



Throughout history, millions of human beings have died of epidemics of different kinds. The statistics highlight some of them: cholera, plague, leprosy, influenza, smallpox, syphilis, AIDS...

In those and so many other epidemics, behind the numbers have concrete stories: men and women who loved, who fought, who suffered, who laughed, who helped, who were accompanied.

Numbers cannot reflect those stories. They are limited to data, statistics, percentages, geographical locations, the ages, and economic and social situations of those who died.

Some personal stories come to literature, or the press, or television. Manzoni, in "The Bride and Groom", narrates some deaths (imagined) during a cholera epidemic in Milan. In the United States, in its time, the real story of Ryan White (1971-1990), a teenager killed by AIDS, was famous.

Many other stories have no relevant narratives. Few know what happened to that husband, to that wife, to that little son, to that orphan who was found dying in a lost street in a big city.

The history of humanity is furrowed by huge sufferings and diseases that have caused millions of deaths, in the past as in the present. The numbers reflect the magnitude of the drama, but they can't pick up all the personal stories.

When new statistics on deaths from malaria, tuberculosis, cancer, AIDS, heart attacks, and so many other situations appear in the media (not forgetting deaths from violence, starvation, wars), we need to open our inner eyes to Think about what's hidden behind those numbers.

One day, upon the threshold of death, we hope to know the faces and stories of these brothers and sisters. Now we can help them with what is within our reach (also with money, but especially with affection), while praying to God to have mercy on the millions of suffering of all time.