

# Prayer Matters

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## Does prayer have a place in Pastoral Care?

Yes. I think so.

Pastoral Care is to care for and be “present” to others - to be there in times of sickness, joy, sorrow or in times of celebration, or transition:

To pray.

To listen.

To share.

To befriend.

Pastoral Care is a ministry of “presence”, based on faith, to provide support and love to those who are in need. It is a journey shared in a concerned relationship, and the journey is equally significant in the lives to both travellers and God. In Pastoral Care, the emphasis is on “Care” not “Cure. The person giving Pastoral Care is not intended to “fix” any situation, provide advice or provide solutions to problems. It is a ministry of caring enough to give one’s time to be truly “present” to someone in times of crisis, joy, happiness or sadness. A Pastoral Care person listens with an open heart. I believe that **prayer matters** in having an open heart, and to being fully present in love to another, and to have a heart connected to a caring, loving God.

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew 11: 28-30 [NRSV]

**Preparation prayers.** When making a pastoral visit, one needs to be spiritually prepared. Central in that preparation is praying beforehand. It is helpful when the visitor has removed any barriers that might exist between him/her self and God by praying for forgiveness. One might also want to pray for protection from evil for both the visitor and the visited. One is encouraged to pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit during the visit. Prayers such as the Prayer of St. Francis or the following may be helpful:

*Lord God, bless the person(s) whom I will be visiting today. May I have your spirit of compassion so that I may enter places of pain and hurt with sensitivity, and bring to others who suffer a presence that comforts, sustains and heals.*

**Prayers during a visit.** Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate for the pastoral visitor to pray with and/or for the person being visited. If there is any doubt the visitor should ask the person they are visiting if they would like the visitor to pray for and/or with them. Using familiar prayers is frequently the most comforting to someone who is in distress. Prayers such as these that follow are familiar to most people.

[ 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

[ The Lord’s Prayer

[ Prayer of St. Richard

**Prayer after a visit.** The visitor may wish to offer a prayer of intercession for the person visited, but in any case, a short prayer of thanksgiving is appropriate.

Prayers before, during and after a pastoral visit help God to be connected to the visitor, to the one visited, and to his/her situation.