

MISSION INTENTIONS

APRIL 2021 - 2022

We pray for health care workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries, may they receive the support they need from governments and local communities.

Country Focus: Italy

Some of the images most associated with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic are those of health care professionals, tirelessly working to aid those in need of medical treatment. In the early days of the pandemic, many of those images came from Italy, one of the first countries to experience a Covid-19 outbreak. Health care professionals in Italy worked around the clock to try and stop the spread of Covid-19, even though they did not have enough resources to treat the number of people falling ill.



The Catholic Church in Italy, led by Pope Francis, responded with prayer, lifting up the sick and their families, government leaders, and all health care workers. Let us continue to follow Pope Francis' example and remember medical profession-

als in our prayers, that they may be given the resources they need to care for all who are in need of medical treatment.

Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

As we will learn on the second page of this newsletter, the work of medical professionals coincides with the Catholic social teaching theme of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. This principle is explained by Blessed Paul VI in his encyclical letter, A Call to Action:

"In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others" (no. 23).

Saint Spotlight

Saint Agatha of Sicily

The life of the patron saint of nurses, Saint Agatha of Sicily, is shrouded in mystery. Very little was written about her, and so what we know about her life is probably more fiction than fact. The only thing we know for certain about her is that she was martyred for her love of Christ.

As her story goes, Agatha was born in Sicily in the third century to noble parents. Like many saints, she dedicated her life to Christ in her early childhood years. When she became of age, a local politician proposed marriage, but Agatha refused because she had already consecrated herself to Christ.

Saint Agatha's refusal angered the politician, who ordered her to be thrown in prison and tortured as punishment for her rejection. It is said that while she was



in prison, she had a vision of Saint Peter, who healed her wounds. She continued to refuse the local politician's marriage proposal, and was eventually martyred for choosing Christ above all else.

But Saint Agatha's legend did not stop with her death. It is said that a year later, an eruption of Mt. Etna was stopped due to her intercession. This is why she is invoked against fires, in addition to being the patron saint of nurses. In fact, her feast day, February 5, is celebrated in Italy with fireworks.

Whatever the true story behind Saint Agatha's life, we can learn from her example of faith and total dedication to Christ. Let us strive to always put Jesus first in our lives, just like Saint Agatha.

Saint Agatha...pray for us!

Formation for Life in Christ

Caring for the sick was an important part of Jesus' ministry. Many of his miracles involved healing those suffering from illnesses like leprosy, blindness, bleeding and paralysis. Jesus' concern for the sick and elderly is something the Church is called to model. We are to continue Christ's work in caring for those who are vulnerable. This call is summarized in the Catholic social teaching theme of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.

The foundation of this teaching is the principle that the needs of the poor and vulnerable should always be prioritized. Many Scriptures speak to the special place the poor and vulnerable hold in Christ's heart. In Luke 6:20, we hear: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours." In 1 John 3:17, the writer asks, "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion,



how can the love of God remain in him?" Catholics are called to see the face of Christ especially in those who are poor and vulnerable and respond to their needs, just as Jesus did.

Catholics are also called to create societies that put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. As the United States Catholic Bishops wrote in their 1986 document, Economic Justice For All, "As followers of Christ...we are challenged to...speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor" (no. 16). In addition to caring for the poor and vulnerable, we must also work to address any issues in our communities that have a negative effect for those on the margins of society.

In this month's video, Pope Francis thanks health care workers in a message for World Day of the Sick. As you listen to or read Pope Francis' words, think about how medical professionals live out the principle of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Why is it important to join Pope Francis this month in praying that health care workers receive the support they need from national and local government authorities?

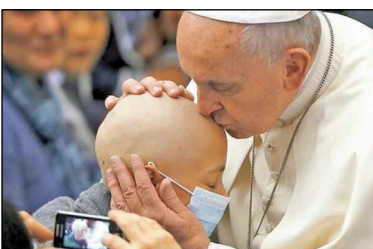
Celebrating the Mystery

While we are all called to live out the Catholic social teaching theme of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, priests, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, are called to do this in a special way. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit gives priests the grace to have a preferential love for the poor, and to "identify himself in the Eucharist with Christ the priest and victim" (no. 1586). Once ordained, priests have a special obligation to continue Jesus' ministry to the sick and dying. Some ways priests fulfill this obligation include visiting those who are ill, administering the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, and serving as hospital chaplains.

Teaching Prayer: Essential Catholic Prayers

Some of the most powerful prayers are those most familiar to the Catholic tradition. Even though Catholics have been praying them for centuries, they still speak to us today. We call these essential Catholic prayers, and they include the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Here is a [list](#) of essential Catholic prayers. Can you find an essential Catholic prayer that could be offered for medical professionals?

Introduction to Community Life [Click Here>>](#)



- + Name someone Pope Francis prays for in the video.
- + How do health care workers live out the Catholic social teaching theme of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable?

- + How can you help the sick and elderly in your community?
- + Name two ways your parish lives out the principle of Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.