

A Caregiver's Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me better understand and believe I can do what you ask me to do. Forgive me for the times, even now, when I question your judgment.

As I go about the many daily tasks of caregiving, give me energy.

As I watch my loved one oh-so-slowly walk across the room, give me strength.

As I answer his/her repeated question just one more time, give me patience.

As I look for solutions to whatever is the most recent concern, give me wisdom.

As I reminisce with him/her about the "good old days," give me a moment of laughter.

As I get to know my loved one in a new way, seeing both his/her strength and frailty, give me joy.

As I sit beside my loved one's bed waiting for his/her pain medication to take effect, give me comfort.

Lighten my burden, answer my prayer, and give me the strength to do what so often seems impossible. Give me a quiet place to rest when I need it and a quieting of my anxieties when I'm there.

Change my attitude from a tired, frustrated and angry caregiver to the loving and compassionate one I want to be.

Remain my constant companion as I face the challenges of caregiving and when my job is through and it's time for me to let go, help me remember he/she is leaving my loving arms to enter your eternal embrace. Amen.

The Friends of St. John the Caregiver is . . .

An international Catholic organization addressing the growing needs of family caregivers by providing:

>spirituality, information and resources to individual caregivers

www.YourAgingParent.com

> training and educational material to dioceses and parishes

www.CatholicCaregivers.com

>a membership association* offering spiritual support for:

—those who need care

—those who give care

—those who assist others

giving care

www.FSJC.org

The Friends of St. John the Caregiver firmly believes:

Caregiving is pro-life!

**No membership dues! No meetings! All we ask is that you pray for family caregivers and those receiving care.*

Donations greatly appreciated.

FSJC is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Donations are tax deductible as provided by law.

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The Basics of Catholic Caregiving

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St. John the Caregiver
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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.

The Spirituality of Caregiving and You

Caregiving may be a new role for you.

It might have happened suddenly: your loved one had a stroke, was in an accident, or was discharged from the hospital still needing extensive care.

Or it might have been gradual: he or she, over time, has come to depend on you more and more.

God has asked you, just as Jesus asked St. John, to take care of someone he loves. More than an assignment, it's a calling. Truly, a vocation.

No matter how you arrived at this point, no matter what your particular responsibilities and concerns have become, you may find it helpful to realize — or to consider once again — that there is a spiritual component to caregiving. To pause for a moment and *make the conscious decision* to be your loved one's caregiver. To accept this role. To acknowledge this God-given vocation.

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Like St. John at the foot of the cross, you now have the opportunity to answer yes to God's invitation to care for one of his beloved sons or daughters.

Our faith tell us, and our loving God assures us, you're not alone in this often challenging and overwhelming — and at times even frightening — mission. The One who asked you remains with you, day and night.

More than merely by your side, he alone can be in your mind, your heart and your soul, ready to offer you comfort, support and strength to handle the daily challenges of caregiving. All you need to do is ask.

But amid the hectic day-in and day-out tasks of caring for a loved one, sometimes it takes effort, it takes a conscious and deliberate decision, to stop — if only for a moment — and become more aware of the presence of God.

You're not alone in this often challenging and overwhelming — and at times even frightening — mission. The One who asked you remains with you, day and night.

To better see how he never abandons you. How — no matter what time it is, no matter where you are, no matter the circumstances — he is *there*.

The love you offer to your aging parent, spouse, family member or friend is always accompanied by God's infinite love for that person . . . and for you.

Our Scriptural Model for Receiving and Giving Care: *John 19:26-27*

Our Lady in Need



At the foot of the cross, Mary is "Our Lady in Need." A widow who is losing her only child, she has no one primarily responsible for taking care of her in her later years. From the cross, so

close to death, Our Lord asks St. John the apostle to meet that need. And he asks his mother to accept John's help.

In every parish, there are those who — because of poor health, a chronic condition, or the frailty of age — are in need.

Today Our Lord asks others to be caregivers. And he asks those needing help to accept it.

St. John the Caregiver

How did John come to receive the assignment of taking care of Jesus' mother? He was *there*.

Of all the apostles, only John walked the road to Calvary and stood beside Mary at the foot of the cross.

Then, and now, a caregiver is someone who is *there*. It's someone who is present in the sense of concern and service even when he or she can't be physically present.

Now asked by Jesus to take care of Our Lord's beloved brother or sister, the imitator of St. John the Caregiver says yes.

The Faithful Followers of Christ

The Gospel of John tells us that, in addition to Our Lady and St. John, other disciples were there, too.

Within a family, within a parish, within a diocese, there are men and women who are not the person needing care, who are not the primary caregivers, but who are called to be of service to both. How, and to what degree, varies. Within this group are family members, friends, volunteers and professionals.

And, no matter our particular role, all of us are called to offer prayerful support.