

**Homily for the Diocesan White Mass for Healthcare Professionals
St. Francis of Assisi Church at Corpus Christi Priory
Springfield, Illinois**

**Memorial of Pope Saint John Paul II
(Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10; John 21:15-17)**

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Reverend Fathers, deacons, consecrated religious, members of the healthcare profession, and my brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good for us to gather this evening for our annual White Mass for Healthcare Professionals, as we give thanks to God for those who share in Christ's ministry of healing. This year we have the opportunity to do so while celebrating the Memorial of Pope Saint John Paul II, who reminded us that the Gospel of life is not one message among others, but is at the heart of the Church's mission to the world.

In our first reading, we heard the prophet Isaiah exclaim,

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation.” (Is 52:7)

Centuries later, in the synagogue at his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus stood and read another passage from Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” (Lk 4:18-19)

After quoting this, Jesus said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21). That was His mission statement. Christ came to proclaim good news to the poor, to set captives free, and to give sight to the blind. But He did not heal countless sick and suffering people simply to prove His divinity. His miracles were not simply proofs of power — they were revelations of love.

Scripture tells us that on multiple occasions Jesus was *moved with compassion* — a phrase which, in the original Greek, refers to being viscerally stirred in the depths of one’s being. Jesus not only noticed or understood human suffering — He felt it. This compassion moved Him to heal, to touch lepers, to restore sight, to feed the hungry, and to raise the dead. He could not turn away a single person who came to Him in faith.

In other words, Christ's healing ministry was not a kind of supernatural display of power, added to boost the credibility of His message. It was a revelation of the Father's heart – the tenderness of God made visible in human flesh.

The story does not end with Christ's earthly ministry. Having revealed the Father's compassion in word and deed, the risen Lord then entrusted that same mission to His followers. As we heard in the Gospel reading, after His Resurrection He turned to Peter and asked three times, "Do you love me?" and then commanded him, "Feed my lambs . . . Tend my sheep. . . Feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17).

In that encounter, Jesus entrusted to Peter – and through him, to the Church – the mission to carry His love into the world. What He began in His earthly body, He now continues through His mystical Body. His compassion has not disappeared from the world – it has multiplied.

In the words of a famous prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila:
"Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which He looks with compassion on this world."

During His earthly ministry, Jesus could not be everywhere at once. Nor could Peter and the apostles reach everyone. And today, too, priests and deacons cannot minister to every person. Many people are far from the Church, not necessarily because of animosity, but because life's suffering has left them wounded or wary. And yet... everyone gets sick. Everyone, sooner or later, needs care. Mothers give birth, children fall ill, loved ones age and decline. And it is often through these very experiences that Christ draws near again – through the members of His Body.

You, members of the healthcare profession, share in this sacred mission. Through your attentive presence, your kindness, and your skill, people encounter the living Christ. Through you, the Church reaches those who might never have set foot in a parish church. The hospital room becomes a place of grace; the clinic, a place of encounter; and even the suffering body reveals itself as a temple prepared for the Spirit of God.

So often, those who are seriously ill or dying are vulnerable to discouragement or despair. Pain, fear, or isolation can cause a person to lose sight of his or her own worth. But through your care, you help them rediscover that worth. You help them believe again that they are loved – not only by you, but by God Himself. Through your compassion, God's

mercy takes on a human face, reminding them that they are never forgotten and never alone.

As Pope St. John Paul II so eloquently taught throughout his pontificate, the Gospel of life is good news not only for individuals, but for families and for society. When the Church defends the dignity of the human person, when she upholds the sanctity of life from conception to natural death, and when she supports those who carry the burdens of illness or disability, she proclaims that no life is meaningless and no suffering is beyond the reach of redemption.

The Church's defense of human dignity is not merely a teaching to affirm, but a mission to embody. Our Lord's words in Matthew 25 remind us of the ultimate measure of our lives: "As you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

These words are familiar, yet still astonishing. In uniting Himself so completely with those who suffer, Christ joins the two great commandments – love of God and love of neighbor – so that every act of care becomes an offering of love to Him.

Tonight, as we gather around this altar, the mystery of Christ's compassion is made present once again. The same Lord who healed the sick

and lifted up the broken now gives us His Body and Blood – the source of all healing and the pledge of eternal life.

Through His Word and through the Eucharist, Christ ministers to us. As we receive Him, we are strengthened to share Him with others. Sent forth from this altar, we become what we receive: His presence in a world that still longs for mercy, truth, and hope.

As we receive our Lord in the Eucharist, may we be transformed more and more into His image, so that those who are sick or suffering may encounter Him through us. May we also recognize Christ in those whom we serve, so that our concern for others is always rooted in our love for Him.

May God give us this grace. Amen.