

# Challenges of the Prayer Room Ministry

by Michele Greischar

**Suggested Prayer intentions:**

*Please pray for the following initiatives, activities and concerns of the National Service Committee:*

- ◆ For all who are involved in preparations for the National Leaders Conference that will be held in Chicago, November 11–13, and for many pre-registrations.
- ◆ For all who attend the various Charismatic Priests, Deacons and Seminar-ians retreats this year, that this experience will bear fruit in their lives and in their dioceses.
- ◆ For a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all who attend World Youth Day in Cologne in August.
- ◆ For God's protection and provision for all who serve Catholic Charismatic Renewal at the National, Diocesan and Parish level, that we will be effective in helping the Church to spread the Spirituality of Pentecost "as a renewed thrust of prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation."
- ◆ For the NSC, as they meet for their annual retreat in September, that they will clearly discern the Lord's direction for the coming year.

Scripture, like life, is full of paradoxes. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; ...For everyone who asks, receives, ..." (Luke 11:9-10). These are strong statements, deeply embedded in the minds and hearts of prayer ministers. We pray in expectant faith for the needs of others, and we thank the Lord that in his mercy our prayers have been answered. But what happens when someone returns to the prayer room with the same problem and the same need? I am reminded of the parable of the persistent widow and the dishonest judge, wherein Jesus illustrates "... the necessity for them (us) to pray always, without becoming weary" (Luke 18:1-8). In this parable, Jesus teaches his disciples the importance of returning to prayer when it is needed. Sometimes situations and/or people need extended prayer.

The challenge in these situations, I think, is more for the prayer minister than for the supplicant. Our efficient knowledgeable selves have prayed in faith. We have followed the "right formulae." Could we ministers be failures at prayer? Surely not. It must be someone's fault. We are tempted to blame, shame or reject the supplicant. We've prayed; God hears; God answers; stop coming for prayer. But it's not always that simple. Here's our paradox. At times, we forget that prayer is not an assembly line process, but God's own mysterious creative process.

I believe that "repeat supplicants" are gifts sent by God for those ministering healing. Tapping our very core of love and patience, and challenging us to see them with God's eyes rather than with ours, they demonstrate clearly to us that God alone is the healer; we are only his ministers.

Therefore, we must become more attuned listeners to the Spirit of God within us. With his wisdom, we may be led to other avenues of prayer.

If instead of shaming, blaming or rejecting the repeat petitioner, we joyfully invite the person into an experience of God's deep unconditional love, walls to healing can be lowered in the recipient as well as in the ministers.

One effective way of dealing with these cases is Soaking Prayer. Here, a team can set aside time exclusively for prayer in the Spirit for the person. There is no need to repeat the description of the situation or any progress. The team is simply committed to praying for a specified amount of time on a regular basis for the fullness of God's love to soak into the person. We do this unconditionally, regularly and with great thanks and praise for God's goodness. Concretely, we might invite the repeat supplicant to come each week for a period of ten minutes of soaking prayer. It is necessary for those praying to be committed to this form of loving prayer, as well as to holding the boundaries of time. When we pray soaking prayer for others, we ourselves are greatly blessed, experiencing the promise of James 5:16: "...pray for one another, that you may be healed."

Practically, we might sensitively check whether the person is receiving medical or psychological help. Always, we respect the individual's integrity. Just as we might take multiple vitamins while eating a healthy diet, so we might receive multiple prayers while availing ourselves of professional sources. One does not negate the other.

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We might also encourage growth in spiritual discipline. The sacraments increase our intimacy with God. Eucharistic celebrations and Reconciliation are paths to healing. Spending time each day in prayer either before the Blessed Sacrament or in our own holy space lifts burdens that are often below our conscious level. Meditating on the mysteries of the rosary keeps us centered in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And turning to the scripture on a regular basis draws us into the truths of our life in Jesus.

In some cases, perhaps the prayer ministers may encounter blocks that seem demonic. If it seems that additional help is needed, then consult with elders who might give direction and assistance.

Finally, through baptism we belong to the communion of saints. The saints triumphant do pray with us. Making that reality more concrete for one another is helpful. Oftentimes, our non-answered prayers

involve issues that may be rooted in alienation from a supportive community. In prayer, we can bring the individual into our heavenly family: union with Mary, as an unconditionally loving mother, with Joseph, who cares and nurtures each of us as he did Jesus, and with the child Jesus, as a healing, playful sibling. Certainly, St. Monica provides a model of a mother's persistent prayer for a straying son. St. Timothy is an example for young leaders in the Church. Who among us hasn't called on St. Anthony for help in finding something lost? We have a family of heavenly intercessors. Let's use our family resources in our prayer ministry.

With rejoicing and with thanksgiving, let us embrace the people and the paradoxes we encounter in our prayer room ministry. With our hearts and minds strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, let us praise God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—for the gift of serving his people. ♦

### Is Your Prayer Group Listed?

The NSC website [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org) has a searchable database of Liaisons, Renewal Centers, Ministries and soon of Prayer Groups. Information requests have been mailed to liaisons and Renewal Centers. In (arch)dioceses where there is no Renewal Office requests have been sent directly to prayer groups.

Is your prayer group listed? If not, please contact us at [chariscenter@nsc-chariscenter.org](mailto:chariscenter@nsc-chariscenter.org). We want to hear from you!

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1980 *Thank God with us for* = 25 = *years of service* 2005



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