

# Prayer

## S E R V I C E



### A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

#### CALL TO PRAYER

LEADER God of all life and healing, we come to you with humbled hearts.

ALL In gratitude we remember the stories of those whom Jesus healed. Help us to be sensitive to the sick and the elderly, aware of their pain, and responsive to their needs with a compassionate presence. Amen.

#### READING

Our understanding of suffering—not merely its inevitability but also its purpose and redemptive value—greatly impacts our ministry of presence. As a matter of fact, suffering severely tests us in this regard, and the reason is quite simple. Whenever we are with people who suffer, it frequently becomes evident that there is very little we can do to help them other than be present to them, walk with them as the Lord walks with us . . . . And yet, the ability to offer that kind of prayerful response is the key that unlocks the mystery of suffering. For, in the final analysis, our participation in the paschal mystery, in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, brings a certain freedom: the freedom to let go, to surrender ourselves to the living God . . . . It's in the act of abandonment that we experience redemption, that we find life, peace, and joy in the midst of physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering.

*Joseph Bernardin, The Gift of Peace, Loyola Press, Chicago, 1997, pp. 47-49.*

#### RESPONSE

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-12 (*alternate sides*)

My soul, bless the Lord, bless God's holy name! Bless the Lord, my soul, hold dear all God's gifts.

Bless God, who heals every illness, who enfolds you with tender care, who fills your life with richness and gives you an eagle's strength.

The Lord is tender and caring, slow to anger, rich in love. God will not bring our sins to trial, nor exact from us in kind what our sins deserve.

As high as heaven above the earth, so great is God's love for believers. As far as east is from west, so God's love towers over the faithful ones.

ALL God help us each to allow the mystery and the purposefulness of Jesus' suffering to become part of our own lives that we may be effective instruments of your healing and a comforting presence to all those to whom we minister. We ask this in confidence. Amen.

#### SUGGESTED MUSIC

"Eye Has Not Seen," by Marty Haugen, GIA Publications, Chicago, 1982.

"Healer of Our Every Ill," by Marty Haugen, GIA Publications, Chicago, 1987.

"Blest Art They," by David Haas, GIA Publications, Chicago, 1985.

"The Love of the Lord," by Michael Joncas, GIA Publications, Chicago, 1988.

This prayer service focuses on the importance of the ministry of presence and those who walk with others in the autumn of life. You may use this service at meetings or on any occasion when you wish to take a moment to reflect on the mission of Jesus. Feel free to adapt the service to suit your own needs.

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