

**Homily on the Occasion of National Hospital Week and
National Nurses Week**

May 7, 2018

**Saint John's Hospital
Springfield Illinois**

**†Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Father(s), dear Hospital Sisters of Saint Francis, Doctor Lucore, members of the hospital administration, medical staff and nursing staff, distinguished guests, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a pleasure to join with you today as we continue to rejoice in the Lord's Resurrection during this Easter season. It is most fitting during this National Hospital Week and National Nurses Week that we should gather together to give thanks and praise to the Lord for the many blessings that he has bestowed upon us and to pray for those whom you serve in your roles as healthcare professionals here at HSHS Saint John's Hospital.

National Hospital Week 2018 celebrates hospitals, health systems, and the women and men who support the health and well-being of their communities through dedication and care from the heart. During this National Nurses Week we also celebrate and thank our nursing teams for their dedicated care of the sick.

As some of you know, I started my career in healthcare when I was in sixth grade. While it was not exactly through caring for patients in the same way that you do, I started off working behind the candy counter in our family pharmacy on the South side of Chicago, which my grandfather founded in 1919. I continued to work part-time in our drugstore throughout my years in the seminary as well as at a wholesale drug company and at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. While I was in the seminary, I also had the opportunity to serve in internships as a hospital chaplain at Alexian Brothers Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, and at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, Texas. My graduate thesis in theology was in medical ethics. And when I was Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, I served as the Cardinal's Liaison for Health and Hospital Affairs. So, you might say that I have more than a passing interest in the subject of health care.

Just a few moments ago, in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we heard about a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, and how she listened, such that the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After she and her household had been baptized, she offered an invitation, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come

and stay at my home.”¹ In other words, her new-found faith prompted her to provide hospitality to her guests. It is noteworthy that the root of the word hospitality is the Latin word, *hospes*, a Janus word which can be translated as both host and guest. It is also the root of the word hospital, where the unique hospitality of healthcare is provided by the hosts of the institution for the guests who come here looking for healing.

In our Gospel reading for today, we heard our Lord preparing His disciples for the coming of the Advocate, that is, the Holy Spirit. During the course of speaking to them, our Lord tells them, *When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.*²

My dear brothers and sisters, while we were not with our Lord at the beginning of His ministry, nor were we present with the disciples at Pentecost, we are called, as disciples of our Lord, to give witness on His behalf in our daily lives. As you know, the theme this year for National Hospital Week is “Caring is our calling.” Given this theme, as well as our Lord’s charge to bear witness to Him through lives of Christian

discipleship, it seems most fitting to consider what it means to care for those whom you serve.

Reflecting on how to care for your patients may seem like an unnecessary exercise, for certainly you are aware of what is needed to care for the physical needs of the people who come to this hospital for treatment of a medical issue. However, reflecting more deeply on what it means to care for patients being treated in a Catholic hospital, we know that truly holistic health care does not stop at a physical level. Rather, 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 are afforded the opportunity to 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.

In your work as you seek to heal the bodies of your patients, you 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. Therefore, I urge you not to be afraid to express your love for Jesus to your patients! For it is his love that brings lasting healing.

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 also took on our weakness. 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 He comes to us now in this Eucharist.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Acts 16:15

² John 15: 26-27