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Patriarch Daniel’s message for World Day of the Sick

On February 11, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel sent a message in observance of World Day of the Sick, highlighting that health is a divine blessing and a gift from God.

The message comes in the context of 2024, designated by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church as a Solemn Year of pastoral care and assistance to the sick and a Commemorative Year of all the holy unmercenary healers.

February 11: The care for the sick is a social duty and a Christian responsibility
The World Day of the Sick is an opportunity for everyone to think more deeply about health, illness, suffering, and recovery.

The clergy and believers of our Church understand it as a call to spiritual and social solidarity with people in suffering through prayer and acts of material and spiritual charity.

The care of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards sick people
In light of the necessity to enhance care for individuals afflicted with mental and physical ailments, the Romanian Patriarchate designated 2024 as a Solemn Year of

Pastoral Care and Assistance to the Sick (by synodal resolution no. 497 dated February 10, 2023).

We believe that, apart from receiving optimal medical care, an ill individual also requires appropriate spiritual solace, which cannot be substituted with medical treatment.

Emotional support, compassion, understanding, and effective communication among the ill, their family members, and medical personnel are critical elements in facilitating the recovery process.

As the soul's recovery facilitates the body's healing, what the family and state institutions are progressively diminishing to provide must be delivered by Church servants.

The Church prays for all humanity, especially those suffering, in a world where man closes himself in individuality and is becoming more self-absorbed and preoccupied with his own requirements. Human health and well-being include physical and mental health and quality of life.

Health is impacted not only by environmental pollution but also by many adverse physical and material factors.

Physical and mental health are gifts from God

The Church has consistently emphasised spiritual and physical health. Nevertheless, from an Orthodox standpoint, preserving physical health in isolation from spiritual health does not hold an intrinsic value.

Through the Holy Spirit, the compassionate presence of the Lord Jesus Christ within those Christians who partake of Him through the Eucharist links Christians' ecclesiastical or social philanthropy with the divine philanthropy of the Most Holy Trinity.

Without a spiritual foundation, the Church's philanthropy or charitable activity in contemporary society cannot flourish authentically. The Church's missionary existence in the world must be characterised by this dynamic symbol of divine philanthropy and not merely a passing trend. The Church of Christ has always engaged in philanthropic endeavours promoting service, healing, and sanctification.

The priestly ministry has always included the duty of the clergy to take care of the sick as a fulfilment of the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, given to His disciples sent to preach: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,

drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

The servants of the Church have the mission of extending in space and time the work of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Matthew 9:35).

Presently, hospital chaplains, who collaborate effectively with physicians and medical personnel, are especially esteemed.

In particular, hospital chaplains, who work harmoniously with doctors and medical staff, are highly valued today.

The medico-social institutions of the Romanian Patriarchate

The Romanian Orthodox Church, in accordance with the prevailing legislation (as stated in Article 138, paragraph 2 of the Charter of the Romanian Orthodox Church), delivers accredited social and medical services via its various units (parish, monastery, deanery, diocese) and non-governmental organisations authorised by the dioceses. Following Ministerial Order 3473/2023, the most recent legislative act of the Ministry of Health permits religious organisations to establish hospital institutions.

Ninety out of the 884 social and medical services the Romanian Orthodox Church provides are dedicated to the ill, ensuring continuous treatment for 39,439 patients.

Concerning the “Health for Villages” medical caravan, the Chapel of the Romanian People’s Salvation Cathedral volunteers embarked on 114 journeys between 2015 and 2023, benefiting 13,474 individuals.

A total of 74 visits were conducted as part of the prevention and health education component, benefiting 16,171 individuals.

Since 2013, the “Donate Blood, Save a Life!” Campaign, which has been conducted in 44 editions throughout the dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchate, has successfully collected over 24,000 litres of blood from over 50,000 donors.

During the previous years, the Romanian Patriarchate signed a collaboration protocol with the Ministry of Health regarding the conduct of Orthodox Christian religious assistance activities in the health units subordinate to the Ministry of Health and a Framework Agreement with the “Salute Donna” Association of the National Tumor Institute in Milan, Italy. This framework agreement results from the partnership between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Oncological Institute “Prof.

Dr. Alexandru Trestioreanu” from Bucharest.

In conclusion, let’s not forget that health is a gift from God, which must be protected, cared for and sanctified.

If we lose it, we must look for it with great faith and hope, praying to God, the Mother of God and the unmercenary holy healers to heal our souls from sins and our bodies from diseases for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity and our salvation.

† Daniel
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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