

Dear Friends in Christ,

Carers Week in Australia will be celebrated on Sunday 11 to Saturday 17 October. In recognition of the many carers in our parishes, the Bishops invite you to celebrate and acknowledge carers.

Carers Australia define carers as people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged. This includes the 272,000 young people up to the age of 25 who are carers. (Carers Australia: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/>)

In 2015, in Australia, there were 2.7 million unpaid carers in Australia¹ that is 12% of the population. 96% of carers provide support for a family member which often means they can only work part time. Only 56% of primary carers work compared to 86% of non-carers. Reduced work hours leads to less weekly income and the weekly median income of primary carers aged 15 - 64 was 42% lower than that of non-carers². Lower income in a household can lead to poverty. Carers are our unsung heroes and are a real presence of Jesus in our communities. In fact, in 2015, it was estimated that carers provided 1.9 billion hours of unpaid care.

However, caring has a price and research has shown that, when carers are inadequately supported, their own health, mental health and wellbeing can be seriously affected. Being unable to work or work part time can lead to financial challenges and sometimes poverty.

Parish communities can play a pivotal role in providing support, both spiritually and practically, to carers in their parish communities. We are called to not only celebrate and acknowledge carers but to look for ways to listen to, build relationships with and form networks of support for carers. Pope Francis instructs us: "It means opening the doors and letting Jesus go forth. Many times we keep Jesus closed inside the parishes with us, and we do not go out and we do not let Him leave!" We are encouraged to open the doors of our parishes and open our hearts to carers.

I invite you to use the enclosed material to promote Carers Week in your parish. Thank you again for your willingness to engage in this practical pastoral expression of genuine love for Jesus as seen in every member of His disciples.

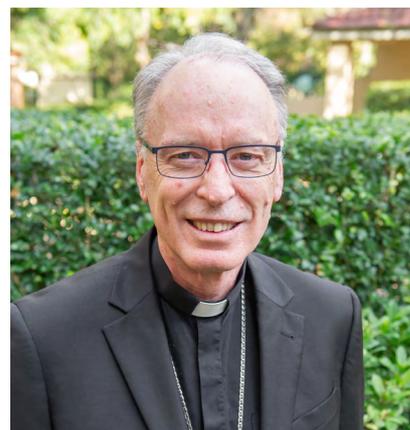
Yours sincerely in Jesus,



+ Don Sproxton

Bishop Delegate for Disability Issues

Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service



1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

2 *ibid.*,

LITURGY NOTES

Suggested Bulletin Inserts

- National Carers Week is about recognising and celebrating the outstanding contribution unpaid carers make to our nation.
- There are over 2.7 million family and friend carers in Australia providing 36 million hours of care and support every week* to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail. The replacement value of that unpaid care is \$1.1 billion per week.
- Anyone at any time can become a carer. National Carers Week is an opportunity to educate and raise awareness among all Australians about the diversity of carers and their caring roles.

Source: All About Carers: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/all-about-carers-fact-sheet-sept-2018-update.pdf>

Carers often need support to enable them to participate in the life of the parish. Parishioners could offer to assist carers with washing and ironing (especially in cases where the person with a disability is incontinent), play with children, take them for a walk or assist with therapies. This would allow carers an opportunity to be more involved in the parish.



PARISH ACTION

As a parish, we can support people in caring roles and their families in the following ways:

- Invite carers to meet to share their stories and discuss what type of support they need
- Keep in contact with carers by telephone, text or mail
- Increase our awareness and education of carers, especially young carers and where to get help when its needed
- Offer to organise a retreat day for carers
- Offer 'companion' ministry for carers. This ministry provides time for the carer to attend Mass or other parish events while their loved one is cared for
- Organise a support group for carers in your parish/deanery or dioceses
- Offer prayers and support to individuals and families who are affected by caring responsibilities
- Serve on parish committees for outreach to individuals and families affected by a caring role
- Investigate counselling services in your diocese for carers
- Review your parish's inclusiveness of carers in community life, ministry, and leadership
- Get involved in your local Carers organisation
- Work on justice issues affecting Carers such as health care, respite and employment
- Invite a carer to speak about their role as a carer at weekend Masses
- Contact your local CatholicCare or Centacare for services for carers



- Becoming a carer in the family circle is like being born; it is not something you choose; you could say that it is something that happens to you. In another sense, however, like life itself, it is possible to see how becoming a carer is a “vocation”. It is an unexpected invitation from God to participate in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Living as a disciple is not always about what I would prefer to do; but how I respond to what I have been asked to do.

I think most of you, in your better moments, will recognise that there is a privilege involved in caring for someone at home, where they can be in familiar surroundings and close to family and friends. Sometimes it is only later on that you can really appreciate this. Let’s be honest, though, it can also be very challenging and isolating to be a carer and the question needs to be

asked “who cares for the carer”?

The first disciples were sent out in pairs and, in this way, Jesus made it clear that no Christian vocation is meant to be lived in isolation. My own experience would suggest that being a carer has a way of creeping up on you. You don’t always notice it coming, and neither do other people, even other family members. It is important to speak up, for your own sake and for the sake of those for whom you care, so that the wider community of family and parish, which also has some responsibility, doesn’t sail on oblivious to the need.

I encourage you also not to lose sight of the spiritual support which your local parish can offer, through the pastoral visit, the sacrament of the sick and the Mass.

Bishop Kevin Doran. Thursday 24th July 2014

Parish outreach needs to be organised and available. The volunteers must have an understanding and expertise and utilise professionals in the parish. This volunteer group could link into existing care structures, like CatholicCare



TIPS FOR CARERS

- Try stress-reduction techniques, For example: meditation, prayer, yoga, Tai Chi.
- Look after your own healthcare needs.
- Good rest and proper nutrition is vital.
- Try to exercise for at least 10 minutes a day.
- Try to have some time off!
- Look after yourself by participating in the things you love! For example; reading a good book, going to a movie with friends and a warm bath or facial!
- Keep in contact with your friends and try a support group for carers.
- Don't be afraid to see a counsellor when you need it or talk to a trusted friend, counsellor or priest.
- Learn how to identify and acknowledge your feelings. Feelings are neither right nor wrong; it's how we react to our feelings.
- Try to look at the positive side of a situation. A sense of humour can relieve some situations.
- Set goals for yourself. For example; when do I plan to have some time off? What is my exercise plan for this week?

Handy Websites for Carers

- Carers Australia: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/about-us/>
- Carer Gateway: Australian Government: <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>
- Carer Gateway Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olrn3w_JPIg
- All About Carers: Carers Australia: <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/all-about-carers-fact-sheet-sept-2018-update.pdf>

Young Carers

- Young Carers Network: <https://youngcarersnetwork.com.au/>
- Incredible reality for young carers 7:30 Report: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blb_k6hp0Rc
- How do parents feel about being cared for by their children? SBS Insight <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcgl7qyqHOQ>

PRAYERS OF GENERAL INTERCESSION

For all those who face discrimination due to their role as a carer, that they will find welcome and inclusion,

Let us pray to the Lord.

For all men, women, and children, who deal with mental and emotional crises, that the joy and love of Jesus may bring them comfort,

Let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who struggle in the role of carer, that the Church and public agencies will act with justice to ensure the availability of necessary and supportive services,

Let us pray to the Lord

That the Holy Spirit will inspire Christians everywhere to open their hearts and arms to welcome those who provide care to family members,

Let us pray to the Lord

For all who provide services for carers in our community – social workers, counsellors, mental health professionals, pastoral caregivers – that they will bear witness to God's spirit of love,

Let us pray to the Lord

For persons who are cared for. To find effective treatment and understanding and acceptance from others,

We pray to the Lord

In thanksgiving for the compassion and dedication of carers,

We pray to the Lord

For our elected officials to come to an understanding of the need for increased funding for carers,

We pray to the Lord

That the darkness of stigma, labels, exclusion and marginalisation might be dispelled by the light of greater understanding, acceptance and respect for the dignity of every person,

We pray to the Lord

SCRIPTURE

- You have granted me life and favour, and your care has preserved my spirit. *Job 10:12*
- So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. *Luke 10:35*
- "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' *Matthew 25:34-40 34*
- Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. *James 5:14*
- When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. *John 13:12-14*
- Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. *Galatians 6:2*
- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. *Philippians 2:3-4*
- We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. *Romans 15:1*
- Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. *Romans 12:13*
- "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength." *Philippians 4:13*
- "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." *Isaiah 41:10*
- "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!" *Psalms 31:24*

- Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. *Luke 6:38*
- Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. *1 John 4:7-8*
- So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. *John 13:34*
- Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. *3 John 1:2*
- But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. *1 John 3:17-18*

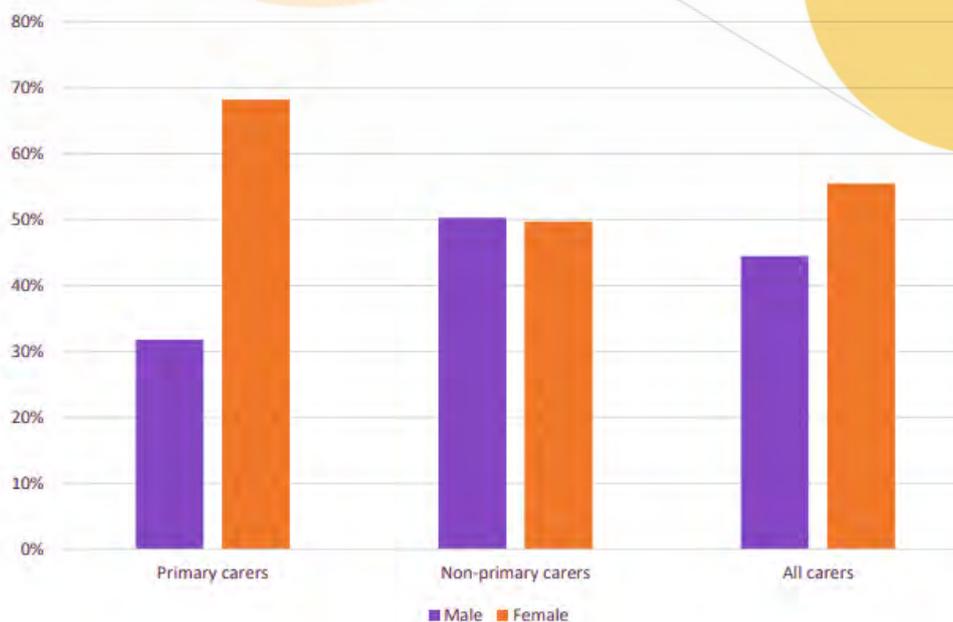
Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils need to be encouraged to tap into and be resourced by the expertise and experience of Chaplains and Pastoral Carers who have ministered with disabled people, their families and care givers both in and out of the institutions.



STATISTICS

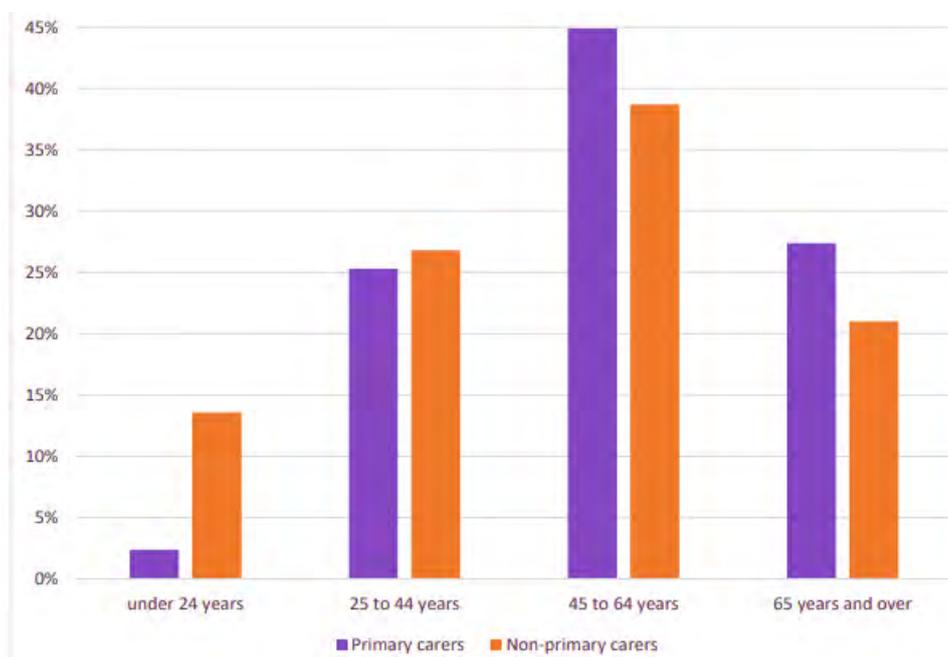
2.65 million or 10.8% of all Australians are carers

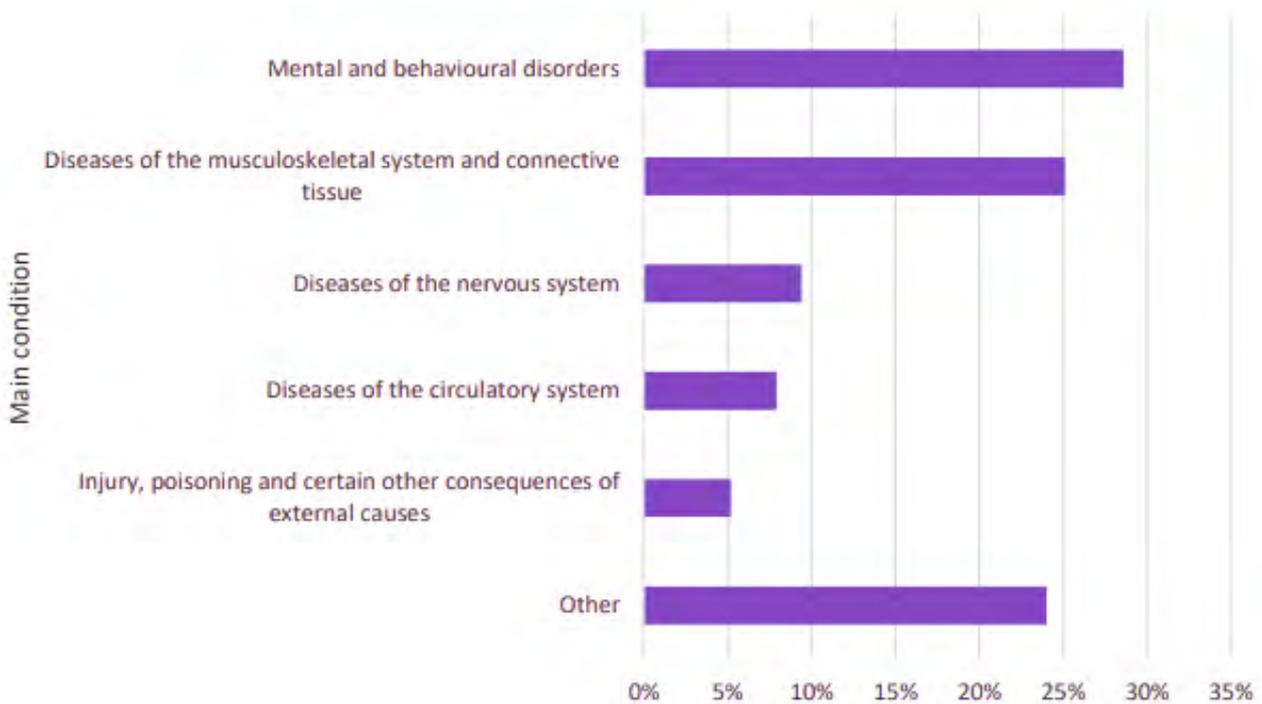
Of these Australians, 3.5% were primary carers.



12.3% of all Australian females were carers and 9.3% of all Australian males

These include **235,300 carers under the age of 25**



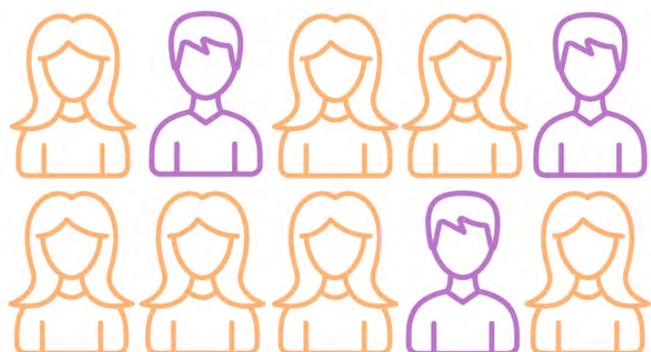


The **most common reason (70.1%)** primary carers gave for taking on a caring role was a **sense of family responsibility**



Half (50.2%) of all carers lived in a household in the lowest two equivalised gross income quintiles, twice that of non-carers (25.6%).

12.3% of all Australian females were carers and **9.3% of all Australian males**



Seven in ten (71.8%) primary carers were women.

PRAYERS

A Carer's Prayer

Let me be kind when tiredness overwhelms
my weary brain and turns my legs to lead;
let me be brave when truths must be conveyed,
confronting the past and all things left unsaid;
let me fight on for you when various rules
make nonsense of your rights and reinforce
your fears;
grant me the stamina to speak and treat with
fools,
remaining calm when biting back the tears.
Help me to know somehow that life goes on
beyond this time of stress and sleepless nights;
help me to smile and love you in the midst
of endless pointless and exhausting fights.
And when the caring ends, help me to be
kind, in my guilt and weariness, to me.

By Heather Smith

Open-Hearted Carer

For each person in my care.
O loving and mysterious God,
open my heart to their healing need.
Strengthen me.
Give me wisdom as you guide me
in my care for the sick.
Help me to see the presence
of the suffering and risen Jesus
in each person and to know always
that you look at me, O Lord,
through the eyes of the sick
and that you love each of us as we
give and receive care from each other.
Amen.

Carers Prayer

Father,
Allow me to serve others with a joyful heart;
Never keeping score;
Always giving;
Never expecting to receive.
Allow me to give of myself,
To give of my talents and of my goods,
To give of my time and of my energy,
To give of my heart and of my soul.
Help me understand the needs of others,
Never criticizing,
Never demeaning,
Never scolding,
Never condemning.
You have been so gracious to me,
Always Loving,
Always forgiving,
Always restoring;
Never gloating over my defeats,
Even when I have been so wrong.
Father, keep a condemning spirit
Far from my heart and further from my lips.
Allow me to serve others as You serve,
With gentleness, compassion, and tenderness,
Never diminishing the worth of another,
Choosing to extend mercy to the
brokenhearted,
Like You have repeatedly shown it to me,

Amen.

By Jack Watts

A Prayer of Celebration and Thanksgiving in Carer's Week

Loving Father, we thank and honour you for the people who care for us, our parents, foster parents, grandparents, Godparents, spouses, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, teachers, religious and all those special people in our lives who just seem to know when we need them. We especially pray for young people who care for siblings, parents, grandparents and friends. We ask you to bless, fill and flood their hearts with your endless love.

Jesus, we thank and praise you for those who care for us in a professional capacity. We pray for doctors, nurses and support staff. We pray for all those who care for others as volunteers, for those who give their time to just sit and be present, for those who help with the daily mundane chores of life and for those who provide personal care so lovingly and respectfully. We ask you to bless, guide and sustain them with your everlasting peace.

Holy Spirit, pour out your gifts and fruits on all those who provide care for others. Grant them time and rest to rejuvenate, courage and fortitude to face the day to day challenges and wisdom and trust to know when to ask for help.

Blessed Trinity, inspire and awaken us to be a Church community that is actively seeking to provide assistance and support to people who care for our brothers and sisters, who are witnesses of your gifts to our world. Amen.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2007

Care and Concern Prayer

Father

You have loved us into life. Thank you for your presence among us and for the many blessings you have given us.

Jesus

You have asked us to see your face in those who need to experience your love in their lives. Help us to walk in your footsteps as we use our gifts in service to others.

Holy Spirit

Grant us wisdom, strength and patience and fill us with your joy and peace in our Ministry of Care and Concern.

Amen

Perth Archdiocese

"Blessing For the Work of Our Hands":

May our hands and all that they do be blessed.

May they be strong, creative, and gentle.

May the Spirit guide them.

May they provide comfort and healing.

May their touch remind patients of God's divine grace and mercy.

May they work with compassion, and may they also play and rest in good measure.

May they feel beauty, create peace, and clap with joy.

May our hands and all that they do be blessed.

Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands!

(Psalm 90:17)

Clair Hochstetler Used with permission.

Prayer Service - Praying for Pastoral Caregivers

READER

Let us place ourselves in the presence of God in the quiet space.

READER

A reading from the Gospel of Mark:

"On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.' And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, 'Son of David, have pity on me.' "Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage; get up, he is calling you.' He threw aside his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man replied to him, 'Master, I want to see.'"

READER

It is a cry that we hear every day as carers "I want to see." In some circumstances, it is a cry for physical sight that has been taken away by age or accident. But in many circumstances, it is a cry for meaning and insight as persons suffer spiritual crises spurred by ill health and disaster. What is the meaning of life with disability? Is there purpose in my pain? How could a good God allow this to happen? What happens after I die?

READER

Catholic teaching lifts the importance of honouring the whole person, both body and spirit, seeing the two as integrally connected. It would be impossible for us to offer care without dedicating carers to spiritual care. They go by many different names — chaplains, pastoral caregivers, spiritual companions, family

members and more. Many are professionals who've prepared for their ministry with years of study and certification. Others are generous volunteers from the local community. All help us to fulfil our mission in an explicit way. And today we give thanks for their presence in our midst. (Invite all carers present to stand.)

READER

As a carer, yours is the face of Christ for many of our parishioners and family members. Today, we offer thanks to God for you and ask God's blessing. Let us pray:

READER

For the generosity and gentleness of these women and men ...

ALL

We give thanks.

READER

For their courage and perseverance in accompanying those in grief and pain ...

ALL

We give thanks.

READER

For their wisdom in dealing with life's most difficult questions ...

ALL

We give thanks.

READER

For the gift of fidelity to their call ...

ALL

We call upon you, O God.

READER

For the gift of ongoing strength and endurance
in their ministry ...

ALL

We call upon you, O God.

READER 2

For continued growth and insight before the
mysteries of life and death ...

ALL

We call upon you, O God.

READER

Let us pray:

ALL

Bless these women and men whom you have
called to serve you as spiritual companions of
the infirm and suffering. Make them ministers of
the “sight” that we all need in our lives in times
of trial. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the
healer, who attends to both body and spirit.
Amen.

Mike Garrido

Director, Mission Services

Catholic Health Association

*Adapted with permission from the original prayer “Praying for Pastoral Caregivers”, Health Progress, May-
June 2009 Copyright © 2009 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States*

Website Resources

- A service of celebration and thanksgiving for caregivers: <https://southwell.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-service-of-celebration.pdf>
- Prayers for Caregivers: <https://www.strengthforthemoment.com/prayers-for-caregivers/>

This parish kit has been produced by the Secretariat for Social Justice – Mission and Service

Please address all enquiries to:

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
Disability Projects Officer
Secretariat for Social Justice – Mission and Service
GPO Box 368 CANBERRA ACT 2601

T (02) 6201 9850

E disability@catholic.org.au

www.catholic.org.au

You are the body of Christ,



and each of you is part of it

(1 Corinthians 27)