

**Homily for the celebration of the 34th World Day of the Sick  
Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Paz, Chiclayo, Peru  
11 February 2026  
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Readings: 2 Kings 20:1-6; Psalm 101; James 5:13-16; Matthew 8:5-17

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is a joy and an honor to be able to bring you the greeting of your Bishop and our Holy Father for the celebration of the 34<sup>th</sup> Day of the Sick, which is solemnly celebrated right here in Chiclayo, in Peru.

Pope Leo, who is particularly tied to this land by his ministry as a missionary and a bishop lived for many years among you, refers in his Message for this day precisely to this personal life experience as an occasion in which he was able to see "how many people share mercy and compassion," according to the style suggested by the parable of the Good Samaritan - the biblical icon of this Day. Dearly beloved, such a reflection seems particularly significant also for us: the love that carries the pain of the other - at the center of the Pope's message - cannot be ever just an idea, the result of abstract theological or sociological reflections; one can speak of such love *only from one's own experience and personal faith, from the living memory of the faces in which we have seen such love "in action."* Learning from the Holy Father, therefore, in this Eucharist we want to present also, to the God of Life, the intimate gratitude for all the times in which we have in some way

participated in this healing and saving grace! We are not distant, along this trajectory, from the many faces and names that populate the pages of the Scriptures that we have just proclaimed: from he who personally experienced healing – as Isaiah, the Psalmist, the centurion, and so many others. If there is a connection between these biblical personages – and each of them with us! – *It is precisely the experience of this divine love that “carrying the pain of the other” can give life, health, and salvation. Accompanied by the experience of the pain and the love that heals, therefore, we can find ourselves in the words that Leo XIV has given us in his Message: ““To be one in the One’ means truly recognizing that we are members of a single Body that brings the Lord’s compassion to the suffering of all people, each according to our own vocation. Moreover, the pain that moves us to compassion is not the pain of a stranger; it is the pain of a member of our own Body, to whom Christ our Head commands us attend, for the good of all.”*

After these words, I would like to focus on *three* aspects that the Word of God and the Message of the Holy Father suggest to us.

First of all, if the experience of healing love is, and must be, a personal one, it always unfolds – starting with those who choose to bear the pain of others – as *a true journey of “conversion.”* I think of the prophet Isaiah who, in the first reading, almost adapting to God's “change of heart” towards Hezekiah, first announces to him his imminent death (cf. 2 Kings 20:1); then, as he is about to leave, he is called back to bring the king a completely different message from God, one that restores his hope of healing and life

(cf. 2 Kings 20:4-5). Yes, dear friends: love is a process of conversion, in the most authentic sense of the term! It means "seeing with the eyes of God," not being content with coldly proclaiming dire prophecies or announcing tragic diagnoses, but rather being always ready to change course, to bend down with hope, again and again, to the other! As the Pope writes, quoting Saint Augustine, "no one is truly a neighbor until they freely draw near to another [...] Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other. Being a neighbor is not determined by physical or social proximity, but by the decision to love." *Let us ask the Lord today for this first gift: make me a neighbor to others, capable of "converting" to them, of allowing their pain – which I want to bear – to radically change the course of my feelings, my thoughts, my plans! In this way, I will be able to learn – according to the words of the Pontiff – that "personal participation in another's suffering involves the gift of oneself. It means going beyond the simple satisfaction of needs, so that our very person becomes part of the gift."*

A second noteworthy aspect, therefore, concerns the *sharing of the mission in caring for the sick*. The Holy Father dwells extensively on this point in the second part of his Message, where he affirms the "*social dimension*" of compassion, showing how "this experience, which is realized in an intertwining of relationships, transcends mere individual commitment." In this regard, I would like to mention the valuable instructions that the Apostle James gives us today in the second reading: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14); and again:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). In these words – which we can recognize as the background of the so-called "sacraments of healing," which we celebrate today in this sanctuary, especially for the benefit of the weakest and most wounded – we can find a trace of the effectiveness of this "community principle" in the ecclesial action of caring for the sick. I would like to at least evoke, in this remembrance of Our Lady of Lourdes, what happens within the confines of that Sanctuary, laden with the pain and expectations of salvation of so many men and women. In the diversity of ministries linked to the needs of each sick person, together they can give far more than what, at first glance, one might expect from individuals. In this, Mary is our teacher: as at Cana, so at Lourdes, so in every place of suffering, she repeats to us, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5); she does so with the maternal sweetness and firmness of one who, inviting us to join hands with others, entrusts us with the mission of combining our personal commitment with that of all those who wish to respond to the divine call to compassion and care. Only in this way can God himself still respond to the needs of so many, unfolding his saving action through the active commitment of those who, united solely by the desire to serve their brothers and sisters, take on – together – their suffering. *Today, in this sanctuary dedicated to Mary, Our Lady of Peace, we ask for a second gift: make me capable of collaborating with others for the good of all and – especially – of the most vulnerable, offering what I can and overcoming the temptation of that distrustful or, at*

*times, presumptuous individualism that separates me from my brothers and sisters in the mission of caring for those most in need.*

Finally, in his Message, the Pope reminds us that "*serving our neighbor is loving God in action*": in other words, as Christians, we can never forget that our love for others is always a concrete expression of our love for God and that, conversely, we cannot say or think that we love God without following the path of love, that is, the love given to the other who is in need of me. In this regard, in today's Gospel, Jesus emphasizes twice the exemplary nature of the centurion's faith – his relationship with God (cf. Mt 8:10, 13). The centurion's love for that sick servant and the hope of sitting at table "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11) seem to find their "keystone" precisely in this relationship with God, of which faith is the expression.

Dearest brothers and sisters, this faith has gathered us today to celebrate the Eucharist on the 34<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Sick! We are opening ourselves, rather, through a "familiar" dialogue with God – like that of the centurion – to the encounter of faith with Him who, present and alive among us, is the reason for our love, our hope, and our acts of love. *Let us therefore ask the Lord for the gift of that faith that he praises in the centurion, while with the words of the Psalmist we still invoke him, for ourselves and for all suffering humanity: "Lord, hear my prayer; let my cry come to you. [...] Let this be written for the generation to come, and a new people will praise the Lord" (Ps 101:2, 19). Amen.*