



National Catholic Healthcare Week

Daily Reflections and Prayers

The third annual National Catholic Health Care Week will be held Sunday, October 3 to Saturday, October 9, 2021. The Week recognizes the mission of Catholic health care organizations across Canada.

This year, we focus on the theme of “Together in Care,” grounded in our commitment to social justice and the values of inclusiveness and compassion, in the spirit of reconciliation.

We begin with a prayer to walk together in unity and healing. Daily reflections and prayers follow.

A Prayer for Unity

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 Healthcare Week

Monday, October 4

Together in Care

Our shared commitment to “Together in Care” helps us to provide a safe place where partners in the healing journey can connect as people and learn from each other to make the best decisions.

Catholic health care is founded in the belief that we are social beings and every person is interconnected with every human being, with all of creation and with Creator God. The mission of Catholic health care is to concretely share the healing love of God in the world. What does this togetherness look like in healthcare? It includes a co-creation of excellent care experiences, openness, trust, authentic encounters, equity, community and compassion. All the best parts of ourselves and our organizations.

But how do we reconcile “together in care” with our brokenness—with isolation and inequities heightened in pandemic, with the living violence of residential schools, with structural racism and more? We can sometimes feel paralyzed by this question, but a return to our fundamental interconnectedness invites us into reconciling action.

Since March 2020, we have discovered and shown much courage, innovation, commitment, and resiliency in the face of COVID-19. Together, may we use these same gifts to address those structural sicknesses for which the cure has long been elusive.

Let us reflect

1. What does “together in care” mean to you?
2. In what ways are you or your organization currently actualizing “together in care”?
3. What are the barriers to “together in care” within yourself or your organization? Are there anyways you can help to break down these barriers? What do you draw on for resiliency?

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 authentically “together in care”
in all that we do and all that we are.

Amen



National Catholic Healthcare Week

Tuesday, October 5

Openness and Trust

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.
(Matthew 22: 37-40)

Our words and actions have the power to hurt, to heal, to open minds, to open hearts and to change the world. We were created for the purpose of connection to God and others. Following the gospel call to compassion—to walk with our neighbours in love at times of pain, injustice and illness—challenges us to be vulnerable and to be willing to be changed by that encounter.

For over 400 years, people working in Catholic Healthcare have strived to provide a safe place where caregivers, patients and families can connect as human beings and where a spirit of openness and trust can bring healing. The journey to healing requires open hearts, open doors, open eyes, open minds, open ears and open souls.

Openness asks us to be receptive to new ideas, opinions, or ways of seeing and processing the world. This calls for us to be active listeners who do not look to have our expectations confirmed, but who bring a certain curiosity and honesty about ourselves. In health care and in life, this openness is a personal act of vulnerability and it will change us and will bring gifts of growth, understanding and healing.

Let us reflect

1. In loving our neighbour, what things hold us back from being vulnerable and open in our work and our lives and how does this impact trust?
2. What things can we do to create a safe place in our communications and actions to build relationships with those who are hurting, especially where trust has been broken?
3. What role do we as individuals, as organizations and as communities play in (re)building trust?

Let us pray

Together in care, may our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers, and to be vulnerable to what we feel and experience. Please send your healing and reconciling Spirit in order to bind the wounds created by racism, ageism, sexism, and other “isms”, and to promote understanding, justice, trust, and love.

Good and gracious God, who loves and delights in all people, we know that the spark of life within each person is the spark of your divine life. Guide us on this journey of openness and trust. Amen.



National Catholic Healthcare Week

Wednesday, October 6

Creating a safe place

Jesus reaches out to us in our time of need and calls to ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.’ (Matthew 11:28)

How do we recognize a safe or sacred space to rest especially with our recent journey with COVID 19? Many of us attribute a ‘safe place’ of rest as either an inner space within our being where we connect with the Holy or within our sacred places of worship where we physically go to connect with the Holy—especially in word and sacrament.

COVID 19 stretched us to re-examine that approach. The closing of our places of worship, forced us to connect with each other via live streams and limited our access to sacraments and sacred traditions that sustain and connect us. The pandemic introduced many within our community to a new experience of isolation.

What has our experience with COVID taught us about sacred space? One Indigenous teaching, *All My Relations*, helps to bring into clarity Jesus’ teaching of giving rest. Many times Jesus would go off alone and be one with Yahweh through the peacefulness and silence of nature. One can only imagine Jesus drawing strength from the Spirit through the sound of the wind, the singing of the birds, the warmth of the sun and reflection of the moon. It is all of these aspects of creation that Yahweh indicates is ‘Good’.

Let us take a moment to reflect

1. Where do you interact with the sacred in the world around you?
2. What positive teaching/s has COVID taught you over these past two years?
3. As Jesus calls you to come and spend some time alone in nature. What burden/s is Jesus calling to release, offer up in ritual, prayer or ceremony?

Let us pray

O Holy One,

You invite us to bring our burdens to you and find rest

Open our eyes to the beauty of the world around us

Reminding us that the sacredness of your love is all around us

It is in the wind that warms us, pushes us to see life in a different way, that brings life in times of need

It is in the Sun, that warms our day, guides our feet, and reminds us to pace ourselves and find rest

It is in the Moon, that smiles on us during the night and reminds us that we are never alone on our journey

It is in the blade of grass or mustard seed, that finds ways to adjust to whatever life is doing

Lord, continue to bless our day through your creation, allowing us to find rest in the sacredness of the world you gave us.

Amen



National Catholic Healthcare Week

Thursday, October 7

Partners in the healing journey

Today we explore our role as partners in the healing journey: we start with a question for each of us: what have I contributed to the hurt/pain/damage that has caused the need for healing? Healing and forgiveness and repentance are all closely intertwined. Repentance starts with a change of heart. We must stop and listen to the voices of those who are challenging us to understand our own roles in actions that have caused so much pain. Are we open to the next steps that are required – the steps that open our hearts?

In order to be a partner in the healing journey, we need to look at our structures and our own biases as individuals and as organizations. That is painful work, but absolutely necessary. Truth and Reconciliation will only happen when there is trust. That trust needs to be earned. We will fail at times, both collectively and individually. But it is absolutely necessary for us to work at this. The alternative is no longer an option.

It will be uncomfortable, with difficult questions that challenge us. This is a journey and journeying is—at least partially—about spiritual and personal growth. It will take time but we can use the social justice mantra of “See, Judge, Act” as a starting point. In the words on St. Peter “be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” Be open to change of heart.

Let us reflect

1. What does it mean to be truly partners in a journey towards healing?
2. How does walking with others challenge us and our assumptions?
3. What puts up barriers and what is life-giving and healing?
4. What does it mean to be an ally and to offer safe space, in our lives and in our facilities?

Let us pray

Healing God, at this particular time for Catholic healthcare in Canada, we ask your continued guidance as we recommit ourselves to social justice and the values of inclusiveness and compassion. Help us to be open to examine our own beliefs. We trust that this examination will lead to actions that will help bring about reconciliation. May we work to ensure that safe space is available to all who are entrusted to our care. May we continue to reflect on our role as partners in the healing journey. We give thanks that Jesus’ ministry of healing and reconciliation continues every day as people are healed, accompanied and supported. Bless and strengthen all those who work to continue the ministry of healing. Amen



National Catholic Healthcare Week

Friday, October 8

Learning from each other

In health care, we are privileged to walk with one another on a healing journey. Every encounter and every experience is personal, as we bring our diverse lived experiences. This awareness has been reinforced during our collective but unique experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic and, in the past year, as stories of trauma, systemic racism and injustice have been courageously shared. We have diverse experiences and to find a place of common ground, we must approach every healing encounter with an openness to learn.

We need to listen to discover what is important to someone in order to accompany them on their healing journey, and to discover the gifts and internal resources they bring. Learning from one another helps us find and build on what unites us and to see in our differences the opportunities to grow in mutual respect. We need to explore the questions before we go to answers; we need to expose the truth before there can be reconciliation.

How do we create the needed space within to truly be present to another. It requires quieting the chatter within us so we have space to truly listen and learn from the person in front of us. We need to set aside quick answers and pause to examine our biases and assumptions. Being on a journey of healing with others invites us into mutual relationships, where we are curious about their experiences and invite them to teach us how we can best serve as partners in their healing.

Let us reflect

1. What opportunities do you have to join others on a journey of healing?
2. How can you invite genuine partnerships in healing by learning from those you serve?
3. Pope Francis said: *The process of building community, can only be undertaken if we are free and open to authentic encounters with true dialogue.* What does this mean to you? Where are you being invited to participate in true dialogue?

Let us pray

Jesus prayed in his final prayer, *Father, may they all be one, as you and I are one.* John 17:11
God of grace,

We join this prayer for the whole human family and ask that our bonds of togetherness would be stronger than our divisions;

that our willingness to learn from one another would be stronger than our self-protective pride; and that love, rather than fear, would lead us.

Guided by your mercy, we pray for the wisdom and courage to walk together on a journey of healing today. Amen.