

“Prayer opens the heart”

by Frances Molloy – Pastoral Care Project Charity No 1094766

Our minds are often over stimulated with information and images intended to inspire us to get involved with various good causes - it can often have the opposite effect. So, for us as a small charity how do we highlight the importance of Dementia – Prayer Week 12 – 19th March 2015? This week is important for people who live with dementia, as they are important members of the parish family and the wider community.

They are the reason the annual event was first created by ourselves and takes place during lent - a familiar time for them and us. It offers an opportunity for people to pray and help support the spiritual wellbeing of those with dementia through using our resources. The resources we offer enable people everywhere to pray for those with dementia and for the caring services. The resources also offer creative ways of supporting family carers who may be carrying the burden of caring alone. In response to these growing needs a new prayer and information leaflet will be produced by the Pastoral Care Project and available late February.

Dementia – Prayer Week focuses on a variety of ways of praying together with those who may experience failing sensory perception. However often their perception of God is still very much alive, why? As it is written in St Paul’s letter to the Romans 5.5. ‘the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.’ Therefore, we appeal to you, to take up this opportunity during lent and help the frail elderly through the use of familiar prayer, religious symbols and music to help them to connect with God and one another in the present moment. I know from my own experiences over last twenty five years of being with the frail elderly that with help they can practise their faith, and feel God’s presence. I remember one lady who during a time of prayer despite having advanced dementia she always prayed for others and would say “faith is a gift from God.”

It is encouraging that year on year that support has grown throughout the country. Several Bishops and priests offer mass with anointing of the sick. Many schools pray the Rosary, hold assemblies, as well as organising a Pastoral Care Project charity ‘Yellow Day’. There is also an increase in local churches working together offering prayer events and using our ‘Bake & Share’ initiative for reflection and hospitality as well raising donations for our work.

During a recent conversation with Bishop David McGough about the forthcoming Dementia – Prayer Week 12-19th March, and the growing response, he said, “Prayer opens the heart...” these words have stayed with me; reminding me that prayer is central to all that we do. A recent telephone call from a parish priest reminded me again that ‘prayer opens the heart’ the priest went to say he had promoted the work of the Pastoral Care Project and Dementia - Prayer Week at their weekend masses of 23rd and 24th January and a collection was taken for our work. We are so thankful to him and his parishioners for their prayer and their generosity which is vital for us as we continue with this important work of the Church.

One of the new prayer initiatives is ‘Carers Prayer Service’. This has come about because of the number of enquiries from individuals, organisations and churches who have contacted us for information and resources.

Getting involved is straight forward by using the website www.pastoralcareproject.org.uk you let us know what you plan to do and the date. Donations can be sent to us at our new address, Pastoral Care Project, St George’s House, Gerards Way, Colehill B46 3FG or telephone 01675 434035/6 All text is the copyright of the Pastoral Care Project.