

## FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel for this Sunday tells us that Jesus did two things. First, He healed many who were sick. Second, He cast out unclean spirits from many who were possessed with demons. When it comes to Jesus' identity as a healer, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) has a fantastic reflection. In the section on the sacrament of suffering, the Anointing of the Sick, the CCC has a section called 'Christ the Physician.'

Paragraph 1503 of the CCC says this: "Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that 'God has visited his people' and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Jesus has the power not only to heal, but also to forgive sins; he has come to heal the whole man, soul, and body; he is the physician the sick has need of. His compassion toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: 'I was sick and you visited me.' His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them."

Did you notice what it says there? Jesus Christ is the divine physician and Jesus Christ has a special preferential love for those who are sick. Illness touches all of us. It touches our families in some way, and it can feel like God has abandoned us there. What the Catechism tells us is no, God has not abandoned us. Christ is a divine physician. He has a special love for the poor, and He is present, in a mystical way, in those who are sick or suffering. Also, He came into this world to heal every kind of infirmity. There is nothing too big or too small for Him.

Now you might say, I know somebody who is sick or maybe I'm sick and Christ hasn't healed me. What is that? The CCC continues with an answer in paragraph 1505: "Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the 'sin of the world,' of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion."

What the CCC is saying here is important. Jesus' vocation is not to heal every single sick person. Those healings are signs of the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God ultimately comes through His supreme victory in His death and resurrection on the Cross. It is only because of the resurrection that every sickness, every suffering, and all death will be undone. For now, we must recognize that God allows sickness and suffering to take place, and that for us as Christians, Christ has given a new meaning to our sickness and our suffering. By uniting it to the Cross, by uniting it to His Passion, we can, in union with Christ, offer our illness and sufferings, for our salvation and the salvation of the world in union with His redemptive Passion and Cross.

Peace,