

‘their oneness is something to behold’

The response to Dementia - Prayer Week 12- 19th March has been wonderful but not surprising owing to the number of people using the Prayer Leaflet every day in parishes and schools. We wish to thank His Grace Archbishop Bernard Longley and Bishop David McGough for their support for this initiative. A few people have already told us how much they love the prayer, which is becoming a simple prayer they use with others.

It is also very touching speaking with people who contact us, some for information, and others to share their experiences. As one man who contacted us said, “I got so much from looking after my mum when she had dementia.” Looking after a loved one at home can be a great blessing, but many are not in a position to do this and so have to rely on care agencies or care homes, so the relationship can be different as less time is spent together. One of the fears often raised with us about visiting the person with dementia is, “they won’t know who I am.” After talking things through and providing information, such as our ‘Visiting the Frail Elderly Person’ Leaflet can be of great help to them.

It is not easy creating conversation; we can often feel shy or out of our depth. For example, if we are not familiar with children we can feel unsure. I love being a grandmother, and look forward to having our youngest grandchild of nine months each Tuesday while her parents are at work. She is so happy and full of smiles. I often wonder what is she thinking as she looks at us, as she listens and takes in all that is going on around her – if only she could express what’s in her mind. However, as soon as her dad comes to collect her she immediately recognises his voice and crawls towards him to be picked up and cuddled. The way she looks at him - even though she is not yet able to call him daddy, she instinctively knows who he is. The deep bond expressing their oneness is something to behold.

Might it be that within each of us there is the child still needing parental love? Some may find it difficult accepting the frailty of a parent with advanced dementia who can no longer express their love in this way. Every relationship is different but deep down there is this need between parent and child where love needs to be expressed. My experience during the last twenty five years is that the power of prayer and sharing in Holy Communion brings about the closeness of God, deepening the bond of love and creating new memories to cherish, where roles are reversed. Our new Prayer Leaflet is still available and can be used as ongoing resource. The theme ‘have you got time to say a prayer’ may be a way of opening up the subject and bring forth more help in meeting the spiritual needs or more simply put, the hunger and thirst for God that people with dementia have.

We thank those who have prayed and continue to pray for our mission, also those who have raised alms for us. Our appeal for your generosity is ongoing and should you wish to organise an event or make a donation, it would help us continue our work of charity in the church. Write to me, Mrs Frances Molloy, Project Manager, Pastoral Care Project, St George’s House, Gerards Way, Coleshill B46 3FG