
PRAY WITH HONESTY,
DISCERNMENT AND
INTEGRITY

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Pray With Honesty, Discernment and Integrity

When you are seriously ill, long term, one of your most important needs, when you share your experience, is to feel heard, respected, accepted and validated, just where you and for who you are. Even if a person cannot fully understand or comprehend your situation, they can still value your perspective. Empathy comes from a longing to know the other and speak truly of their need.

How often, though, does this truly happen?

Trying to explain to someone about how worried, how upset, how realistically afraid or concerned you might be about a situation, within the context of your physical reality, or how very, very ill you are and how difficult it makes your life, takes great courage.

If the person then simply responds without apparent acknowledgement that they have understood or heard you, it can be very damaging, particularly if they then give you a lecture on fear or present you with religious platitudes, or seem to criticise your level of faith or appear to make a judgement about a spiritual underlying cause of your

illness. None of these are grounded in genuine listening or compassion.

The need for both self and God awareness in spiritual practice is essential. Be very careful what you say to another and how you say it, what the underlying implication might be, even if unintentional. The gifts of the Spirit can help you to discern what is appropriate to say and what is needed to pray.

“Do not be afraid, just trust in God.”

What a beautiful message this is, yet if someone shares their fears and difficulties based on their physical or practical reality and is told just to trust that God will sort it out or will make them well, it can feel like their practical reality is being ignored, that they are being dismissed or that they are expected to have false hope that difficult to impossible things will change, in denial of the truth of their situation, as if their fear is not valid.

Though we recognise that fear can exaggerate a situation and make up an untrue story about a future not yet come to pass, some issues that raise fear are very real and are grounded in incomprehensible realities and experiences, sadly and can be excruciatingly painful.

To jump in and say do not fear, just trust may be too much of a leap. There may be many levels of healing required for fear to be released. Never underestimate or negate a person's very real fears for the future. Not all fear is fanciful. There is great danger in denying someone's reality and implying it is due to a lack of faith. When you pray, pray for the right thing! Yes, banish fear, in Jesus' name, if it is appropriate, but also pray for the individual issues that create the fear. Pray in a way that is in tune with the person and lifts that person with you into a hopeful reality, asking God to help in ways they can trust and relate to.

Even if you know that God can transform any situation, still you need to give the person a genuine and realistic hope of a way forward.

Though we know that God's light is pure, blesses, touches us in unexpected ways and transforms difficult situations and that His Word received, uplifts and transfigures us, still, if it is said without thought, in the wrong moment, at the wrong time, it may not be heard as it was meant. The Word of God can never be wrong, yet His Word has many levels of meaning. Make sure that you are not interpreting it in absolute terms with only one, expected outcome, based on your own will, not God's Will. This is where listening to God is important to guide you. He will help you know what should be spoken and what should not. This is particularly true if you feel you have been given a Word of Knowledge. Not all Words of Knowledge should be shared out loud or immediately.

When praying for another person, especially one with untreatable or incurable symptoms, you really need the deepest empathy and intention to recognise where they are coming from and what they need, not just what you want for them or what you think is best. You need to hear them. You need to respect what they say and find a way to pray with them and for them in a way that encompasses their truth as well as your hope and trust in God.

To pray a prayer without discernment and understanding can leave a person feeling even more separate, isolated, dismayed that you have not heard them or feeling that somehow they are not good enough as a Christian or have too little faith. To pray the right prayer is everything. To say words that miss the mark or to get lost in your own good intention can unfortunately cause great hurt, especially to a person of sincere faith and practice and ultimately damage relationships. Pray in the Power and Love

of the Trinity. Pray in the name of Jesus, that He touches the person with love.

*Lord, pray with me
So that when I pray
I pray fully
In the Power of
Your Holy name
Lord Jesus Christ*

Be wary of any overt or covert message you might convey, that might lead to diminishing the truth of the person's reality. One way to protect yourself and the other is to pray the Our Father before you begin and and pray it in your daily practice. To us it is the ultimate prayer of protection and truth. And if you do not know what to say or what to pray, then keep listening with open heart and mind.

Be very careful that your own thoughts and opinions, even judgments, do not get in the way of bringing healing and hope to another.

If you want to say any of the following, think carefully, context is important to consider:

“ Remember God is bigger than any suffering.”

That God is bigger than any suffering is true, but sometimes our own suffering is so vast, we cannot feel beyond it or even recognise God with us, holding us. The person who prays, must have hope and trust in God, holding this truth at the centre of their prayer, yet also recognise that there are many paths forward and may be many layers to healing needed.

God is near to us in our suffering but He does not necessarily take it away, as we see in the lives of the Saints, such as Saint Theresa of Lisieux and Saint Bernadette. Nor did the Father take away the intense suffering of His

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Son that was experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane or on the Cross itself, unto death. For this path that Jesus chose to undertake freely, ultimately led to a healing of the whole world for all time. He held everyone and everything that is hurting or harmed, in His most Sacred Heart, freeing the Spirit to be with us all in a new way, thus changing everything spiritually for all humanity.

God suffered that He might be with us in our own suffering. This is the most precious gift to those who suffer without a way out and was recognised particularly in the ministry of Pope John Paul II.

But when your suffering is extreme, never ending and tortuous, it may not be possible to feel good about God suffering for you, when all you want and need is for it to stop. God can feel like He has abandoned you in it, as Christ himself called out on the Cross. So to be told God is with you, may or may not be as helpful as you think it would be, particularly in extreme lost moments.

Though some people may receive miraculous healing, and it is not wrong to ask for miracles, indeed Jesus said others would do even more than He, we have to be aware that many do not receive this specific response. This does not mean that God is not with us though and does not care, that He has not heard. This does not mean you should not ask, but you really do need discernment for what to pray, when to pray it and how to word it, when to ask for a miracle or deliverance and when to ask for comfort and strength in dire situations that will not change immediately or at all.

Sensitivity to the person, as well as love, compassion and hope, is key in this situation.

The person praying for you may genuinely believe that through strength of faith and prayer, God will absolutely make you well now or make everything okay. When a

person does not get well, then perhaps it might be by considered by some, a weakness in trust or faith on some level or the fault of the person. Never let someone feel this.

When someone shares their worries and difficult situation with you, they may just want to know that you have heard them. This may be the first step to helping them cope or find comfort. That can be a healing in itself and can be a gift from God. If you jump straight into prayer, you may not have listened well enough.

We trust absolutely in God's love, but overwhelmingly difficult situations cannot be reassured away too quickly by just saying trust in God. Much more may be required before this can feel real and possible. People may be carrying many levels of pain, abandonment, negation, denial, deep hurt, emotional or spiritual wounds, that need to be touched with love and kindness as well as prayer.

And if you do get it wrong, own it and do something to make it right if you can. Humility is the first step.

Listen to the Spirit

So when you pray for someone in great difficulty, listen with all your being to the Spirit. Use all the gifts you have been given. Pray in the name of Jesus that He will pray in and through you, so your words will be true. Trust when it is right to pray with someone by immersing yourself in Gods light and love. Listen for God in your prayer. Feel His Presence. Be guided by honesty and integrity in your prayer and counsel of others.

Ask for a miracle if it feels appropriate and is what the person wants you to do. Miracles happen on many levels, in many ways, if looked for with spiritual sight. However, they may not be the one you ask for or expect. If you ask for something completely impossible on a human level, be

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aware it may not be God's way to answer you in that way. Do not leave the person disappointed or distraught, feeling that God has let them down. Be very sure the Power of Prayer comes directly from God and not your own ego or interpretation. To pray for another, it helps if your own life is immersed in prayer and you have an aware, two-way relationship with God. That is the way that discernment is born.

Discernment is incredibly important when you pray for someone, especially with a vulnerable person who has been let down in the past or felt judged, unseen, hidden, rejected. Make sure you pray the right words for that person. Or maybe just pray in silence with your heart. Then you surely cannot get it wrong.

In silence we are One

In silence we are Peace

In silence

We find strength

Let us always seek a moment of silence

May its purity bless us.

Amen

Perhaps the most important prayer for the long term sick, lacking a treatment pathway, is to pray that the person feels God with them and that they can cope with all that they are experiencing. Hope for the future, a blessing for the day, can lift them.

We like blessings very much for they lift the energy of the person and the situation affecting them into Light. You can bless the past, that it does not dismay the person, you can bless the future, that the person may find hope and a new way forward, you can bless the present, that the person may endure and more than endure, find an inner peace, not of the world, one that brings some sense of protection of their inner self. There are so many ways to

bless a person, that can bring light and love to wrap around them.

Bless the space they live in. Bless the people in their lives. Bless the energy around them. Bless the ground they walk on. Bless the house and the places they live in. Bless anyone who has caused hurt, that the energy of attack may diminish.

There are infinite ways to bless and lift the person and their situation. A blessing is instant, a prayer request for a specific action may take time to be seen or felt or may not be right or given. Therefore I trust most in blessings for they are the pure energy of God. Their energy is alive with God and they are felt immanently. A blessing lifts you immediately, touches you in some special way, warms your heart.

Sometimes it is better to ask for God to work in their life rather than asking for something specific. Other times, specific may be right, but must be what the person wants. I know that people who pray with confidence may want to see gratifying miracles, may want to make things instantly better on every level, may want to hold God's power in order to feel important even, but a realistic prayer is sometimes more grounded, a small request that feels achievable in the right circumstances is sometimes more comforting than something that is a grand, long shot at best, if at all possible, in worldly terms.

Make sure you LISTEN with the Spirit and allow God to work through you.

Trust in the Ignatian way. If someone reacts badly or unexpectedly withdraws from your prayer or counsel, then look to see why this might be. Ponder it. Reflect and grow in compassion and insight. Do not blame them. Ask earnestly, does what you have said or prayed taste and feel spiritually good? Show humility and sensitivity, compassion

and empathy. Have an open heart to grow spiritually yourself. A person filled with the Spirit genuinely lights up the room. Truth is felt in your heart. God's work goes out through them.

If you find that there is a disconnection between you and the person praying for you, you can ask for blessings to protect and surround you instantly. You can always put on the Armour of God to act as a shield and protection against discordant energy. You can pray the Our Father with absolute trust, which offers powerful spiritual protection and deliverance from evil that may seek to unhinge you. The person praying may not be flowing from their highest selves themselves.

When other people are unable to pray for you in the way you need and you feel dismayed, irritated, dismissed or denied and uncomfortable on some subtle, intangible level, by their energy, prayer or counsel, you can pray for them, that they find spiritual integrity, that they open their minds so that they can hear and see the truth, you can ask to be shielded from any energy or message that you feel does not come from God and you can send love to yourself and to the other person.

You can bring your awareness of God into your whole being and feel the healing power of His love, letting it flow through you to bring comfort to yourself. Ultimately, though others pray and hold you in Light, you can find your own truth of God with you. You can find blessings abound from the oneness you experience with God, of you spiritually in Him and Him in you, even if there is no one else that you can trust to understand your need.

Ultimately God knows. God cares. God is with you, even when you struggle and cannot feel Him. When you cry out, "My God why have you forsaken me." Even here

God is with you, for Christ has known, experienced and won through, even this.

May we always reach out in empathy in our own prayers. May we flow to and from awareness of His Mercy, His endurance and His spiritual strength upon the Cross, that it might touch our own prayer and understanding. Let us also feel the Love and silent compassion of the Father for His Son. Let us feel the Spirit genuinely flowing within us, guiding us to right prayer and sensitive awareness of need. And mostly, let us remember that not everyone will be saved in the way that we hope or want or demand or need. Yet everyone will be touched by Love and Mercy. We too must find that love and mercy in ourselves and be humble when we pray. Healing always comes from God.

Ultimately, even in tremendous indescribable suffering, denial, negation, abandonment, God is with you. Thus there must still be hope, even here.