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"Jesus brings both physical and spiritual healing"

On Wednesday August 5, Pope Francis began a new cycle of catechesis on the Church's social doctrine.

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

The pandemic continues to cause deep wounds, exposing our vulnerability. On every continent there are many who have died, many

are ill. Many people and many families are living a time of uncertainty because of socio-economic problems which especially affect the poorest.

Thus, we must keep our gaze firmly fixed on Jesus (see *Heb* 12:2): in the midst of this pandemic, our eyes on Jesus; and with this *faith* embrace the *hope* of the Kingdom of God that Jesus Himself brings us (see *Mk* 1:5; *Mt* 4:17; CCC 2816). A Kingdom of healing and of salvation that is already present in our midst (see *Lk* 10:11). A Kingdom of justice and of peace that is manifested through works of *charity*, which in their turn increase hope and strengthen faith (see *1 Cor* 13:13). Within the Christian tradition, *faith*, *hope* and *charity* are much more than feelings or attitudes. They are virtues infused in us through the grace of the Holy Spirit (see CCC, 1812, 1813): gifts that heal us and that make us healers,

gifts that open us to new horizons, even while we are navigating the difficult waters of our time.

Renewed contact with the Gospel of faith, of hope and of love invites us to assume a creative and renewed spirit. In this way, we will be able to transform the roots of our physical, spiritual and social infirmities and the destructive practices that separate us from each other, threatening the human family and our planet.

Jesus's ministry offers many examples of healing: when He heals those affected by fever (see *Mk* 1:29-34), by leprosy (see *Mk* 1:40-45), by paralysis (see *Mk* 2:1-12); when He restores sight (see *Mk* 8:22-26; *Jn* 9:1-7), speech or hearing (see *Mk* 7:31-37). In reality, He heals not only the physical evil – which is true, physical evil – but He heals the entire person. In that way, He restores the

person back to the community also, healed; He liberates the person from isolation because He has healed him or her.

Let's think of the beautiful account of the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum (see *Mk* 2:1-12) that we heard at the beginning of the audience. While Jesus is preaching at the entrance to the house, four men bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Not being able to enter because there was such a great crowd there, they make a hole in the roof and let the stretcher down in front of Him. Jesus who was preaching sees this stretcher coming down in front of Him. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven' " (v. 5). And then, as a visible sign, He adds: "Rise, pick up your mat, and go home" (v. 11).

What a wonderful example of healing! Christ's action is a direct

response to the faith of those people, to the hope they put in Him, to the love they show that they have for each other. And so, Jesus heals, but He does not simply heal the paralysis. Jesus heals everyone, He forgives sins, He renews the life of the paralyzed man and his friend. He makes him born again, let's say it that way. It is a physical and spiritual healing, all together, the fruit of personal and social contact. Let's imagine how this friendship, and the faith of all those present in that house, would have grown thanks to Jesus's action, that healing encounter with Jesus!

And so we can ask ourselves: today, in what way can we help heal our world? As disciples of the Lord Jesus, who is the physician of our souls and bodies, we are called to continue "His work, work of healing and salvation" (CCC, 1421) in a physical, social and spiritual sense.

Although the Church administers Christ's healing grace through the Sacraments, and although she provides healthcare services in the remotest corners of the planet, she is not an expert in the prevention or the cure of the pandemic. She helps with the sick, but she is not an expert. Neither does she give specific socio-political pointers (see St Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens*, 14 May 1971, no. 4). This is the job of political and social leaders. Nevertheless, over the centuries, and by the light of the Gospel, the Church has developed several social principles which are fundamental (see *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 160-208), principles that can help us move forward in preparing the future that we need. I cite the main ones which are closely connected: the principle of the dignity of the person, the principle of the common good, the principle of the preferential option

for the poor, the principle of the universal destination of goods, the principle of the solidarity, of subsidiarity, the principle of the care for our common home. These principles help the leaders, those responsible for society, to foster growth and also, as in the case of the pandemic, the healing of the personal and social fabric. All of these principles express in different ways the virtues of faith, hope and love.

In the next few weeks, I invite you to tackle together the pressing questions that the pandemic has brought to the fore, social ills above all. And we will do it in the light of the Gospel, of the theological virtues and of the principles of the Church's social doctrine. We will explore together how our Catholic social tradition can help the human family heal this world that suffers from serious illnesses. It is my desire that

everyone reflect and work together, as followers of Jesus who heals, to construct a better world, full of hope for future generations (see Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, 24, November 2013, no. 183). Thank you.

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