



“The word compassion is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum*, which together mean ‘to suffer with’. Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.”

Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill, and Douglass Morrison in *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*.

Henri Nouwen and his colleagues’ definition of compassion is among the best depictions of the practice of chaplaincy and the art of spiritual companionship and serves as a fitting reflection in honor of Spiritual Care Week (October 23-29, 2022). This year’s theme, ***Relevant and Responsive in Times of Crises***, highlights the spiritual caregiver’s role rooted in the sacred space of the selfless acts of compassionate listening and quiet presence that promotes open and safe conversations to manifest into moments of hope and resilience.

From the Spiritual Care Week website: The fact that spiritual caregivers have always engaged in crisis, either singular or collective experiences, accentuates their value. During the pandemic, spiritual caregivers rose to the occasion offering traditional, unique, and inventive models of practice that were new to the landscape of their professions.

Additionally, the emotional and physical drain on the psyche of employees, and the manifestations of this reality became spiritual, ethical, and emotional dilemmas and crises. Chaplains and other spiritual caregivers became a beacon for hope to many struggling to feel a sense of normalcy and safety. They became relevant and responsive to a greater degree in retrospect to the pandemic than they were accustomed to in their pre-pandemic roles.

How might you acknowledge the responsive and relevant spiritual caregivers around you?