



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SICK ON THE SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

Thursday, 11 February 1999

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

I am happy to join you at the end of this celebration in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes. This meeting with you who are sick is very dear to me. The event now has a long history: it goes back 40 years ago to when a zealous parish priest of Rome began a Lourdes celebration for the sick. From the beginning of my Pontificate 20 years ago, I have always wished to preside personally at this liturgy in the Vatican Basilica, with the collaboration of Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi and UNITALSI. It is an inspiring time of prayer which spiritually unites the sick of the whole world, especially since 11 February became the World Day of the Sick seven years ago, and from time to time is celebrated at an important Marian shrine: today at the Lebanese shrine of Harissa, near Beirut.

Dear friends, on our pilgrimage towards the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, we are "walking towards the Father", as was recalled at the pastoraltheological meeting which ends with this Holy Mass. Blessed Mary goes before us on the path that leads to God: she goes before us in faith and hope. I entrust each of you to her, invoking her comfort in your trials. I assure you of a daily remembrance in my prayer, as I affectionately impart a special Apostolic Blessing to everyone present here and to all who are spiritually united with us.