

# VISIT THE SICK



“Picture it, Sicily, 1922.” Thus, begins one of Sophia’s stories on the TV show, “Golden Girls.” Let’s take a few more snapshot views in history:

Picture it, Israel, the year 32. The blind, the lepers, the deaf.... Jesus is asked, “Who has sinned, this man or his parents?” Jn. 9:1-41

Picture it, St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, OH, 1935. The alcoholics... The place where Dr. Bob Smith and Sr. Ignatia Gavin, CSA, planted the seeds for Alcoholics Anonymous. Where alcoholism was recognized as an illness and not a moral failing.

Picture it, Anywhere, 2020. The addicts, those with AIDS, those with PTSD [Post-traumatic Stress Disorder], mental illness ... How do we see those sufferers?

We are so advanced today. We know what disease is and what causes it. We would never ask the question posed in today’s Gospel, about the blind man and the connection of sin and blindness. Yet, at one time or another, each of the groups mentioned above was seen as sinful, or immoral. Even today, we do not see that all sickness is not always visible, not always physical.

Even in 2020, many are still judged by “appearances”, whereas “God sees the heart.” (1 Sm. 16: 1-13). Have we really progressed? Or is our vision in need of corrective lenses so that our eyes see as Jesus sees. We cannot be blinded by our judgmental attitudes. The blind man did not ask for a miracle; nevertheless, Jesus restored his sight. But, sadly, like so many others who rise above their illnesses/failings, the man was not accepted but rejected! Jesus sought him out, visited the one rejected by polite society.

There is the challenge. Do we recognize “dis-ease” in whatever form it takes? Pope Francis has asked that the Church be a field hospital, that we be out in the field, on the margins, where the wounded, the sick, the imperfect are to be found. Are we willing to visit, to encounter, to reach out to those who may be overlooked or rejected by society? To those seen as the dregs of society. Can we visit, meet, encounter these sick?

During the time I have been reflecting on this corporal act of mercy of Visiting the Sick and the readings of the Fourth Sunday of Lent, a new virus has surfaced in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. We have all watched as the Corona virus advanced from local spread, to epidemic, to pandemic. COVID-19 has evolved to where “life as we know it” has been impacted in ways we never dreamed of. All of us have had our personal, social, economic, religious realities changed. Each day, we become more aware of the ramifications of this pandemic. We have had our connection to one another, our dependency on one another, our responsibility for one another, become more and more apparent.

Due to the physical distancing required, visiting the sick just cannot be practiced in the ways to which we are accustomed. We need to identify and seek out those who are sick in any way and be creative in finding new ways to visit. This may involve just a phone call, a letter, or contact through social media. Others may need more practical help in picking up groceries or medicine, spiritual support, or just knowing that they are not alone. Perhaps someone is ill and needs assistance in getting the care they need.

Someone we know, or even we ourselves, may be frightened by the uncertainty of the present situation, fearful of what is still to come. This, too, can be “dis-ease.” Mr. Rogers shared some good advice in facing these fears. “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

*Let us trust in God who will always send us the help we need  
and be the helpers that He sends to others.*

Sr. Patricia Cataldi, CPS

Photo:

Like all assisted living facilities, this one in the photo above is on lockdown so [this son] comes every day to see his dad and they talk through the phone. (Consent was given to post this on FB)