

**National Hospital Week and Colleague Anniversaries
St. John's Hospital**

**Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter
May 9, 2012**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Father(s) and dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to be among you today as we continue to rejoice in the Lord's Resurrection and of his promise of everlasting life. I am also pleased to join you in celebrating this National Hospital Week and to help you recognize the various anniversaries of your colleagues.

You who work in this hospital and, indeed, everyone who works and volunteers in any Catholic Hospital must have as your primary motivation a desire to help lead souls to Christ, the Divine Physician. As you listen to their pain and witness their anguish, you can extend to them a reminder of the love of the One who suffered for them and invites them to unite their sufferings to his own for the redemption of the world.

If often happens that a difficult illness or a medical emergency helps – and, at times, even forces a person – to take stock of his or her life and to consider the state of one's soul. Sometimes a physical healing is beneficial for a person's soul and sometimes a physical healing would not be beneficial. Our own weakness sometimes serves to remind us of our dependence on God and this recognition brings about the acceptable time, the day of salvation, the day of the healing of the soul.

It is against this backdrop that Saint Paul says today, “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2). The word “salvation” has at its root the word “salve.” Salvation is about health, but not just a physical health, but the spiritual health of the soul.

To you, dear patients, present with us by closed-circuit television and in spirit at the altar of the Lord, I offer a special greeting. Know that in your illness and pain, the Lord Jesus has not abandoned you. When he humbled himself to take on our humanity, he took on also our weakness and on the Cross he suffered with us and for us. Now he invites you to join your suffering to his for the redemption of the world. He accompanies you even now. Take comfort in his presence; pour out your soul to him and he will give you peace.

As you know, the theme this year for National Hospital Week is “Making Miracles Happen.” Strictly speaking, we know that only God performs miracles but, as we see so often in the lives of the Saints, he often makes use of simple and docile instruments to bring about these miracles. We see this particularly clearly in the life of the great Wonder-Worker of Padua, Saint Anthony, one of the early followers of Saint Francis of Assisi.

So often we think of the many miraculous physical healings as the most meaningful, but in reality the greatest miracles are those that occur when a soul turns back to the Lord, when a person opens his or her life to God. The initiative in these miracles always belongs, of course, to God, who always calls out to us and invites us return the love he first gives us.

Even so, men and women who remain open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit can also have a role to play in such miracles through their words and actions as they seek to bear witness to God's love for his people.

Today the Lord says to us, "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). Dear medical professionals, if you wish to be humble and docile instruments in the hand of the Lord, if you desire to ask him to work miracles through you, you must first of all seek always to remain in him.

In the waters of Baptism, we were joined to Christ and made one with him in his Body, which is the Church. When, through our sin, we are separated from Christ the vine, he seeks to reconcile us again to himself through the sacrament of confession. He nourishes and strengthens our union with him through the gift of his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist. He wants us to remain in him so that we might daily grow in holiness, that he might strengthen within us the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

If we are constantly united to Christ, then, as He says, we can "ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). But this presupposes that what we ask is that the Lord's will be done; if we are united with Him, we want only what He wants. What is it that the Lord wants? He wants us to be saved, to be united with Him, that we bear much fruit, so that His joy might be in us and our joy might be complete. In short, He wants us to be with Him in heaven.

Your work as you seek to heal the bodies of your patients can – and should – help lead your patients to salvation, to a greater knowledge of the love that has been poured out for us and is given to us at the altar of the Lord. I urge you: Do not be afraid to express your love for Jesus to your patients! It is his love that brings lasting healing; it is his love alone that abides.

To work in the various fields of healthcare is truly a noble occupation. I thank all of you for so devoting your energies and I am grateful that so many men, women, and children find comfort in your skilled care. Many Saints were formed through their loving service of the sick. In their compassionate service, these men and women recognized the truth of Jesus' words: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

Strive, then, to glorify the Father by your works of love and ask him each day to allow you to bear much fruit for him. Ask him daily to make you a saint. By becoming saints yourselves you truly can make miracles happen.

May God give us this grace. Amen.