

Padre Pio an instrument of the power of the Cross

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND SUFFERING

VATICAN CITY, 21 JUN 2009 (VIS) -

At 4.45 p.m. today Benedict XVI met with patients and medical and administrative staff of the "Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza", a hospital founded by Padre Pio in 1956 that currently has beds for one thousand patients.

On the subject of sickness the Pope explained how, "by taking many forms and striking in different ways", it "raises disquieting issues: Why do we suffer? Can the experience of pain be considered as positive? Who can free us from suffering and death? These are existential questions which usually remain unanswered in human terms because suffering is an enigma which reason cannot fathom.

"Suffering is part of the very mystery of the human person", the Holy Father added. "Certainly we must do whatever we can to reduce suffering, ... but to banish it from the world altogether is not in our power. This is simply ... because none of us is capable of eliminating the power of evil, which ... is a constant source of suffering.

"The only person who can eliminate the power of evil is God. Precisely because Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal to us the divine plan of our salvation, faith helps us penetrate the meaning of all that is human, hence also of suffering. There exists, then, an intimate bond between the Cross of Jesus - symbol of supreme pain and price of our true freedom - and our own suffering, which is transformed and made sublime when lived with an awareness of God's closeness and solidarity".

The Holy Father went on: "Padre Pio was aware of this profound truth. On the first anniversary of the inauguration of this hospital, he said that 'those who suffer must experience God's love through a judicious acceptance of their own pain, through serene meditation upon their destiny in Him'".

"May the Lord help you to fulfil the project that Padre Pio began", the Pope concluded, "with everyone making a contribution: doctors and scientific researchers, healthcare workers and those who collaborate in the various offices, volunteers and benefactors, Capuchin Friars and other priests. Without forgetting the prayer groups which, alongside the 'Casa del Solievo', are the outposts of this citadel of charity, greenhouses of faith, hotbeds of love".