



National Catholic Health Care Week

Daily Reflections and Prayers

National Catholic Health Care Week (Sunday, October 2 to Saturday, October 8, 2022) recognizes the mission of Catholic health care organizations across Canada. This year, we focus on the theme of “Building Bridges,” grounded in our commitment to social justice and the values of inclusion and compassion. Our mission is rooted in the Gospel, and calls us to work with others towards a society where all are seen and heard.

As we carry on the healing ministry of Jesus in hope and trust, we begin with the Prayer of St. Oscar Romero. Daily reflections and prayers follow.

Prayer of St. Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete,
which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.
Amen.



National **Catholic Health Care** Week

Monday, October 3

Building Bridges

Love shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate; in their place, love builds bridges.

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*

Bridges are amazing structures, spanning chasms, rivers and busy thoroughfares to provide a safe and trustworthy link between people and places. In spanning what seems insurmountable, they open up new territory, connections, and possibilities. Bridges knit us together as community.

As people with a mission to concretely share the healing love of God, we are called to create—and be—bridges of hope and compassion in the world. We are called to work together and with others to heal the brokenness, mend the gaps and traverse the barriers we encounter between each other as people, and in our communities, our social and health systems and our society.

Every bridge needs a strong foundation. In our service, our planning and our health system collaboration—from moments of care to complex, courageous system innovations—we build on a strong foundation grounded in the shared belief that every life is sacred and that we are responsible for each other, especially those most vulnerable among us.

Every bridge needs a purpose. We work with love and hope, bridge by bridge, towards a world that respects the dignity of every human person, fosters trust and promotes justice—where everyone finds belong belonging, dignity and worth.

Let us reflect

1. In what way is the bridge a fitting metaphor for our work in the healing ministry?
2. What are the most pressing gaps and barriers that you see in your community?
3. Bridge-building is shared work. Pope Francis says that “we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges.” Who in our community should we be building bridges with?

Let us pray

In the name of the One who created us,
and who teaches us to love,
and who walks with us.

May we respond to your invitation as interwoven and connected people,
an invitation to healing and to be authentic bridge-builders
in all that we do and all that we are.

Amen



National **Catholic Health Care** Week

Tuesday, October 4

Giving Back

True charity requires courage: Let us overcome the fear of getting our hands dirty so as to help those in need.

Pope Francis (2015). *The Spirit of St Francis: Inspiring Words on Faith, Love and Creation*

Along with communities and many different partners, Catholic health works to achieve a Canadian society that reaches out to every person who is suffering from illness, stigma, poverty or loneliness. As we work together for a just society, many of the entrenched problems we encounter are complex. There is no simple solution—no single bridge—that can link resources or overcome the gaps to address poverty or discrimination or addiction.

St. Teresa of Calcutta dedicated her life to bridging the gaps she encountered in the human suffering around her. Whatever the size of the problem, she counselled, “Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and start with the person nearest you.”

As bridge-builders, we come together as members of the human family—a family interconnected and interdependent—seeing ourselves in each other. With eyes and hearts open, may we step into the uncomfortable spaces and the possibilities.

Let us reflect

1. The word charity in the New Testament is the Greek word *agape*, which describes a love without gaps, meaning it is unconditional. How might we practice charity in our lives and organizations?
2. In the spirit of St. Teresa of Calcutta, who is the person nearest to you and how can you help?

Let us pray

Lord Jesus,
Open our eyes that we may see you in all our sisters and brothers.
Open our minds that we may understand their hopes and dreams,
their sorrows and pain, their longing.
Open our hearts to give generously of ourselves.
Grant us wisdom to respond effectively with grace and compassion.
Give us the courage to speak and act
in true peace, love, mercy and human solidarity.
Amen



National Catholic Health Care Week

Wednesday, October 5

Reaching Out

Love is that condition in the human spirit so profound that it empowers us to develop courage; to trust that courage and build bridges with it; to trust those bridges and cross over them so we can attempt to reach each other.

Maya Angelou

Our Catholic tradition teaches us that each of us is not only sacred, but social. We find fulfillment through belonging and interactions with others. As people committed to creating communities of belonging, we know the moral test of our society is how our most vulnerable members are faring.

We saw this so clearly over the past few years as the COVID-19 pandemic shone a public light on what's at the heart of our Catholic ministry: human dignity, compassion, the importance of human connection, and the meaning of wellbeing—body, mind and spirit.

COVID-19 challenged us to think about how we organize ourselves as social groups, as cities, towns and parishes, and as service organizations. As we focused on keeping people safe, the pandemic challenged us to also examine our profound social responsibility to reach out so that no one is left isolated or abandoned. It compelled us seek new methods and new partners in bridge building.

As we emerge from this time of distance and barriers, may these bridges, bonds and new insights continue to guide us forward so that no one is ever left behind.

Let us take a moment to reflect

1. How have you reached out and bridged gaps in your community in the past few years? How might this strengthen community into the future?
2. What has the pandemic shown us about who is most vulnerable in our society?
3. When we lack the courage to reach out, what might be holding us back? How can we overcome these barriers?

Let us pray

Loving God,
Help us to come out of this Pandemic better, not bitter.
Help us to become more considerate of others,
more mindful of how we bridge the distance,
and walk side by side with those in need.
We thank You that no matter how dark the way may get,
there is the hope of the dawn to come.
Amen



National Catholic Health Care Week

Thursday, October 6

Walking Together

Words create bridges between us. Without them we would be lost islands. Affection, recognition and understanding travel across these fragile bridges and enable us to discover each other.

John O'Donohue, Beauty

As people of God, we are called to be in relationship and walk side-by-side with people in communities across this land. Our commitment to the journey of Truth and Reconciliation must begin with honesty and humility about our history and the impact of our action on the health status of Indigenous Peoples.

Among other things, as settlers, this means being fully present to each other and opening the door to uncomfortable truths that will help us move towards authentic healing and restoration, mutual understanding, and trust. For many of us, it is also about unlearning some of the things that we think we know—particularly attitudes we have been socialized to believe to be true.

This is a journey of openness, learning and action. It calls us to create sacred space in our care environments, our communities and in ourselves for traditions, language, ways of knowing and healing practices that foster kinship, relationship and community.

As we move forward with humility and courage to address the harms of the past and create a more equitable future, may our hearts, minds and ears be open to the truth, to one another and to new ways of being present to each other.

Let us reflect

1. What concrete steps can we take, as organizations and communities, in opening doors and creating safe spaces that foster relationship, kinship and community.
2. What are some ways to learn, unlearn and create safe space in our communications and actions?

Let us pray

(From a Prayer by the late Frank Fools Crow, Oglala Lakota)

Grandfather, *Wakan Tanka**,
Grandmother, the Earth who hears everything,
Give us a blessing so that our words and actions be one in unity,
and that we be able to listen to each other, in so doing,
we shall with good heart walk hand in hand to face the future.
In the presence of the outside, we are thankful for many blessings.
I make my prayer for all people, the children, the women and the men.
I pray that no harm will come to them, and that on the great island,
there be no war, that there be no ill feelings among us.
From this day on may we walk hand in hand.
So be it.

* *Great Spirit God, Great Mystery*



National Catholic Health Care Week

Friday, October 7

Listening and Learning

The Spirit asks us ... to listen to the world, to the challenges and changes that it sets before us. Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one another.

Pope Francis, Homily, October 10, 2021

As Catholic health care, our work to support the health and wellbeing of Canadians—to bridge gaps and navigate difficult problems—is complex work that directly impacts people’s lives and the good of the whole community.

At the core of our mission to continue the healing ministry of Jesus is the commitment to provide excellent quality care and service and to attend to the wellbeing of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological and spiritual. We build on values of dignity, respect and justice as our foundation, recognizing there is an ethical dimension to all our decisions and actions.

For those seeking help and for caregivers, the answers are not always easy—and, in the messiness of living, we all are constantly learning and responding. This includes actively seeking out and incorporating new information and a wide variety of perspectives and insights to respond together to the challenges we face in our communities and our lives.

Our mission calls us to support human vulnerability and welcome questions and concerns as essential for care and trust—especially when hurt, harm or conflict occur. Wherever we serve as bridge-builders, it’s our responsibility to engage with everyone we encounter with grace, continually looking to listen, evaluate and improve.

Let us reflect

1. How do you “listen to the world?”
2. What do you do to open up dialogue and seek feedback from the people you work with or serve when faced with difficult questions?
3. In the past few months, what conversations or events have deepened your understanding of something and how have you responded?

Let us pray

Healing God,
As bridge-builders in a broken world,
May we accompany life in all its joys, questions and sorrow.
May we sustain hope, courageously reaching out wherever we are called.
May we be a sign of unity and equality,
respecting the dignity of every human person, fostering trust, and promoting justice.
May we break down walls of misunderstanding, stigma and fear.
May we sow the seeds of reconciliation wherever our journey takes us.
Amen