

## *Living Eternally Through Death and Dying II:*

A bulletin insert series informing and inspiring the faithful in the truths surrounding death and dying

*The following is the second in a series of inserts related to death and dying. Future inserts will address: the purpose and significance of the Church's liturgical rites for the dead (Wake services, Funeral Mass, Cremation); Communion of Saints, living wills, bequeaths, and Memorial Masses for our loved ones who have gone before us.*

### **Caring For They Who Care For us**

"When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!'" (John 19:26-27). From this moment on, John took Mary into his home and cared for her.

Like St. John at the foot of the cross, caregivers are people who answer yes to God's invitation to be the very hands of God caring for a loved one. No matter how we arrived at this point, we know that taking care of someone who needs assistance can be very rewarding, but it may also exact a high toll.

Caregiver stress is very common. As caregivers, "we instinctively want to take the pain away. Yet, to truly companion another human being requires that we sit with the pain as we overcome the instinct to want to 'fix'." (Handbook for Companioning the Mourner, Wolfet, p.16). This desire is so compelling that many caregivers will drop other activities and focus all of their time and energy on their companion. (Companioning the Dying, Yoder, p.121). Don't make this mistake!

We must not allow ourselves to become so focused on caring for a loved one that we fail to realize that we may be placing our own health and well-being in jeopardy. Remain alert and prepared to respond to these indicators of stress:

- Tired most of the time
- Overwhelmed and irritable
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Unexplained gain or loss of weight
- Loss of interest in activities we used to enjoy
- The false impression that we are alone in this difficulty.

In addition to the physical, psychological and emotional impact upon a caregiver, the spiritual dynamics cannot be overlooked. It is vitally important that we recognize the spiritual reality of what we have been called to share. Realizing that what we're doing is actually a living prayer, and that the suffering we share in is a share in the sufferings of Jesus, these are transformative blessings for us and for those dependent on us too.

The demands of caring for a loved one may, at times, seem overwhelming. We may feel isolated and on our own, however God assures us that He is with us! He is ready to give us His comfort, support, strength, and healing. All we need to do is ask (Psalm 30:3).

While we may sometimes feel overworked and unappreciated, God recognizes our loving efforts. Jesus himself tells us "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25: 34-36) God blesses the caregiver.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

*CareGuides for the Care Team*, Seven Spiritual Practices for Caring Helpers, Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, IN. [www.onecaringplace.com](http://www.onecaringplace.com).

*CareNotes* and *PrayerNotes*, Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, IN.  
[www.onecaringplace.com](http://www.onecaringplace.com).

National Alliance for Caregiving, phone 301-718-8444 or  
[www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org).

*Caring With Faith Series*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH. phone 800-488-0488.

The Friends of St. John the Caregiver. <http://www.fsjc.org/>