

Pastoral Care Reflection

Have you ever heard this dialogue? “You have been such of a help.” With the reply, “All I did was listen.” Isn’t this the desire and longing of all human hearts, especially those who are marginalized and isolated because of age or illness?

When people are living in their own homes, or a care-facilities or with a relative, they can feel very isolate and lonely, not because people are not caring and trying to make life pleasant, but sometime there is just not enough time and energy to provide enough companionship.

Loneliness can be debilitating because as we age, our friends and family members die. If we have a long-term chronic illness our friends and companions, very often have busy lives and can’t be with us as often as we would like. Frequently, the relationships that we treasured are not there for support and consolation. I can remember my mother saying the hardest family death for her was the death of her sister, Mary. They had a very close relationship all of their lives and would call each other each afternoon. They didn’t talk about profound things but they could share what they were cooking for supper and what was going on with the latest soap opera. They enjoyed being connected!

Communication and belonging are so important for our emotional well-being. There is a wonderful book entitled, *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, by Elisabeth Tova Bailey. In her book she quotes an article written by Atul Gawande. He says, “All human beings experience isolation as torture.” Elisabeth continues, “Illness isolates; the isolated become invisible; the invisible become forgotten.”

Pastoral care ministers have a noble ministry. They are the incarnation of God’s love and care for each person that they visit. They help people to realize that they are not alone in their infirmity or illness. When they bring Communion to the homebound, hospital patients or nursing home residents, they give the recipients a sense of hope and connection. They are not forgotten or alone.

Here is a little poem in honor of our pastoral care visitors:

Pastoral Care Visitor
Compassionate, Attentive
Enlivening, Listening, Caring
Providing the Connection
Love!

May God continue to bless our pastoral care visitors in their life-giving ministry.

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