



Catholic Diocese of Victoria *Office of the Bishop*

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January 15, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

The twenty-fourth World Day of the Sick, observed annually on February 11, is a wonderful opportunity to enter more deeply into the experience of offering the Mercy of Christ to our elderly, frail and sick brothers and sisters.

Because we are busy and preoccupied with necessary but worldly activities for the daily maintenance of our lives, we sometimes forget to keep Christ at the center of all we do. We tend to reduce the essence of our lives to *just let me get through this day*. However, if we choose to really listen, Christ will reveal the reason for our lives and the ultimate purpose of all human existence: *Charity*. Pope Francis teaches us that “true charity requires courage: let us overcome the fear of getting our hands dirty so as to help those in need.”

When there is something beautiful in us we should desire to share it with others. When we see others who are less fortunate than we are, we should have a strong desire to help them. This desire is part of our baptismal vocation, so original and natural that it is within us before we are conscious of it. The charitable work we do, and our care for others, is in response to this inner calling. The supreme purpose of our being is to share in the lives of others; to accompany others in communion; and to share in the joy and sorrow of others. I am grateful for the many representatives in our parishes who distribute Holy Communion, and to those who offer comfort and companionship to people who are sick or dying.

Our Diocese is blessed with a team (the Diocesan Health Care Committee) who are working hard to assist clergy and parishes to form an active and efficient pastoral outreach ministry, bringing the presence of Christ to the sick, shut-ins, the elderly and those who are dying at home, in hospitals or in care facilities.

We are also blessed with two Catholic healthcare facilities on Vancouver Island: Mount St. Mary Hospital in Victoria and St. Joseph’s Hospital in Comox; both these Catholic institutions have full-time pastoral care. In addition, Mass is celebrated in many nursing homes throughout the Diocese; Fr. Vince Borre serves as the full-time chaplain in Victoria for extended care facilities, and Fr. Ian Stuart is the full-time chaplain for the Royal Jubilee and Victoria General hospitals.

In Christ’s mercy and grace, we are called to joyfully announce to all people, especially the elderly and those who are ill or dying, that the Good News of Jesus provides an opportunity to live in relationship with him, even though we may be in difficult circumstances. We have the chance to rediscover the symbolism and meaning of our baptism: to be buried with Christ and resurrected through this redeeming Sacrament as ‘new creations’. As Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glorious power, so can we begin to live a new life, even if it is our last day on earth.

When the elderly and sick are surrounded by caring and compassionate brothers and sisters, suffering can become something meaningful to be embraced by those who experience it, as well as by those who accompany them. St. Thérèse of Lisieux inspired us: “Every second belongs to the Infinite.” When people are deeply loved and

cared for as our precious brothers and sisters, they will choose to live fully, even in weakness and grave illness, until Christ calls them home to heaven.

During this Year of Mercy, I encourage you to commit to attend the Pastoral Care Outreach sessions being offered, to learn more about the spiritual care of the elderly, sick and dying (Victoria dates are listed below). For more information about the Pastoral Care Outreach sessions, please contact Moira King, Diocesan Health Care Committee Chair: moiraking@shaw.ca.

Let us help one another to live in the joy and peace that is found in the eternal, loving gaze of our Saviour, the Lord of all Mercy.

In Communion,



Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria

Pastoral Care Outreach Sessions Victoria Area



Saturday, February 13: Holy Cross

Session 1: *The Healing Ministry of Christ*, 9 AM – 2 PM. Please bring a bag lunch. Coffee and Tea will be provided. Fr. William Hann will be the morning presenter. To register please call the parish office at (250) 477-5321 or email office@holycrossvictoria.org.

Saturday, March 12: Holy Cross

Session 2: *Listening and Communication; and Mental Health*, 9 AM – 2 PM. Please bring a bag lunch. Coffee and Tea will be provided. To register please call the parish office at (250) 477-5321 or email office@holycrossvictoria.org.

Saturday, April 9: St. Joseph The Worker

Session 3: *The Grieving Process; and Ministering to Families*, 9 AM – 2 PM. Please bring a bag lunch. Coffee and Tea will be provided. To register please call the parish office at (250) 479-7413 or email sjtwooffice@shaw.ca.

Saturday, May 14th: St. Joseph The Worker

Session 4: *Who Am I as a Pastoral Care Visitor?*, 9 AM – 2 PM. Please bring a bag lunch. Coffee and Tea will be provided. To register please call the parish office at (250) 479-7413 or email sjtwooffice@shaw.ca.