

# Catholic Caregivers

*'Caregiving is pro-life!'*

## God Knows Caregiving Is Hard

God knows caregiving is hard. God knows caregiving is work. God alone knows all the particular circumstances—the feelings and emotions, the life experiences and personality quirks, the baggage and hot buttons—that can make taking care of another person hard work.

And knowing all that, God has chosen you to play a central role in providing that care. Just as from the cross Jesus asked St. John—the patron saint of caregivers—to take care of the Blessed Mother, God asks you to help take care of someone else he so deeply loves. But that doesn't mean providing care for a spouse, a parent or grandparent, a child or sibling with special needs, or any other family member or friend is simple or easy.

You know caregiving is hard work. That caregiving can take a toll physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, and spiritually. What you may not know, or at times not recognize, is that you are not the only one facing these challenges. While you may be the only one in your family providing care (or the primary person providing it), there are other caregivers in your workplace, in your parish, in your community, in your city or town, in your state.

As in your case, often the work they do and the services they provide—the loving care they offer—is unknown and unseen by others. That's so because caregiving is personal. That's so because caregiving is not a role one accepts and sticks with to earn glory and praise. That's so because caregivers aren't interested in tooting their own horns (even if they had the time or energy to do so).

A caregiver needs workable options that can easily be tailored to meet specific needs and circumstances, not a one-size-fits-all, time- and energy-consuming “answer.” A caregiver needs up-to-date information on, and access to, affordable services, not programs that are out of touch with reality or out of reach financially. A caregiver needs the support of others, not a hands-off attitude from the workplace, the community, the state, or the

church. And a caregiver needs solid spiritual nourishment, not pie-in-the-sky platitudes.

More than needing all that, a caregiver deserves all that . . . and much, much more.

*You* deserve all that . . . and much, much more.

God knows you do.

One of the basic teachings of Catholic spirituality is that throughout our lives each of us is

personally called by God to use a particular talent, to meet a particular need. For you, now, that vocation is taking care of a loved one.

Our Catholicism also tells us that in all

things, at all times, we're never alone. God doesn't send us on our way. He walks with us. That's not to say there aren't times when we feel alone—or abandoned. Countless saints have testified to that experience. From the cross, Jesus himself cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

When you are caught up in the many everyday details and demands of caregiving, it's easy to overlook the spiritual side of what you have been asked—called—to do and what you are doing. It can help to realize, to remember, that what you're doing is a prayer, and the path you and your loved one are taking is spiritual pilgrimage.

It's the Father calling his beloved child home. It's the Father asking you to help his son or daughter along the final stages of that journey.

It's his Son whom you are giving care. It's the Son who told us that whatever we do for those in need we do for him.

And it's the Spirit who is with you right now. It's the Spirit who will never leave you, even during those times when it seems he's gone away and taken his gifts—wisdom, courage, knowledge, and the rest—with him.

*May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit richly bless you and your loved one in this life, and in the life to come.*

*Amen.*

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