

From the Parish Nurse

REVEALING ALZHEIMER'S

(Second of a three-part series on Alzheimer's)

What will other people think? Should I share that a family member has Alzheimer's? Is it anyone's business? Do these questions sound familiar? Of course they do if you've ever had any type of crisis and wondered how much you should share and with whom. No one can make that decision for you, but the first step is to take it to the Lord in prayer.

James 1:2-5 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Secondly, think of the energy that can be expended worrying about what others think. It can be exhausting trying to hide something and in so doing you limit the opportunities for others to step up beside you and be supportive, loving and nurturing. By revealing it you free yourself of one burden and gain the love, support and prayers of others.

The Alzheimer's Association offers the following tips for telling others:

- Decide whom you wish to tell and

how you will go about telling them. You may want to tell selected friends and relatives personally, one on one. Or you may want to consider writing them a letter.

- Expect that some people may not believe the diagnosis at first. Alzheimer's disease is in many ways "invisible," particularly in its early stages. Often, those who have it appear healthy. The symptoms are not always apparent.
- Be prepared for the possibility that lack of understanding about Alzheimer's disease may cause some friends and family members to be unsure of how to respond to your news. Also know that it may bring others closer to you.
- Let people know that calls, cards, letters, and visits are welcome. Let them know what the best times for visits would be.
- Let people know it is okay to talk with you about the disease if they want to do so.
- Educate others about Alzheimer's disease. Explain that it is a medical condition with a physical cause. Describe some of the symptoms as well as the things you are still able to do. Refer them to this Web site for more information.
- Be ready with a list of suggestions for those who ask how they can help.