

## Pope Francis asks that the terminally ill and their families be cared for and assisted

- [The Pope Video](#) for February, the month in which the Church celebrates the World Day of the Sick, contains an appeal that the terminally ill “will always receive the necessary medical and human care and assistance.”
- “Cure if it is possible; always take care”, **Pope Francis** affirms, citing John Paul II in the video message he addresses to us through the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#).
- The Pope also states that families play a “decisive role” and that they “should not be left alone.”

(Vatican City, 30 January 2024) – **Pope Francis** requests prayers for and a commitment to the **terminally ill** and **their** families in the February edition of [The Pope Video](#). The **Holy Father** shares this prayer intention during the month in which, on 11 February, the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, the **World Day of the Sick** takes place, which was established in 1992 by John Paul II.

**Pope Francis** explains that “when some people talk about terminal illnesses, there are two words they often confuse: incurable and un-curable. But they are not the same.” Citing **John Paul II**, **Pope Francis** affirms, “**Cure if it is possible; always take care**”, in the video message he addresses to every believer through the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#).

### To care for and to cure

We see: a couple from behind, contemplating the sea, the young man embracing the young woman who has lost her hair due to chemotherapy; a girl in a hospital room hugging her grandfather; a man at his father's bedside, with a Bible in his lap and a Rosary in his hands; a patient who can no longer walk being assisted by a nurse in a garden; a physician explaining to a family the difficult road they will need to take with their loved one.



Depending on how they are interpreted, the images from **The Pope Video** for February depict a series of failures or successes: failures, if the only acceptable outcome is a cure; successes, if the objective is the care of the patient. To cure and to care for seem to be synonymous, but they are not. **Pope Francis** explains this clearly: even when little chance for a cure exists, “every sick person has the right to medical, psychological, spiritual and human assistance.” And he continues, “Healing is not always possible, but we can always care for the sick person, caress them.”

### **The sick, families and palliative care**

In our throw-away culture, there is no longer a place for the terminally ill. And it is not a coincidence that, in the last decades, the temptation to euthanasia has been gaining ground in many countries. Instead, **Pope Francis** invites us to look on the sick person lovingly – to understand, for example, that physical contact can give so much even to those who are no longer able to speak and who no longer seem to recognize their own relatives anymore – and to assist them in the best way possible as long as they need it.

It is not a question about unnecessarily prolonging suffering. Rather, the **Pope** insists on the importance of palliative care and the role of the family who, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith writes in the letter *Samaritanus bonus* of 2020, “remains at the bedside of the sick to bear witness to their unique and unrepeatable value.”

Regarding palliative care, **Pope Francis** reiterates that it “guarantees the patient not only medical attention, but also human assistance and closeness.” Meanwhile, when speaking about the role of the family, he reminds us that “they should not be left alone in these difficult moments,” and that “their role is decisive and they need access to adequate means so as to provide appropriate **physical, spiritual and social support.**”

This is why the **Pope** then concludes by asking for prayers and a commitment from everyone so that “the **terminally ill** and **their families** always receive the necessary **medical** and **human** care and **assistance.**”

### **Like the Good Samaritan**

**Father Frédéric Fornos S.J.**, International Director of the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#), present in 89 countries with more than 22 million Catholics, asks: “Why should we pray for this intention? Wouldn't it be enough for the Pope make a statement regarding this topic? Does prayer really change anything? These are the questions we



may ask ourselves.” Father Fornos continues, “When illness knocks on the door of our life, the need arises in us that someone be close us, to look into our eyes, to take us by the hand, to show us tenderness and care for us, like the Good Samaritan in the Gospel parable. This closeness and human affection toward the terminally ill might seem to be an accessory or secondary in relation to medical assistance. Prayer might fall into this category too. Nevertheless, this assistance is essential. It is love that is expressed through these actions and our prayer. In these difficult moments, families play a decisive role, Pope Francis says. Let us pray, then, that the terminally ill and their families might always receive the necessary care and assistance.”

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#### **About The Pope Video**

The Pope Video is an official global initiative with the purpose of disseminating the Holy Father's monthly prayer intentions. It is carried out by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). **Since 2016, The Pope Video has had more than 218 million views across all the Vatican's social networks, and is translated into more than 23 languages, receiving press coverage in 114 countries.** The videos are produced and created by The Pope Video Prayer Network team, coordinated by Andrea Sarubbi, and distributed by La Machi Communication for Good Causes. The project is sponsored by [Vatican Media](#). More information: [The Pope Video](#).

#### **About the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network is a Vatican foundation, with the mission of mobilizing Catholics through prayer and action in response to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church. These challenges are presented in the form of prayer intentions entrusted by the Pope to the entire Church. The foundation's mission is inscribed in the dynamic of the Heart of Jesus, a mission of compassion for the world. Founded in 1844 as the Apostleship of Prayer, it is present in 89 countries, and is made up of more than 22 million Catholics. It includes a youth branch, the Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM). In December 2020, the Pope constituted this pontifical work as a Vatican Foundation and approved its new statutes. Its international director is Fr. Frédéric Fornos, SJ. For more information, visit: <https://www.popesprayer.va>.

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