

SAID ED July 29, 2007

Alzheimer 's disease

Recently my youngest brother Kevin flew in from Iowa where he lives to be part of a family meeting that my three brothers and I had at the Fairport Baptist Home where our mother is a resident. Mom has been in the full care household there since May of 2005. She moved there originally for therapy following a fall in which she broke her hip. The broken bones had long since healed, but mom was unable to retain the rehab exercises that she was given because of her encroaching Alzheimer disease. Mom receives excellent care at FBH and often comes to the 11:30am Sunday Mass here, but the last several years have helped me come to a deeper appreciation of how devastating this disease can be, not only for the person afflicted with it, but also for all the care givers.

Mom enjoys many of the things that gave her life in life in former years – like good food, rides in the country and gatherings of family and friends, but she is slowly sinking into a pool of confusion and lost memories. It makes us all sad to be gradually losing her to this disease, but we do our best to keep her stimulated and enjoying life as much as she is able.

There was an article in a recent U.S. News & World Report magazine entitled: “Rethinking Alzheimer’s”. It presented some facts that may surprise you as much as they surprised me.

- Alzheimer’s disease is fatal and is a leading cause of death in the United States.

- Someone in the United States develops Alzheimer’s every 72 seconds; by mid-century someone will develop Alzheimer’s every 33 seconds.

- Alzheimer’s is not a part of normal aging; however one out of eight people 65 and over has Alzheimer’s.

- In 2005, Medicare spent \$91 billion on beneficiaries with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and that number is projected to more than double by 2015.

So, why is a pastor of a Catholic parish bringing Alzheimer’s to your attention? First, to be perfectly honest, it strikes very close to home and often leaves me feeling sad, angry, helpless and frustrated and it

hurts to see such a loving and caring person lost while still living. Secondly, I believe like so many other issues, we have an obligation to promote the quality of life for all people, particularly those who can not speak for themselves. To quote from the U.S. News & World Report article, "Many Alzheimer's sufferers will slowly lose control of their bodies. They need you to move their cause forward. More than 250,000 people under 65 won't be able to stop the progression of Alzheimer's, maybe you will."

Have a good week and enjoy the summer!
Have a great week!
