

COMPASSIONATE COMPANIONS

St Peregrine Ministry News
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Caregivers are Part of the Healing

One of my most moving moments at my dad's funeral was when I spotted, among family and friends, some of his caregivers from the facility where he spent his last months. They were not paid to be there, but told me they wouldn't want to miss the celebration of the life of one of their favorites! Along with the compassion they had shown all along, I gained an ever-deeper appreciation for the role, and the heart, of all caregivers, whether family, friends, volunteers or healthcare professionals. Let us gratefully celebrate the "compassionate companions" whom we refer to as "caregivers!"

In one gospel story, friends of a paralyzed man lowered him through a roof to bring him to the One who might heal him. Isn't that what we are doing when we pray for a loved one who is living with cancer or other illness? We are "bringing" them to Jesus. While much of St Peregrine Ministry focuses on prayer for the sick, the gospel story leads



me to also reflect on the friends who went out of their way to show him such loving care. These friends can model for us a two-fold behavior toward those who are ill: be with them with care, and bring them to Jesus in prayer. Simply "being with" someone can be part of a person's healing. One very ill man said that he never understood a word that his minister had said during his many visits to him, but always felt better simply because "he was here with me, and I liked the sound of his

voice!" The novelist Anne Patchett further affirms, "You can't change the outcome, but you can sit with someone while they're going on their journey and just say, I see you and I'm here with you."

Perhaps we can call to mind those people in our own lives who have provided that kind of care, who have been there for us, or for our loved ones, whether for the long haul, or even with occasional words and gestures. For no robot and no telemedicine conversation can substitute for a fellow human being looking one in the eye and holding their hand. The truth is that many caregivers, even outside of family or considered loved ones, are people whose hearts are nonetheless broken when they see a life struggle, and come apart. The care they show in such situations is truly an

St Peregrine Ministry Mission Statement

Inspired by Mary at the foot of the Cross, and by our brother friar St. Peregrine, OSM, patron saint of those living with cancer, we Servites accompany and support persons who suffer from serious illness, especially cancer, along with their loved ones and caregivers. We offer our faith, compassion and prayerful intercession, that they may experience hope, peace and the healing presence of God in their lives.

expression of love. The best of them not only meet material needs, but more importantly, they administer kindness, instill hope, affirm human dignity, and respectfully accompany lonely, suffering, anxious people, and those afraid of death or terrified by what may lie ahead. And they get tired too! Some of you reading this article could write much more yourself, because you, too, ARE those compassionate, loving, committed, exhausted caregivers.

“Caregivers don’t think of themselves as special, much less heroes. They do what is humanly possible, day in and day out, because they are human and what they do is possible – although at times seemingly impossible. In the presence of suffering and anguish, they do not flee—they accompany.” When I first read these words, especially “accompany,” my mind jumped to the foot of Jesus’ Cross, and to the woman who stood there, and who inspires Servites to continue a ministry which is not just about “doing for” others, but also a “being with” them, not at all an easy task when the other is in pain. Henri Nouwen writes, “We can come close to another person only when we are willing to become vulnerable ourselves. A compassionate person says: ‘I am human, fragile, and mortal, just like you. I am not scandalized by your tears, nor afraid of your pain. I, too, have wept. I, too, have felt pain.’” Thank God for such compassionate caregivers!

It has been said that 10% of life is what happens, and 90% is how we respond to what happens. With all the unknowns of a journey of cancer or other chronic illness, caregivers

can encourage hope, point out the beauty of human life, and remind us that faith is not about certainty, but feels a lot more like love. I have a friend who has felt called to accompany a number of persons on such a journey. She has learned that the people she companions all longed to feel safe in the care of a loving presence more powerful than their illness. As a woman of faith, she has reflected such a presence by her tender care and hope-filled spirit, almost like a midwife assisting people through the birthpangs that lead to new life after death. A man reported that his strong, self-reliant father lived longer than expected so that God had more time to work to mellow him! He says, “As he lost his wife, his health, much of his independence, his place in society, and his firm grip on life, his soul mellowed and he died ready to grasp a stronger hand.” Some caregivers, who hold and wash others’ hands, also help prepare them to grasp that hand which eventually takes and welcomes them, and us, into the eternal heart of God, where we finally know how much we are loved...the ultimate form of healing! Let us be grateful, and pray for, the dedicated caregivers in our lives and world!

- Fr. John Fontana, OSM

Thank you St Peregrine

- Thank you, St. Peregrine, for praying for Pope Francis’ strength and energy to keep in touch with God’s Holy Spirit in the Synod process.
- I send up prayers of thanksgiving for my mom, who has been in remission for many years now; thanks to God’s blessing and St. Peregrine’s intercession.
- Thank you, God and St. Peregrine for all your help in getting me through my cancer treatment.
- Thank you St. Peregrine for all those who call me on the phone, for all their messages of love and support.
- St. Peregrine, I ask God for the strength to get through one day at a time with my illness. It is difficult and I thank God for wonderful caregivers in my family and medical staff. Thank you God for blessing me.



Newsletter of the Servite St. Peregrine Ministry
Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica
3121 W Jackson Blvd
Chicago IL 60612-2729
Fr. Christopher Krymski, OSM
Fr. John Fontana, OSM

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"Praise God"

Dear Friends of St. Peregrine, OSM,

May God bless you with healing strength and a supportive, prayerful community.

As we hear in St. Luke's Gospel story (Lk. 5:18-20; 24:26), *"Just then, some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you....I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go home.' Amazement seized all of them and they glorified God and were filled with awe."*

What a wonderful recovery for the man to have such neighbors, his community helpers to carry him to the Lord Jesus for healing! We, too, have many people around us to carry us in prayer, in a smile, in holding our hand, in driving us to our doctor's appointments, in blessing us with supportive phone messages to keep in touch. I had that experience when recently, I had major left knee replacement. I had to depend on my Servite brothers and Parish friends to pray with me and take me to appointments and physical therapy. Our community helpers are truly our strength, "to keep in touch" with Divine assistance and St. Peregrine's added strength.

At our Corpus Christi Mass, I received a happy surprise from a parishioner Claude Young who only two weeks ago had brain surgery to remove a cancerous tumor. He was very alert, smiling and walking with the help of a walker, sitting in the front pew. He appreciated all of our community helpers and St. Peregrine's intercession. God's grace and our prayers for him helped in his successful surgery. Praise God for that answered prayer!

Thank you for taking the time to write me on how you and your family have a positive plan to pray for the others' healing in your community. Also share your "God-stories" of faith with me. Let me know how these stories get you through serious illness. Email me at chriskrymski@aol.com. God bless you, your family, friends, caregivers and community helpers.

- Fr. Chris Krymski, OSM



PRAYER

Jesus, the healer, thank you for all the wonderful community helpers you bring into our lives. They have taught us so much about God's unconditional love and that we dwell in God's House and beautiful Creation. Thank you for restoring health for all in the world today. May we walk with one another as we are guided by your Holy Spirit. Bless all the prayer partners, like St. Peregrine, who bring visible comfort and God's care to so many in distress and serious illness. We ask this prayer through you, O Lord Jesus, now and forever, Amen.

Your donation will help us to continue the good works of our Ministry Office in publishing and distributing this newsletter free of charge to parishes, hospitals and prayer centers across the country. Please visit www.servite.org/product/give-now/ to help us spread the good word that others are praying for those with serious illness. Thank you !

Bless you, you who are so worth caring for. You are worth having your needs met. You are worth shuttling to all of those appointments and having someone to complain to about another day of the same unresolved problem. Your pain does not disqualify you from love.

[And] to the care-givers who continue to put another's needs before your own. Bless you. We know this isn't what you had imagined for your life either. That sometimes you are so tired or lonely or burned out. But you serve and support and show up, anyway. You are worth having your needs met too. But you often don't. Because this is what the day requires. This is what love requires.

Bless you all. All you care-givers and care-receivers. You who do the hard work of love and hope-making. May you receive the love you so freely give others and then a little extra (because too much love is never enough).

- Kate Bowler

For prayerful reflection

Who in your life could use some encouragement or consolation? What are some of the ways you can meet these needs? Focus on someone you interact with on a regular basis: a family member, a friend, or a caregiver. Hold that person in your mind. Pray for the grace to know what they are suffering, what they need. Next time you see that person, greet them with a smile and a sincere question about their well-being. Present that person to God in your prayer and ask that he or she be blessed.

You might not be the person who is suffering or sick but this is happening to you too. You juggle the physical, emotional, financial, logistical needs of your loved one. AND caretakers need to be taken care of as well. So take time to consider what you need, today, next week and beyond. Who can you talk to about your own feelings, struggles and frustrations? Who can understand what you are going through, and support you?



Prayer for Caregivers

As you draw me ever deeper into your heart, I discover that my companions on the journey are women and men loved by you as fully and as intimately as I am. In your compassionate heart, there is a place for all of them. No one is excluded. Give me a share in your compassion, dear God, so that your unlimited love may become visible in the way I love my brothers and sisters. (Henri Nouwen)

Photo by eberhard grossgasteiger on Unsplash.com

Questions to ponder

How do we deliberately “keep in touch” with God’s people and creation, for all to be well again? How can we be like those concerned neighbors, community helpers, who are our caregivers when we are in distress?

Action Task

Keep in touch on the phone to give a healing message that you are praying for others’ good recovery and health. Become part of the St. Peregrine Prayer Partners in daily prayer for others with serious illness. Visit our website and enroll online at <https://servite.org/st-peregrine/prayer-partner-enrollment-form/>.

St. Peregrine Ministry is:

Companionship & Support, with Faith, Compassion & Prayer toward Hope, Peace & Healing

A healing Mass, and blessing with the relic of St. Peregrine, is celebrated monthly at the National Shrine of St. Peregrine (in Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica, 3121 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago). The Mass is celebrated in English at 11AM on the third Saturday of each month, and in Spanish at 11AM on the second Saturday each month. All are invited. Please visit and subscribe to our YouTube channel “Servite St. Peregrine Healing Ministry.”