

February 2008 – General Intention

That people with mental disabilities may not be marginalized, but respected and lovingly helped.

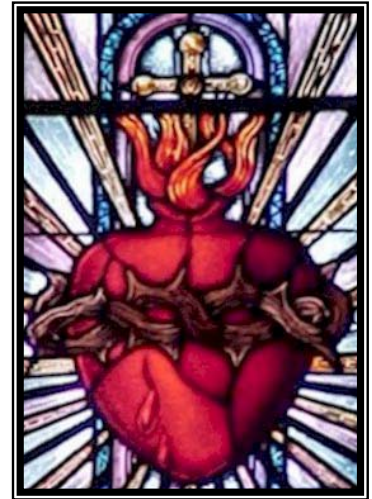
For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

~ Isaiah 55:8-9

Often in our world today, things that are different or in some way less than perfect are thrown away and quickly replaced. Most people don't seem to want to spend the time or money to fix up older things. They tend to like things that are shiny and new. We live in a "throw-away" world. In this world, there is little room for people with mental disabilities. They are often pushed aside and seen as a burden. They are treated as different and imperfect. This is very sad!

Jesus teaches us that we should not think as the rest of the world thinks. Instead, we should "put on the mind of Christ" and think as God thinks. But how can we know how God thinks?

We only have to look as far as Jesus' Sacred Heart. Jesus revealed His heart to us in order to teach us about God's ways. He showed us that His heart is a human heart. Even after Adam and Eve sinned against God and turned away from His love, He did not just throw them away and start over. God's ways are different. God worked to fix all human beings because we are so very valuable in His eyes. We are not just a disposable creation.



Of course Jesus' Sacred Heart is no ordinary heart. No, it is a heart burning with love but also crowned with thorns and pierced by a soldier's spear. In this sense, it is different - Jesus' heart still bears the wounds of His suffering and death. Now we are coming closer to thinking as God thinks. You see it is not with a perfect, shiny, and new heart that Jesus' saves us, but by a heart crushed by sin and death and resurrected to new life. God comes into the imperfection, the "messiness" of our lives and re-creates us.

In Jesus' eyes, those who suffer with mental disabilities have hearts even more like His - they suffer much but they also love much and are open to the life-giving love of God. They often possess a child-like faith and innocence. In His eyes, they are priceless gems, crown jewels of creation, just waiting to be polished and shined by grace. Let's pray this month that all people with mental disabilities will be valued and treated with dignity. Let's do our best to see as God sees and think as He thinks, to see the incredible value of every human life.

Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.

~Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass for the Inauguration of His Pontificate, 2005


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February 2008 – Mission Intention

That Institutes of Consecrated Life, so flourishing in mission countries, may rediscover the missionary dimension of the Church and be generous in bearing witness to Christ and proclaiming Him to the ends of the earth.

And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is... There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak with others of our friendship with Him.

~ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass for the Inauguration of His Pontificate, April 2005



With these words, Pope Benedict XVI teaches us about the true missionary dimension of the Church - "There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak with others of our friendship with Him." This is the true heart of missionary work - to experience the love of Christ in the Eucharist and other Sacraments, in prayer and the Bible, in service to others, and in the community of faith, and then to share this love with others. This is Jesus' missionary call for the Church.

After Jesus' Apostles had spent much time with Him - traveling around, proclaiming the Good News, and watching His Passion, Death, and Resurrection unfold - He gave them a new command, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). It was not enough for the twelve Apostles to just keep the knowledge and love of Christ to themselves. Jesus wanted them to spread His love and the truth of the Gospel message to the whole world. He wanted them to "speak with others about their friendship with Him".

There are many things for Institutes of Consecrated Life (groups of religious men and women) to do in missionary lands. The people in these lands are often hungry, thirsty, sick, injured, and living without homes. They are often the victims of hatred, violence, and war. Their children usually do not have clothing, toys, or any type of school to attend. All of these problems are very important. However, can you think of what the most important work of these missionaries might be?

If you said "to speak with others about their friendship with Christ" you are right! The most urgent work of any missionary is to proclaim the Gospel. Of course, all of the other works of charity must also be done, but the best thing that we can share with others is the Gospel. Let's pray this month that all missionaries will "rediscover the missionary dimension of the Church and be generous in bearing witness to Christ."

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