

Catholic Caregivers

'Caregiving is pro-life!'

How to Nourish Your Spiritual Life

Caregiving includes a strong spiritual component. Here are some suggestions for ways that you can nourish your spiritual life in your role as a caregiver:

- Pray every day. Make an effort to spend quiet time with God.
- Read Scripture.
- Ask for prayers from your parish community for your care-receiver and for you as a caregiver.
- Prayerfully reflect on your unique role as a caregiver and realize the special gift you have been given.
- Use the principles of Catholic caregiving as a foundation in decision making.
- Provide comfort and compassionate care.
- Accept God's will for you and your family.
- Take time to be aware of God's presence.
- Share your thoughts and feelings about your caregiving experiences with a spiritual director or a trusted friend who can honestly support and guide you.
- Ask God to reveal the meaning in your life as a caregiver.
- Seek forgiveness for your mistakes and offer it freely and completely to those who have hurt you.
- Use the Internet for prayers and do an online retreat.
- Attend Mass, and go with your loved one if at all possible.
- Write down your thoughts, prayers, fears, and joys in a journal. Review your experiences as a caregiver to become more aware of the presence of God in your daily life.
- Listen quietly to music as a way to slow down and hear the sweet whisperings of God.
- Join or become active in a parish community and draw on the strength of others.
- Read the Liturgy of the Hours and realize God is with you from the moment you wake up to your last thoughts at night. □

Principles of Catholic Caregiving

Love and respect: Whether you're caring for an aging parent or other older family member, a spouse, a child with special needs or a friend, the bond between you and your loved one is like no other. You probably realize that this relationship — though seldom ideal and never perfect — remains a tremendously important part of your life.

You're now being given the opportunity — the challenge — to “honor” your mother and father, to love your spouse, to care for your child or friend in a new, different and more demanding way.

Caregiving is pro-life: The “culture of life” includes providing care for a loved one who is sick, elderly, disabled or frail. A cornerstone of respect for human life is compassionate care for the most vulnerable among us at all the stages of life, from the moment of conception until natural death.

The spirituality of caregiving: Caring for a loved one is a vocation, a calling from God. It's a mission and a role a caregiver accepts in the name of love and it is Love itself who accompanies both the caregiver and the care-receiver on this journey. An awareness of the presence of God, fostered by a turning to both formal and informal prayer, helps you offer loving and compassionate care.

*Most Holy Spirit, guide me
on my journey as a caregiver.
Each step of the way I need you.
I don't know how long this trip
will last. Please give me comfort
and rest when I'm done. Amen.*

--From “The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers”

For a free copy of “The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers,” send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: FSJC, P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.

Catholic Caregivers is a free monthly publication of CatholicCaregivers.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver. Individuals, dioceses, parishes, Knights of Columbus councils, schools and other Catholic organizations are encouraged to make and distribute copies. For more information, go to www.CatholicCaregivers.com. **Vol. 4, No. 5**