Leo XIV: “Teach us to recognize your face in every suffering child”

“For children with incurable diseases” is the intention that Pope Leo XIV is carrying in his heart for the month of February. The Holy Father invites the entire Church and all people of goodwill to join in praying for children who are suffering and extremely vulnerable, together with their families and those who care for them.

In his prayer the Pope focuses on Jesus’ tenderness as he welcomes the little ones, recognizing in their fragile bodies a sign of His presence, and in their smiles, a testimony to the Kingdom. The Holy Father asks that “**they may never lack proper medical care, human and compassionate attention, and the support of a community that accompanies them with love**”. At the same time, he prays for families, that they might be sustained in hope and by doctors, nurses, and caregivers, and that their care might always be an expression of active compassion, patience, and tenderness.

Lastly, with his intention, Pope Leo XIV invites the entire Church to be transformed by the same feelings of Christ’s Heart and that, sustained by prayer and service we might know how to accompany others who in their fragility so that, “in the midst of suffering”, we might become “a source of comfort, a seed of hope, and a proclamation of new life” for those children who are suffering and for those around them.

The video for the month of February was recorded in the Church of *San Pellegrino in Vaticano*. In it, the Holy Father can be seen holding drawings, some drawn by children suffering from different illnesses who are being cared for at **Bambino Gesù Hospital for Children in Rome**

Children with incurable diseases

There are various serious and chronic illnesses that deeply affect millions of children and their families. Every year, according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, an estimated **400,000 children and teenagers up to the age of 19 are diagnosed with cancer**, an illness that cannot be easily cured

in many cases, and which is one of the leading causes of infant and adolescent death. In addition, it requires continuous care and equal access to specialized treatment. For example, more than 80% of children with cancer in high-income countries are cured, whereas less than 30% are cured in low or middle-income countries.

On the other hand, the **United Nations agency dedicated to children (UNICEF)** reports that **more than 2.1 billion children and adolescents under the age of 20 throughout the world are affected by chronic illnesses or long-term health conditions**. Among others, these include cancer, type 1 diabetes, and heart and respiratory conditions. **Each year, around 1 million children under 20 die because of these illnesses**, which could be treated or effectively prevented with adequate access to healthcare treatment. These conditions are often caused by genetic, metabolic, or environmental factors that challenge healthcare systems around the globe, and highlight the urgency of a more robust response that guarantees the dignity of children, access to palliative care, and holistic protection for those most at risk.

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