



PARISH NURSE MINISTRY

PRAYER AND YOUR HEALTH

As science investigates connections between the mind and the body, some scientists have found that a person's faith can help him or her live a longer, healthier life. By praying, people feel that they can have some influence regarding the outcome of their condition, so they are not as helpless. There have been many well-documented studies recorded in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Lancet*, and *National Academy of Sciences* showing the connections between better physical and mental health and prayer. The quality of life appears to be enhanced by prayer. Immune system functions are increased as documented by a study published in *Lancet*. Coronary artery disease and associated hormonal levels are decreased, and those patients diagnosed with depression have shown marked improvement and lowering of medication dosages when prayer has been included in their treatment regime.

Other studies have found that people who are religiously active tend to be healthier and have a more positive attitude, and their perception of life is all embracing. Many people with a variety of health conditions who engage in some form of prayer have compassion for others. Prayer helps us to see the hand of God in every aspect of life. Being religiously active need not necessarily mean being active or "doing things" within the church. As ours is a very large parish we are graced and blessed with many elderly who are prayerful people. It is true that perhaps they have maladies that inhibit them from active participation at mass or involvement with church activities, but making a spiritual connection to the parish community is paramount to their wellbeing. Many of our shut-ins pray not only for themselves but also for others. Prayer is a gift freely given.

While praying for oneself may provide some health benefits, intercessory or distant prayer is another matter. Intercessory prayer is praying for a higher power to intercede on behalf of another person, usually for recovery from a health crisis. Distant prayer is a form of intercessory prayer in which someone prays for a person whom he or she has never met, often as a public request through a church or other institution of faith. Many in the scientific community do not look at prayer as an effective modality of care even though there are many scientific studies that have demonstrated how prayer has helped individuals. It is not known exactly how prayer works; prayer is a mystery but it is known to cause change.

According to a study done by the University of Rochester, as many as 85 percent of people suffering from disease pray in addition to receiving medical treatment. Prayer is the number one complementary medicine form Americans utilize, more than vitamins, herbs, or therapeutic exercises like yoga. If it makes someone feel better, even if it cannot be proven scientifically, what harm does prayer pose?

The notion that we humans possess a capability to heal others simply by using our minds and hearts to call upon a higher power to intercede lies in the face of science. But in the pursuit of the truth, researchers will investigate it scientifically. In truth, there is much scientific investigation now occurring.

It has been documented that most of those using prayer for any health concerns were simultaneously using conventional medicine, but the percentage of respondents using both prayer and conventional medicine varied widely by conditions. Writer and researcher Ann M. McCaffrey, MD, of Harvard Medical School tells us, "Physicians should consider exploring their patients' spiritual practice to enhance their understanding of the patients response to illness and health." Religious beliefs impact medical decisions. Studies show that 66 percent of medical patients indicate that their religious beliefs would influence their medical decisions should they become seriously ill. In a survey of terminally ill patients families, when asked "what is the importance of God and prayer in their life and the life of the loved one who is ill", they ranked God and prayer as a very high priority. When physicians were asked the same question, they ranked God and prayer at the bottom of the list.

We are people of prayer and we have people praying for us all the time. In our church community, we have friars who pray for our community every day. We also have people who pray the rosary with special intentions. Many of our masses are celebrated for both the living and deceased of our parish. The power of prayer can never be underestimated. God hears any and all prayers and certainly answers them, perhaps not as we wish or in our time, but nonetheless our prayers are answered. Prayer is powerful medicine and when coupled with allopathic medicine, it helps heal and bring peace to spirit, mind and body.

SOW SEEDS OF FAITH THROUGH RELIGIOUS ED



Do you feel called to serve the youth of Saint Paul Church? Volunteers are needed in a variety of roles, including:

Teachers, Co-teachers, Substitute Teachers, Classroom Aides, Office Assistants, Hall Monitors and Event Assistants.

For more information, contact Robin Veronesi at religioused@stpaulkensington.org.

To volunteer, go to www.stpaulkensington.org, choose Catechists from the Religious Ed drop-down tab and then click on the 2014-2015 Teacher Registration Form on the left side of page.

We teach young people the way, the truth, and the life.
Can you really think of a better way to spend just one hour a week? | know | can't.
Amy Piorkowski
(Grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)



The reason why I continue to teach is seeing the kids eyes brighten up when they get why we are studying our faith. The questions and answers are so sweet when they speak. Looking forward to my eighth year of teaching this upcoming Fall.

Cara Nogiec (Grades 1, 2, 3, 4)

I've always been fascinated with the life of Christ, ever since I started my Catholic education in middle school, and continued it through high school and college. That's why I chose initially (a few years ago) to teach 7th-graders about Jesus Christ.

My 1st year of teaching was an eye-opener, as I discovered that most of my kids really didn't have a solid foundation or knowledge-base about Jesus Christ. This gave me a lot of incentive to educate them as to who Jesus was, what He did for us, and how He continues to "do" for us today.

Things about Jesus and Jesus' life that I take for granted are, many times, surprises and new/ exciting discoveries for our 7th-graders. I get the biggest kick out of seeing their faces register that "Ok, I get it now" understanding of Christ, and to have them come back at me with some really good questions and challenges.

Mark Duplin (Grade 7)

