

Self-Care
for **parish**
ministers

20

PRACTICES

TO ENHANCE YOUR
WELL-BEING

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**TWENTY-THIRD
PUBLICATIONS**

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A joyful heart is the health of the body, but a depressed spirit dries up the bones.

PROVERBS 17:22

The recent emphasis on “preventative medicine”—a proactive approach to patient care—affirms the need for adopting healthy habits in order to prevent disease and infirmity. This holistic sense applies not only to the body but also to the mind, heart, and soul. Taking care of our physical, emotional, intellectual, and emotional needs is vital to a practice of well-being.

Well-being is essential for those working in parish ministry. Even so, the demands on one’s time and energy can easily pull us away from safeguarding our health. It is difficult to carry the Good News to others with dried bones and an ill-tempered spirit. Healthy practices not only lower the potential for exhaustion and burnout but also restore the joyful heart that makes for authentic discipleship.

This booklet offers ideas tailored for those who work in parish ministry. Each topic includes a short reflection, prayer, and a soul-feeder—a concrete suggestion for putting the idea into practice. Let each one bring you a deeper sense of well-being so that you can minister with the best of what you have to share with others.



Develop an Outside Passion

As a parent, I loved taking pictures of my kids on the sports field. What evolved over the years is a passion to photograph their teams. The goal is to enjoy the game *and* capture it all on film. It's a process that doesn't end at the buzzer. The pictures need to be reviewed, cropped, and edited before they can be posted online for all of the families to see. There is a sense of accomplishment when those pictures are finally uploaded. I am by no means a professional, but I love to be on the sidelines with my camera. I look forward to the games and often schedule evening parish meetings around the game schedule.

What is it that *you* enjoying doing? How do you like to spend your spare time? Finding something we enjoy doing that isn't related to parish work is essential to our well-being. When there is something we look forward to, we are less inclined to stay late when it's not really necessary. When there is something we are passionate about, we look forward to it and maybe even work more efficiently so that we can get to it. Does your passion already exist? When was the last time you really spent time engaging in it?

SOUL-FEEDER

This month, spend some time really investing in yourself and find something that you want to learn or to spend more time doing. Make sure you add the time needed to your calendar.

PRAYER

Mother Mary, help me to see all of the possibilities that surround me this month as I look to find new ways to spend time in self-care. Amen.



Keep the Joy in Your Planning

One strange reality in parish ministry is planning for upcoming seasons far in advance. As parishioners are setting up Advent wreaths, Christmas trees, and mangers, we church ministers are looking toward Lent and Easter. This allows us to get a jump on the season and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

While all of this may be necessary, we may get so caught up in readying ourselves for what comes next that we forget to enjoy the now. God meets us in the now. Caring for yourself spiritually means that you allow yourself the opportunity to enjoy each season as it happens.

How are you taking time to enjoy and live in the events and liturgies that you have planned for the current season? Spend time at the rituals and immerse yourself in the opportunities that you worked so hard to create six months ago.

The other side of planning is our ability to let go. Getting caught up in the need for perfection doesn't allow us to enjoy the experience. Good planning is necessary, and it is important that we try to ensure that things go well, but there will always be things that don't go as planned, and most people won't notice. Don't forget to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

SOUL-FEEDER

Take a step back. Consider attending another parish, where you can experience Eucharistic Adoration, Holy Thursday Mass, an Advent Mass, or a Lenten pilgrimage. Find one experience that you can attend and enjoy that you did not plan!

PRAYER

Inspire my soul, Heavenly Father, as I take time to enjoy the fruits of all of my planning, so that I can continue to bring your kingdom here on earth. Amen.