



Special invitation to all the Catholics of Québec on the occasion of the World Day of the Sick, Tuesday, February 11, 2014

More than twenty years ago now, Pope John Paul II designated February 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, as the World Day of the Sick. This year, it will also be the day when Québec's National Assembly resumes its work. Among the items on its agenda will be Bill 52, which would make euthanasia possible, under the name "medical aid in dying", for those who are at the end of life.

As Catholic bishops here in Québec, we have already expressed our firm opposition to this bill. Today we would like to invite all Catholics to pray - and to pray in a particular way on February 11, World Day of the Sick - that the Holy Spirit might touch the hearts and consciences of the Members of the National Assembly who will soon be called upon to vote on the proposed law, and that they might in turn welcome the Spirit in the depths of their souls.

Many of the Saints and Blesseds who have lived in Québec have been notable for their devotion to the sick: from Blessed François de Laval, first Bishop of Québec, to Saint Brother André, without neglecting to mention Saint Marguerite d'Youville and Blessed Catherine de Saint-Augustin, to name but a few. These great witnesses to the love of God were able to see the incomparable dignity of each person, no matter how fragile or impaired. Let us entrust ourselves to their intercession at this turning point in the history of our people, at a moment when our elected representatives have a decision to make that will have especially weighty consequences.

In his recent exhortation entitled "The Joy of the Gospel", Pope Francis issued the following call: "Small yet strong in the love of God, like Saint Francis of Assisi, all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples" (para. 216). May the Lord grant us the strength and the courage to draw near to the seriously ill and the dying, and to be witnesses ourselves to the love of God and to the hope of eternal life.

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