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A Message to the Sick: His Holiness Pope Pius XII: Radio Message on the "Day of the Sick," February 14 the Marian Year

Pope Pius XII

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Message to the Sick
His Holiness Pope Pius XII

WHEN last September, in response to the inspirations of grace, We proclaimed the celebration of the Marian Year, and shortly after, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, We Ourselves wished to inaugurate it in a solemn way from the brilliant Liberian Basilica, by going there to lay Our petitions at the feet of her who is the "Salvation of the Roman people" and of all peoples, even then We were thinking of you, beloved sons and daughters who are ill, you who can lay special claim to be among those closest to Our heart and soul.

The Mother of God, indeed, bends over you with loving tenderness, eager to dry the tears of the afflicted who run to her maternal breasts to a secure haven in the tempests. So also the Vicar of Christ reaches upon you, the precious jewels of the Church of God and her powerful source of spiritual energy, for the realization in this holy year of the many and sorely needed blessings envisaged in our Encyclical "Fulgens Corona" for the well-being of humanity and of the Church herself.

This lively hope moves Us to address you today, with the intention of gathering all of you under the loving protection of our common Mother, Mary Immaculate, of surrounding you with Our charity and that of all the faithful who are praying for you, and of reminding you of the mission to which Divine Providence has destined you in your sickness.

Thanks to modern technology We are able to speak directly to many who are ill and We hope that We shall be able to reach in other ways those who cannot hear Our voice. Certainly We would wish to have the omnipresence of God: We would wish to draw near to each one of you, beloved sons and daughters, languishing in hospitals large and small, in sanatoriums, clinics, rest-homes, prisons, barracks, under the desolate roofs of the poorest, or in rooms set apart in your homes. Little children with pale faces like flowers which grew without the warmth of the sun; young people whose rare smile expresses strength of soul rather than the fresh bloom of youth; middle-aged people, cruelly taken away from their usual active lives; the aged, to whose natural weariness sickness has added discomfort and suffering.

We have always begged Jesus to make Our heart in some way like His: a good heart, a meek heart, a heart open to all sufferings, to all pains. But how greatly would We wish to have some reflection of the omnipotence that is His! How We would desire to pass in the midst of you, drying tears, bringing comfort, healing wounds, giving back again strength and health!

We must content Ourselves with being in the midst of you in spirit. We linger beside infants as a mother would, beside parents trembling at the thought of having, perhaps, to leave their children orphans. And to each one We give Our blessing, praying the all-powerful God, our Loving Father, to grant, by means of it, whatever He judges suitable to the special plan of providence He has chosen for each one of you. And may the Lord grant that when this brief visit with you in spirit is over, each one of you may feel the good effects, spiritual and material, of Our affectionate blessing, as well as the comfort of the words We address to you with all Our heart.

(1) Behold, We seem to see there in that hospital ward a young man who is suffering and in his suffering is cursing. Once he was strong and handsome; he was the pride and joy of his parents, whose hearts are now breaking because they fear losing him, wasted away by a relentless disease. And the youth feels as if life were slipping away from him: farewell to health, farewell to strength, to the surgings of hope, farewell to the plans cherished with boyish enthusiasm; farewell to love. And the young man rebels: "Why, why? Haven't I too a right to life? And can a good God let me suffer so, let me die? What evil have I done?"

How many are you, sons and daughters, how many of you have contorted your features and raged with anger in your hearts and curses on your lips? To you especially would We wish to approach, to place Our hand gently on your brow burning with fever. We would wish, in all tenderness, to whisper to each of you: soul in anguish, why do you rebel? Let fall on this dark mystery of suffering the rays of light which come from the cross of Jesus: What evil had He done? Look, over your bed, perhaps in the hospital ward, there is a picture of the Madonna. What evil had she done? Soul in desolation, because overwhelmed with suffering, listen to this: Jesus and His Mother have suffered, certainly not through their own fault, but willingly and in complete conformity with the divine plan. Have you ever asked yourself why?

It may be that you have done evil. Think back. Perhaps you have offended God many times, in many ways. You know that a serious sin merits for the soul eternal damnation; and you instead are still alive

under the merciful gaze of God, in the loving arms of Mary. If, then, the Lord is now punishing some sin of yours, you should not on that account curse and debase yourself; you are not a slave, as it were, punished by a cruel master, but a child of God, a Father Who wishes not to take revenge, but to correct you. He wants you to say to Him: "I have sinned," in order to pardon you and restore to you the life of the soul.

Even if you had done no wrong, if you were innocent, still you should not rebel. As a matter of fact, the idea of punishment does not always explain suffering and human woes. Do you remember what is written in the Gospel? One day Jesus came upon a man born blind, and after His disciples had asked Him whether that man or his parents had sinned, He replied: "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but the works of God were to be made manifest in him." (John, 9,2-3) Even the misfortunes of the innocent, therefore, are a mysterious manifestation of the divine glory. Lest you be wearied by long reflections look at the Holy and Immaculate Mother: she holds in her lap the lifeless body of her Divine Son. Could you possibly imagine that the Sorrowful Mother would curse God? That she would ask the reason: for such suffering? We would not have been redeemed if that Mother had not seen her Son die in torment, and there would not have been for us any possibility of salvation.

For all of you, dear children, who do not yet know how to pronounce the "So be it" of resignation and patience, We invoke God's blessing, asking that He send a ray of His light into your souls, and that you may cease to contradict with your will His plan, His will, His work, that you may become convinced that His Divine Fatherhood is still loving and benevolent, even when He judges it necessary to make use of the bitter chalice of suffering.

(2) Yet, it is not always thus, dear children. Not always do souls rebel and curse under the weight of pain. There are, thanks to God, souls resigned to the divine will, serene, joyous souls; souls even that have positively sought out suffering. The story of one in particular We heard during the glorious Holy Year when Our children came to Us in extraordinary numbers from all parts of the world.

There was a young woman, twenty years old, of humble origin, to whom Our Lord had given great charm as well as innocence. Everyone felt her attractiveness, for about her radiated the fragrance of an unsullied life. But one day she grew fearful lest she become an occasion of sin, and becoming interiorly convinced of this, she went to receive Our Lord and in a burst of generosity asked Him to take away all her

beauty and even her health. God granted her prayer and accepted her offer for the salvation of souls. We know that she is still living, though burning and being consumed like a living flame before God's throne of justice and love. She does not curse, does not murmur. She does not ask God, "Why?" There is always a smile on her lips and within her soul she treasures abiding peace and joy. One should ask her why she accepts suffering, why she is happy in it, why she looked for sufferings. And the same question should be asked of thousands of other souls who offer themselves to God in silent holocaust.

(3) Beloved sons and daughters! If to your eyes, wearied with sickness, the whole universe, gloomy and oppressive, is confined within the narrow space of a little room, let in the light of faith, and at once it regains its limitless dimensions. Faith will certainly not make you love suffering for its own sake, but it will give you an insight into the many noble reasons for which sickness can be serenely accepted and even desired.

Here is a man who has many sins to expiate, or at least he has stains on his soul: suffering will purify him. Here is a young woman who was once good, but did not possess a strong character, so necessary for one who has to be a wife and mother: suffering has been for her like a fire which has tempered her and given her great strength. You, perhaps, have desired martyrdom: you have dreamed that the chance might be offered to you also to suffer for Jesus. Thank God for it: your bodily affliction is like shedding blood, a real form of martyrdom. And you, do you want to be like Jesus? Do you want to transform yourself into Him? Do you want to be a channel of life for Him? In sickness you can find the cross and be nailed to it and thus die to yourself so that He may live and make use of you. How many of you, beloved children, would like to help Jesus save souls: Then offer Him your sufferings according to all the intentions for which He continually offers Himself on the altars of our churches. Your sacrifice, united to the sacrifice of Jesus, will bring many sinners back to the Father; many without faith will find the true Faith; many weak Christians will receive the strength to live fully the teaching and the law of Christ. And on the day on which the mystery of Providence in the economy of salvation will be revealed in Heaven, you will finally see to what extent the world of the healthy is your debtor.

And now, beloved sons and daughters, We leave you. We pray to Jesus, friend of the suffering, to remain with you, to remain in you. We pray to the Immaculate Virgin, your most affectionate Mother, to comfort you with her smile and to protect you beneath her mantle.

... Radio Message on the "Day of the Sick"
February 14 in the Marian Year

In recent years moralists and Catholic writers have been careful to point out and condemn certain practices which are followed in many fertility clinics. It is well understood now by Catholic doctors and by most Catholic couples that some of the methods of making tests are forbidden by the Natural Law. However, we have done little on the positive side to give constructive assistance to those childless couples who are anxious to have children.

It is easy to condemn practices, but it is frequently more difficult to offer solutions to the problems of people who want to cooperate with God's plan for the kingdom of Heaven. We have not yet matched the zeal of those who promote the limitation of births among our American people. It is with considerable satisfaction, therefore that LINACRE QUARTERLY presents the following series of articles by zealous and learned Catholic doctors who are contributing to a positive, Catholic and scientific solution of a perplexing problem which has been the cause of much unhappiness to many good Catholic people.

THE EDITOR

A Plan For Parenthood

THE OPERATION OF AN INFERTILITY CLINIC IN ONE CATHOLIC HOSPITAL

- General Administration—John J. Carty, M.D.
 The Role of the Gynecologist—Joseph B. Doyle, M.D.
 The Function of the Internist—Francis W. Drinan, M.D.
 Urological Aspects—Richard E. Stiles, M.D.
 Psychiatric Problems—Philip Quinn, M.D.
 Some Moral Phases of Infertility Problems—

John J. Lynch, S.J.

The doctors are members of The Guild of St. Luke of Boston