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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

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Caring for Aging Parents in a Catholic Way

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Monica Dodds: *A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parent* (Loyola Press, 2006)

Monica Dodds had a great deal of experience working with elderly people and their families in the Seattle region. She was a case manager for homebound elderly and a program coordinator of a senior center. In this highly readable work, she proposes that care giving can be a time of grace.

The work is largely aimed at the increasing number of people who are called to become caregivers for their aging parents. The author's personal experience shows as she tackles medical, financial and legal problems associated with looking after elderly parents. The book is easy to read and is ideal for tired caregivers.

The chapter on mental health is excellent, providing a wealth of practical advice. She covers important topics including depression and dementia. The chapter on emotional and social health is also filled with good, sensible practical advice. Anyone who describes the encyclical on the Gospel of Life by Pope John Paul as "a stunningly beautiful document" must have been a solid Catholic and this shows in her discussion of Catholic spirituality. Practical as always, she discusses how to prepare the elderly for confession and how to deal with a parent who wishes to receive Holy Communion but who has swallowing difficulties. The chapter on how to deal with the many emotions that come with caring, including anger, guilt and exhaustion are especially helpful. The practical note goes all the way to the last chapter on the Church and dying.



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This reviewer was able to read the book quickly. But it is best to hold onto it and read it over several weeks and months. The book would certainly be of benefit for caregivers of aging parents. But it is of equal value for professional caregivers, health workers and caregivers of people with disabilities in general.

Dr Pravin Thevathasan is a consultant psychiatrist. He is the author of several articles on medical ethics and mental health in relation to Catholicism.

