the sick", signs and instruments of Christ's compassion who must

reach out to every person marked by suffering. I ask you, dear presbyters, to spare no effort in giving them care and comfort. Time spent beside those who are put to the test may bear fruits of grace for all the other dimensions of pastoral care. Lastly I address you, dear sick people and I ask you to pray and to offer your suffering up for priests, so that they may continue to be faithful to their vocation and that their ministry may be rich in spiritual fruits for the benefit of the whole Church.

With these sentiments, I implore, for the sick, as well as for all who nurse them, the maternal protection of Mary *Salus Infirmorum*, and I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to all.

(Extracts from the Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the Eighteenth World Day of the Sick)

To read the complete Message, [click here](#).