



Prayer Anthology

Part Three: Professional Carers

**The Art of
Dying Well**

Prayer Anthology

Part Three is for professionals who care for the dying.

Donald Nicholl

In my present situation [dying of cancer], thinking is not all that great a help. What is helpful is the presence of others...

No one living can teach me about death – no living person has experienced it. Some people are in a better position to guess about the experience than others – those who have watched many deaths with the eyes of compassion – Mother Teresa’s Sisters, certain hospital workers etc. But they cannot know the experience.

Today I realised a main source of confusion in my attitude. It is that often I am dealing with medics for whom death is the enemy and, therefore, all your energies have to be devoted to fighting, and so you can hardly be at peace... Cardinal Bernardin said, ‘Some people regard death as an enemy. I choose to greet death as a friend’. Hence he could be at peace...

...Also medics are concerned to cure you, i.e. to restore you to the condition you were in before your illness. But what we need is to be healed, i.e. rendered more whole than before for the rest of our life’s journey.

[The Testing of Hearts – Part III: Testing Unto Death](#)

Caryll Houselander

There are those who must live, as it were, in other men’s hands: whose success, even if it be of a spiritual order, must be paid for in a suffering of poverty far more terrible than material poverty; a poverty of not having themselves, not having anything of their own – not time, or solitude, or their thoughts, or even their senses: their hearing filled always with other men’s troubles, their eyes with the face of other people’s sorrows, all their words given to others without stint for their comfort, their touch the perpetual touch of healing and blessing.

William of St Thierry

Never does the soul more truly merit to see its image, Christ, which is above in truth, than when the flesh bends down in charity to its own image, the afflicted, which is beneath it.

Leon Bloy

An act of love, the stirring of genuine compassion, sings the praises of God from Adam to the end of the world, heals the sick, comforts the desperate, stills storms, frees prisoners, converts unbelievers, shields the whole human race.



Read and Pray

These prayerful reflections which have been chosen to help you hear God speaking to you.

Dr Sheila Cassidy

I like to think that the wounded healer is more sensitive and compassionate than those who are strong and 'whole'.

St John Chrysostom

Remember thy Master, and by the remembrance thou hast at once applied the remedy.

Janet Erskine Stuart

Letter to one of her young novices who was dying:

These thoughts came to me about your great journey, and I thought I would write them, for I am afraid of not saying them quite steadily.

Supposing that when you were small, say ten or twelve, you had been told that you were going to Rome, alone; much as you would have loved to go to Rome, yet the thought of picking your way across Europe by yourself would have given you a kind of *saisissement* and you would have wondered how you would manage a hundred details of it- getting tickets, on the sea, at the frontiers, among strangers, in long tunnels, not sure of the language, etc., etc., and yet all the time you would be glad to go.

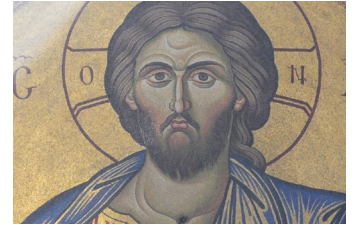
And then, if someone had said to you that you had not understood the message, that it was that you were to go to Rome alone with your Father-how the whole thing would have cleared up and become lovely, and to everything that came into your mind you would answer: 'Father will see about it.' It is exactly like that.

God will see to everything, everything, and you have only to *vous laisser faire*, leave everything to His forethought and care, and think only of the loveliness of it.

[The Life and Letters of Janet Erskine Stuart by Maud Monahan](#)

Rule of St Benedict

Before all things and above all things care is to be taken of the sick, so that they may be served in very deed as Christ Himself; for He has said: "I was sick and you visited Me"; and, "As long as you did it for one of these My least brethren, you did it for Me." But let the sick themselves consider that they are being served for the honour of God, and not grieve the brethren who are serving them by superfluous demands. Yet, they shall be patiently borne with, because by serving such as these a more abundant reward is obtained. Therefore, the Abbot shall take the greatest care that they suffer no neglect. Let a cell be set apart for the sick brethren, and one be appointed to serve them who fears God and is diligent and careful.



Reflections

Some of the reflections are from the Bible, others come from experts in spiritual matters, like the saints or great spiritual writers. Yet others are from people who are experts in suffering.



Acknowledgement

This prayer anthology was compiled by a community of Benedictine Nuns living a life devoted to prayer in a convent on the Isle of Wight.