



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

February 11, 2024

World Day of the Sick

World Day of the Sick this Sunday will pay tribute to the invaluable work that Catholic health institutions undertake not just in Australia, but around the world.

In his [message to mark the 32nd World Day of the Sick on February 11](#), Pope Francis reflected on the way serious illness could cause vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity.

This year's theme is "It is not good that man should be alone", taken from the Old Testament book of Genesis.

"The first form of care needed in any illness is compassionate and loving closeness," Pope Francis said in his statement.

"To care for the sick thus means above all to care for their relationships, all of them: with God, with others – family members, friends, healthcare workers – with creation and with themselves.

"Can this be done? Yes, it can be done and all of us are called to ensure that it happens. Let us look to the icon of the Good Samaritan, to his ability to slow down and draw near to another person, to the tender love with which he cares for the wounds of a suffering brother."

Pope Francis lamented the "throwaway culture" guiding certain political decisions "that are not focused on the dignity of the human person and his or her needs, and do not always promote the strategies and resources needed to ensure that every human being enjoys the fundamental right to health and access to health care".

The Catholic Church's World Day of the Sick, established by St John Paul II, is held each year on February 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who provide them with assistance and care, both in health care institutions and within families and communities.

Bishop Vincent Long, the Bishop Delegate for Health for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, said compassion was at the heart of Catholic healthcare services.

"The Catholic Church seeks to reflect the compassion shown by Christ, the Divine Healer who inspires the service we provide through our hospitals, aged care and other services," Bishop Long said.

"This is a day to honour those providing tenderness and compassion to people in their care, and pray for the sick, vulnerable and poor who are at the heart of the Church."

Catholic Health Australia CEO Jason Kara said Pope Francis' message urges the community to remember both the sick and the people who are caring for them.

"World Day of the Sick is an opportunity for us to reflect on the needs of those who turn to Catholic health and aged care services for their care and compassion," Mr Kara said.

“Every day our staff and clinicians commit to our mission to help the poor, the sick and marginalised, building on the great legacy of the Sisters who were the first to care for the sick in our community.

“We know that in today’s world, social isolation can severely affect a person’s mental and physical health and wellbeing. Healing the sick by healing relationships is therefore central to our ministry.”

To invite others to also mark the day, Catholic Health Australia has distributed specially commissioned lapel ribbons to Catholic leaders, politicians and members to wear on the day.

Note to Editors: Photos of CHA Chair Jenny Parker and CEO Jason Kara wearing a lapel pin are available for [download](#).

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia’s largest non-government grouping of health and aged care services, accounting for approximately 15 per cent of hospital-based healthcare in Australia. Our members also provide around 25 percent of private hospital care, five per cent of public hospital care, 12 per cent of aged care facilities, and 20 per cent of home care and support for the elderly.