

MINISTRY OF CARE

Two Primary Reasons Why a Parishioner Might Want to Volunteer for this Ministry.

The first stems from the incredible need.

- There is at present a chronic problem of spiritual and emotional isolation among many of the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals in North America. This reality is predicted to worsen as Society experiences the tremendous growth of the over 65 population.
- The Conference of U.S. Catholic Bishops have declared that "aging demands the attention of the entire Church" and have called for new Pastoral strategies that respond to the challenges and possibilities posed by aging.

The second reason stems from the huge rewards that this particular Ministry offers.

- In the opinion of some of our volunteers, it is not an exaggeration to say that this is one of the most enriching activities a parishioner could engage in.

1. Health benefits associated with the act of volunteering in general.

- People can develop loneliness, depression, and worsening of personal health as they retire and have friends and close relatives die. However research studies show overwhelmingly that these conditions can often be avoided through volunteering. An Ontario study reveals that volunteering not only improves self esteem and combats social isolation, but also reduces the impact of stress on the body, lowering blood pressure, bolstering the immune system and reducing the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease and depression. It also helps maintain cognitive functioning, decreased dementia risk and longer life.

2. Benefits from this ministry

- In faithful imitation of Jesus Christ, the Church has cared for those who are sick, suffering, and dying in various ways throughout history. While not all parishioners are called to serve in

this capacity, this is a fundamental responsibility of our Church.

- There is an intense desire on the part of many of the homebound and those in hospital to receive the Eucharist regularly and to stay connected to our parish community. No factor is as important to our well-being as our relationship with God. It is a privilege to bring the Body of Christ to those who have requested it and to join them in the experience of prayer.

- Beyond all doubt a visit from a fellow parishioner makes a very real difference in the life of homebound and hospitalized parishioners. To be alone, lost, disoriented - without a sense of direction - is one of the worst fears a person can encounter. To avoid such fear it is often vital that the lonely think that the Church cares about them. If the Church doesn't visit, they naturally feel forgotten and abandoned for we all need to belong somewhere, to someone. Since many physical and emotional problems are amplified near the end of life, many of the sick and elderly have spiritual needs that extend beyond receiving the Sacraments.



- Those who volunteer for this ministry have experienced a deepening of their own faith brought about by the privilege of ministering to God's people in Christian love.
- The close working relationship volunteers have with other church volunteers who are engaged in this ministry is very enriching as are contacts made with family and care home staff. For example, one of St. Charles Garnier's volunteers serves on a Mountainview Village pastoral care committee which he says has been both very educational and inspiring.
- Over time one becomes increasingly comfortable when visiting with the elderly, hospitalized, infirmed or disabled people. One learns how to listen, discuss and often allay the fears of those who are frightened and/or suffering a "crisis of meaning." With proper training these abilities can be acquired by most compassionate people intent on serving the Lord.

OVERVIEW OF THE INDIVIDUAL AREAS OF VISITATION

Hospital Visitations

Visitation to the hospital is done twice weekly by two different volunteer groups on Monday and Thursday.

The same approach is used with each visit except Thursdays when we bring the Eucharist with prayer. We visit by bringing the grace of God to show care and concern with a cheery hello from the St. Charles Garnier family. We spend time to brighten their day and offer a prayer if they desire.

Full training is provided for all volunteers which includes hospital protocol.

Homebound Visitations

The one-on-one visit by lay volunteers and clergy is the cornerstone of the pastoral focus of the Ministry of Care. Our goal is to try to serve the needs of those sick, elderly and lonely members of our parish family who are unable to attend Church services.

As the need arises, which may continue over a period of time, visitations bring the Eucharist and ease the loneliness and sense of isolation for individuals confined to their homes either temporarily or on a more long-term basis.

Care Home Visitations

Each week St. Charles Garnier volunteers currently visit residents in Eldercare, Hawthorne Park, Missionwood, Mountainview Village, Okanagan Chateau, Spring Valley Care Home, Sutherland Hills, Village at Mill Creek and White Heather Manor. A Eucharistic Prayer Service or Mass is offered on a weekly basis in five of these complexes.

This ministry is a wonderful opportunity for anyone who can volunteer a couple of hours a week. Commitment is based on the volunteer's availability. This may simply involve "adopting" one person and visiting that person on a regular basis but could involve much more if desired.

Training for all volunteers will be provided.

"One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation."

**-Pope Benedict XVI, *Veritas Caritas*
Ch 5 (no.53).**

A ST. CHARLES GARNIER VOLUNTEER'S EXPERIENCE

- "I have been volunteering with seniors for over 20 years. For the last few years my focus has been on bringing church to homebound parishioners who are unable to attend Mass because of age, illness, or physical impairment. Some live in residences, others in nursing homes, assisted living complexes or other home situations. With other volunteers we hold Eucharistic prayer services in some locations, and very importantly, we visit with those who have requested visits. In many cases, strong personal ties develop.
- The graces I receive from engaging in this ministry are immense."

