



DAY for
LIFE

Sunday, 15 June 2025
councilforlife.ie

FINDING MEANING IN SUFFERING

Hope does not disappoint

An invitation to pray for those who suffer and to remain with them
like the Good Samaritan, bearing witness to their
unique and unrepeatable value.

Image: Domenico Ghirlandaio – The Resurrection of Christ

Bishops' Message

Day for Life presents an opportunity to celebrate the dignity of all human life from conception to natural end. The theme for 2025 is 'Hope Does Not Disappoint: Finding Meaning in Suffering'.



For as long as history has been written, the world has never been without struggle and suffering. Through the lens of television and social media, however, the suffering of the whole world appears on our personal devices.

Many of us find it hard to make sense of a world in which suffering seems to press down from every direction: pandemic; war; homelessness; violence in our streets, addiction. Then, often without warning, we find ourselves caught up in the struggle when serious illness comes into our own lives.

Suffering touches every person at some point in their lives. It is often associated with illness, grief, and loss. It is not only caused by physical pain but includes emotional suffering as well as 'soul pain', such as depression and despair. Christians are not immune to this mystery and we often struggle to know how best to respond to it, and where we can find hope.

"Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:5-6). St Paul invites us to see that Christian hope is not just naïve optimism but, rather, an unshakeable trust in the power and presence of God who is with us always. This hope can endure the darkness of human suffering and



even see beyond it. That is because Christian hope is anchored in God who is Love and whose love reaches out to us and lifts us up day after day.

Care for the sick and suffering was central to the ministry of Jesus. Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan as a way of explaining what it means to be a “neighbour” to another person. The Good Samaritan is someone who sees and is moved to compassion (while others turn away), who draws close, who “binds up wounds”, who accompanies the person in need, and who continues to care for as long as it is needed. Often the healing Jesus offered was much more than just a physical cure; it included emotional and spiritual healing as well, because for Jesus, the human person is more than just a body needing to be fixed. Jesus invites us to “Go and do likewise” (Lk. 10:29-37).

The alleviation of suffering is good and must always be part of our focus. But there remains, for many people, a suffering that cannot be taken away and has to be endured. How do we make sense of that? The claim that it is better to die than to suffer leads some people to suggest that euthanasia or assisted suicide might be more compassionate. As Christians, however, we follow Jesus who lived his entire life, including his suffering, in the confident hope that His Father loved him and would raise him up, and He did! The cross, which Jesus did not ask for and did nothing to deserve, has become a sign of hope for countless millions of people in every generation.

The death and resurrection of Jesus leads us to believe that, far from being futile or absurd, a life marked by suffering, when it is lived with generosity and patience, is full of meaning. People like Simon of Cyrene (who helped carry the cross), or St. Veronica (who wiped the face of Jesus) literally accompanied Jesus on the Way of the Cross. Modern saints like Thérèse of Lisieux and the soon-to-be first millennial saint Carlo Acutis understood that when we unite our

suffering with the suffering of Christ for the good of the world, it is transformed through his grace. Most of us have known people like them. Far from being the end of hope, their suffering, when accepted and embraced, has shown itself to be a path to growth and ultimately to Resurrection.

This year's *Day for Life* is an invitation to pray for those who suffer and to remain with them like the Good Samaritan, bearing witness to their unique and unrepeatable value. We see this closeness in the generous and fruitful service of healthcare professionals, whose mission continues even when there is no longer any prospect of physical healing. We see it in another way in families, carers and chaplains who support their brothers and sisters who are sick or frail or struggling with the many burdens of life. As Christians, we affirm them and hold out to them the hope of Jesus Christ who does not disappoint us.

Most Reverend John Sherrington

Archbishop of Liverpool

England and Wales

Most Reverend Kevin Doran

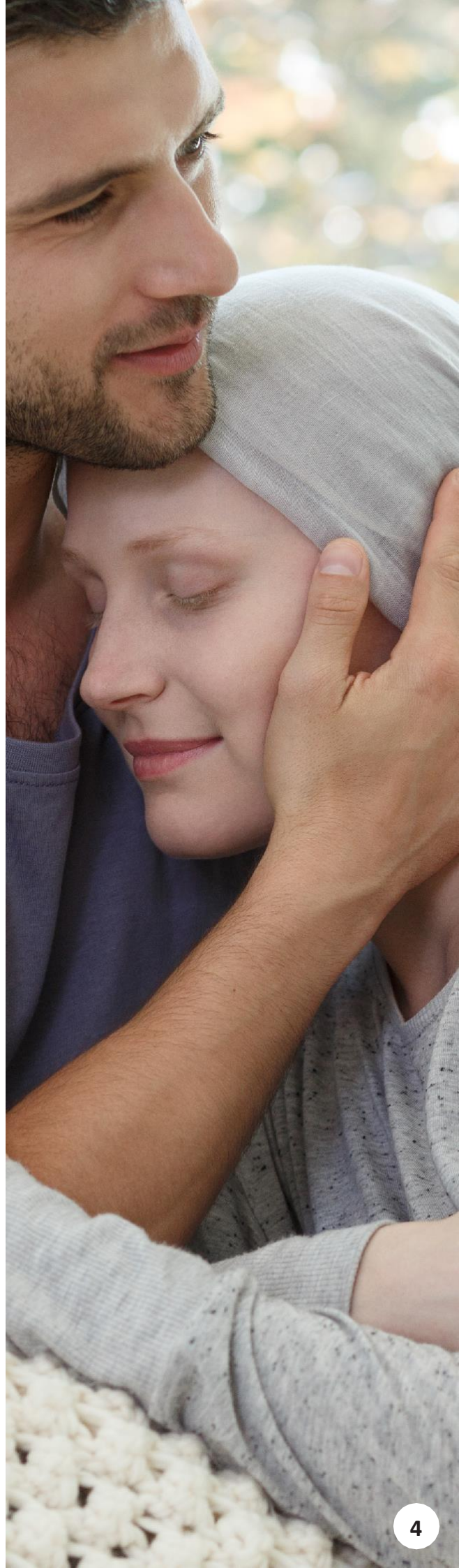
Bishop of Elphin and of Achonry

Ireland

Right Reverend John Keenan

Bishop of Paisley

Scotland



Prayers

Prayers that can be used on or around *Day for Life*, celebrated in our parishes on Sunday, 15 June 2025.

Based on the words of Carlo Acutis and Pope Francis

Jesus, You wait for me.

You let yourself be found when I think there is no hope.

I need to set down the burdens of my history, my life, my sins, at Your feet,
to consign to You the weight of my past.

No matter how burdensome, how complicated, how terrible,
it is always possible for me to consign it all to You, my loving and merciful God,
and set out anew of life's journey.

You show me the sick bed can be a holy place,
where charity and love turn away indifference,
and gratitude nourishes hope.

Suffering can make me feel exiled, cut off,
but with You it is a place of encounter,
a school in which I learn to love and be loved, with humility and grace.

Teach me, Lord, so that I may imitate this in my life.

May the true measure of my life be shown in my relation to those sick and suffering.

May I not banish suffering and those who suffer from my surroundings.

May I not exclude those who are frail and housebound.

Like the Good Samaritan, may I have compassion for those who suffer so much more than me.

Like Saint Carlo Acutis Saint Therese, may I have the strength to embrace life's sufferings and offer them to You, for the Pope and the Church.

Give me Your hope so that I may not fear,
because with Your death and suffering comes life – eternal life;
something extraordinary awaits us.



Prayers

More prayers from the tradition of the Church - including suggested Bidding Prayers.

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Permit me not to be separated from you.
From the wicked foe, defend me.
At the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come to you
That with your saints I may praise you
For ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of St John Henry Newman

O Lord, support us all the day long of this
troublous life, until the shadows lengthen,
and the evening comes, and the busy world is
hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our
work is done. Then, Lord, in thy mercy, grant us
a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last.
Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers)

Hope does not disappoint because God's love is constantly being poured out into our hearts and so with confidence...

We pray for the Church, that she be a beacon of light to all people, shining out the wisdom of God who in His love created each human being in His image and likeness. May this light of hope lead all people safely home to rest in God.

We pray for those in government, that they may work for peace and justice in our divided world. May the spirit of solidarity and care for those in need always inspire political decision-making.

We pray for those who are sick or suffering, that they may draw strength from Our Father, Jesus the Good Samaritan and the Holy Spirit our Counsellor and Comforter. May this spiritual strength encourage patient endurance in the face of difficulties, and give true and certain hope in God's promises to us.

We pray for those who support and promote the *Day for Life* and for the many initiatives funded by the *Day for Life* collections. May they see the fruits of their work in an ever-growing sense of the dignity of every human being from conception to natural death and in an increasing trust in the wisdom of God who is our one true hope.

Almighty God, you who are our wisdom, light and hope, create in us a pure heart for your service, redeem us from the darkness and suffering that surrounds us, and inspire in us the joy of your hope. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever

Quotes

Pope Francis - Homily for the Jubilee of Healthcare Workers - April 6th 2025

Dear doctors, nurses and health care workers, in caring for your patients, especially the most vulnerable among them, the Lord constantly affords you an opportunity to renew your lives through gratitude, mercy, and hope (cf. *Spes Non Confundit*, 11). He calls you to realize with humility that nothing in life is to be taken for granted and that everything is a gift from God; to enrich your lives with the sense of humanity we experience when, beyond appearances, only the things that matter remain: the small and great signs of love. Allow the presence of the sick to enter your lives as a gift, to heal your hearts, to purify them of all that is not charity, and to warm them with the ardent and gentle fire of compassion.

I have much in common with you at this time of my life, dear brothers and sisters who are sick: the experience of illness, of weakness, of having to depend on others in so many things, and of needing their support. This is not always easy, but it is a school in which we learn each day to love and to let ourselves be loved, without being demanding or pushing back, without regrets and without despair, but rather with gratitude to God and to our brothers and sisters for the kindness we receive, looking towards the future with acceptance and trust. The hospital room and the sickbed can also be places where we hear the voice of the Lord speak to us.

Last Testament of Pope Francis

"The suffering that marked the final part of my life, I offer to the Lord, for peace in the world and brotherhood among peoples".

From Carlo Acutis

"Do not be afraid because with the Incarnation of Jesus, death becomes life, and there's no need to escape: in eternal life, something extraordinary awaits us.""I offer all the sufferings I would ever have for the Lord, the Pope and the Church"...."There are people who suffer much more than me."

From Cardinal Francis Xavier Van Thuan (Archbishop of Saignon)

"In my nine years of solitary confinement, I celebrated Mass every day around 3.00pm: the hour of Jesus agony and death on the cross. I was alone so I could sing the mass as I wished: in Latin, French or Vietnamese...I always carried the little container holding the Blessed Sacrament: You in me and I in you" (Jn 6:20).In the Eucharist, we announce the death of Jesus and we proclaim his Resurrection. There were moments of infinite sadness; how did I survive. By looking at Jesus crucified and abandoned on the cross. To human eyes the life of Jesus was a defeat, a disappointment, a failure. However, in God's eyes, Jesus accomplished the most important act of his life on the cross, because he poured out his blood to save the world"

St Therese of Lisieux - Manuscript C

"My dear Mother, what touches me above all is the novena you are doing at Our Lady of Victories; it is the masses you have arranged for me to obtain my healing. I feel that all these spiritual treasures do my soul a great deal of good. At the beginning of the novena, I told you, Mother, that the Holy Virgin had to heal me or carry me away to Heaven, as I found it very sad for you and the community to have the burden of a sick young nun. Now I am willing to be sick my whole life if it pleases good God, and I even agree for my life to be very long. The only grace I desire is that it be broken by love" (Written by St. Theres while dying from Tuberculosis)

Some Ingredients for a Homily

A homilist may wonder how it might be possible to preach a homily for Trinity Sunday, which also speaks to how we might find meaning in suffering. I think there is actually a strong connection, and it comes from the Scripture readings that have been given to us today.

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom, speaks to us in terms which are quite similar to what St John says, in the prologue of his Gospel, about the eternal Word of God. Wisdom, like the Word, was with God from the beginning. She was, like the Word, the “master craftsman” through whom “all things were made”. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity speaks to us of a creator God, the very source of our existence, who makes himself known to us through His Wisdom, the Word made flesh.

Faced with the reality of our own suffering, or the suffering of our loved ones, we struggle to understand how an intelligent creator could ever allow such suffering. It doesn’t make sense - until we stop to think that the eternal Word made Flesh, Jesus, suffered and died on the cross. He accepted suffering rather than turn his back on the mission entrusted to him.

In our second reading, St Paul says that it is only through faith and through Jesus that we can look forward to God’s glory; to seeing God face to face. But our hope is not just for the “next life”, it helps us to respond differently to the present reality. St. Paul invites us to notice how people who suffer often learn patience, which allows them to persevere (at this point, the homilist might usefully introduce something of his own personal pastoral experience).

In her writings, at a time when she was dying of Tuberculosis, St Therese of Lisieux shares an insight about her own suffering. She tells us that, in the beginning she had no patience with suffering. She demanded that God would either heal her or allow her a quick death. It seems that what made the difference for her was the awareness that so many people were accompanying her in her suffering through their prayer. That gave her hope and which allowed her to persevere with her life. She handed everything over to God, praying only that in her suffering, long or short, she would be “broken (tamed) by love”.

Hope often seems fragile, but St Paul (second reading) insists that “*Hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*” (Rom 5:5-6). This Holy Spirit is the Wisdom of God at work today in our lives. With these words, St. Paul invites us to see that Christian hope is not just naïve optimism but, rather, an unshakeable trust in the power and presence of God who is with us always. This hope can endure the darkness of human suffering because Christian hope is anchored in God who is Love and whose love reaches out to us and lifts us up day after day. This is the truth revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing “nice” about chronic or terminal illness. It can break our hearts and turn our stomachs. It is hard to find hope in it. It is not something that we can conjure up for ourselves; it is a gift that we are given. It is the virtue that makes it possible for us (family members, friends and healthcare professionals) to stay close to those who are seriously ill and to sustain them in their suffering.

The very same Hope allows those of us who are seriously ill to join our suffering with the sufferings of Christ and to “offer them” for others. This is something which Pope Francis has in common with the teenage saint Carlo Acutis.

In his Last Testament, Francis wrote: “*The suffering that marked the final part of my life, I offer to the Lord, for peace in the world and brotherhood among peoples*”. Some twenty years previously Carlo Acutis wrote: “*I offer all the sufferings I would ever have for the Lord, the Pope and the Church*”

Today we ask for that gift of hope, especially for all who suffer.



Day for Life
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