

We are called to carry out God’s work in God’s own way: in closeness, by cleaving to him, in communion with one another, alongside our brothers and sisters” (Pope Francis, Mass Homily, 28 October 2018). Our openness to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit acting through us is strengthened by our willingness to truly serve another. In openly sharing with others, we reflect the intimacy that Christ has in our life and desires with them as well. This type of sharing is deeply human, and although it requires some vulnerability, it should be an occasion that strengthens relationships and trust. As Catholics, we have much to share about our faith, however we must act in response to another’s desire, usually a bit at a time. Too much sharing with an uninterested heart will feel like a sales call to another person. It is easy to get overexcited and want to share everything you know at one time. It is imperative to remember that even when trust exists and we perceive another’s openness, we must not storm the village. Openness can quickly revert to pre-trust or a closed heart; we must be sensitive to pressuring or overwhelming a relationship. *One key practice that mental health professionals use in effective listening is to answer only the question that the other asks.* If we listen well, we will hear the specific desires of their heart.

We can gently answer questions, in the loving way that Jesus modeled, and wait for more questions to follow.

Within this relationship, God has placed you in a sacred position. We must be as patient with another soul as God has been with ours. Our grace-filled interactions must reflect the mercy and compassion of Christ.

This tender and patient approach models the pedagogy of God – the art of teaching within a relationship of trust. This pedagogy of God is both art and science; it is a process that is patient, gradual and progressive. It has the capacity of a mother’s patience and long suffering for her children, while also reflecting the faithful understanding that all conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The method of prayer-care-share works in individual relationships, as well as in families, communities, organizations and cities. Praying for our communities and caring for their members and leaders builds trusting relationships. Sharing stories, testimonies and time together builds community and creates conversion-friendly environments. It is a virtuous effort to pray as a parish for city managers, government officials, and community leaders in businesses, schools and churches. This recognizes the place of our Church in a greater community and offers our most powerful tool of prayer in supporting those in positions of influence. Our prayer also paves the way for the Holy Spirit to surface the “whom, what (to do and say), and when” in our relationships with these leaders. Listening and being attentive to the pain of our city is a tremendous example of intentional care. Modeling genuine care for those suffering around us, with local church and community leaders, will open hearts and minds within our Church and parish geography.