

The Health – Faith Connection is a series of catechetical articles for the purpose of exploring healing in the Catholic faith and preparation for the healing sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. It is presented to the faithful of OLPH Church in Clovis as well as the Diocese of Fresno by Sally Flores, RN, FCN of Raphael Health Ministry and a candidate for a Master of Arts in pastoral ministries from Holy Names University.

Caring for the sick and suffering people in our midst



Jesus calls us to care for the least of our neighbors: **“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”** (Mt 25:40, New International Version). When we care for one another, we are Christ to each other. In serving Christ, we are called to be open to see the needs of our family and neighbors. In seeing their needs, we are called to meet them in their pain, illness or suffering and to join them as a support along the way.

We do this when we...

- Listen.
- Sit with the sick person.
- Are present to family and friends.
- Reach out to others – get involved.

Jesus gave us the best example of healing when he served people who were sick and suffering. He came to show us what it means to be a good listener, and how to be a friend and companion to those in need. He broke down social barriers and challenged cultural issues, which prevented

people from caring for others in times of need. He inspired others by the power of faith, prayer and healing touch. This gift was given to build up the body of Christ.

PRAY, TOUCH, SMILE, HUG

Being the caregiver

Caregiving comes from the heart. It takes a special person to see the needs of others outside of themselves. Caregivers have patience, compassion, good listening skills, lighthearted nature and a good sense of humor. They don't take life too seriously nor panic in a difficult situation. They are creative, fun and able to utilize critical thinking. All these skills help them to anticipate a person's needs. A good caregiver sees the value in a human person and strives to uphold a person's dignity at all times. Being a caregiver is a gift. That role in a sick person's life is immeasurable and very fulfilling.

It can also be challenging to care for others. It can cause one to feel lonely and unappreciated. It can cause physical, spiritual and emotional exhaustion. In families, there can be conflict about who is capable of caring for a loved one. Some people (by no fault of their own) are not able to do the hands-on physical/nursing care required of a homebound/bed-bound patient. The knowledge, encouragement, support and willingness to be a caregiver is lacking in this world today.

The sick person feels alone and isolated

The greatest underlying problem is the alienating factor of illness and the misplaced value of independence that causes isolation and

lack of caring for each other. Many people do not want to tell others about their cancer, chronic illness or an injury that is causing suffering. It seems illness and suffering have become deep dark secrets. As caregivers, how might we encourage the sick person to view themselves and their situation differently?

- Share the illness or problem. Don't keep it a secret.
- Allow others to listen and be present in times of suffering.
- Accept care from others graciously.
- Be life-giving to those around you
- Be a witness to the sufferings of Christ.

As loving caregivers rooted in the passion of Christ, we can change people's lives.

Caregiving can be a hard job. Caregivers need support from their community. It is important to realize that we cannot do this on our own. God calls us to be a community, one body of Christ. Call on each other for help and companionship. Involve the faith community in praying for the sick and encourage all to pray for the strength of the caregiver. The community has many talents to share and all we need to do is ask.

The faith community can help...

- Cook, clean and care for the sick.
- Help manage financial issues.
- Navigate the medical system.
- Provide handyman jobs around the house.
- Sit and visit offering prayerful readings, conversation and silent presence.
- Look to your health ministry for advocate services and much more.

All of this help can offer blessings of healing to the sick as well as respite for the caregiver. Caregivers need to recognize their weaknesses, frailty and humanity. Everyone needs support and a chance to refill ourselves with new spiritual, emotional and

physical strength. We need exercise and healthy eating to give us the amount of energy it takes to care deeply for another human being. We need spiritual renewal through prayer, word and worship to center our efforts with Christ and to keep a proper focus on what we are called to do. Jesus offered many wonderful healings and showed compassion to the sick and the suffering but in his humanness, he also recognized the limitations we face.

- He took time to pray quietly.
- He took time to eat and rest.
- He walked; fasted; and lived a balanced, healthy and pure life.

Our faith can guide us and fill our cup.

The prayer of St. Francis: "O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved as to love."



When we recognize the dignity of each person and God's presence in them, we are strengthened to do the work of love we are called to do.



Raphael Health Ministry is here to guide and support you on your health journey. Office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. until noon. Phone Number: (559) 298-5443.

Works Cited

WAU. (2010, October 4). Meditation for Monday, October 4 Luke 10:25-37. *Word Among Us*, p. 28.