

Care Connection

Hi, it's Martha Sterne. I am a priest at Holy Innocents' and a long distance caregiver for my 89 year old mother who has significant dementia and still lives in her home in Jackson, Mississippi.

For months now I have been worrying over the challenges of long distance caregiving, and there are plenty. But you know what? There are some gifts in this situation as well. I would like to write to you each week and share with you both the challenges we are facing and the gifts we are being given. You will also hear from time to time from other members of our Care Connection support group (**which meets the second Wednesday in the month i.e. June 11 at noon at Holy Innocents' – you and your caregiving friends are welcome to come.**)

So today – let me give you the first gift I have noticed about caregiving for a fragile adult. It really, really, really connects my growing-up family which is scattered. My brother is in Denver and my sister is in Arizona. We love each other but we have busy lives. Now we talk with each other often and email even more often. We count on each other in a way we have not needed to since we were kids if ever. This may not work in every family, but it is worth a try.

We have talked through who does what best which has turned out to mean that my doc brother handles the medical; my semi-retired sister is more available to go in an immediate emergency and for holidays when Mac and I are working. I manage the pool of caregivers, and my husband – the only spouse - does the financial stuff online.

Also we swap off going to Mississippi, so somebody is over there once a month for a couple of days, We coordinate our calendars months in advance and everybody takes their fair turn. As children, we studied the chocolate pie to make sure our piece was as big as the other pieces. That happens now as far as spreading the caregiving around.

So that has been a big gift – our generation is in touch a lot more and we appreciate each other more. God wants families to need each other, and we know we do.

This past weekend I planned a family reunion in Mississippi so the reconnecting spread out and out to cousins we haven't seen in thirty years. Mama loved it in the moment, and then totally forgot we had gone but that's okay. More about the gift of living in the moment another column!! Peace be with you and the people you care for.