

# Bereavement Ministry

## Resources



## **Bereavement Ministers – Who Are They and What Do They Do?**

Those forming a Grief Support Network/Bereavement ministry for the parish or pastoral area will be:

- A prayer-based group working pastorally within the parish or pastoral area, alongside of and as support of the priest or lay pastoral leader.
- Where possible, comprised of all the cultures that make up the community.
- Available to support parishioners in any circumstance that has given rise to grief.
- Active listeners, with the ability to just 'be' with those in grief, as well being able to provide practical support where needed.
- Those who recognise and understand the differing cultural needs and customs of people when dealing with grief and death.

### **Practical Support and Involvement**

At various levels will be:

- Support to the family leading up to a bereavement or immediately following a bereavement.
- Practical assistance with funeral arrangements.
- Hospitality after a funeral.
- Ongoing support for families.

### **Ongoing Ministry**

- Ongoing development and collecting of resources for Bereavement Ministry, including prayers, readings, music and funeral services etc
- Sending of cards to those who have suffered a bereavement.
- Collation of key contacts in the community who would be helpful to those who have suffered a loss.
- Organisation of special remembrance services / Mass of Bereavement in November.

### **The Parish / Pastoral Area**

- Will guarantee provision of ongoing training, supervision, and mentorship to all those involved in the Bereavement Ministry.

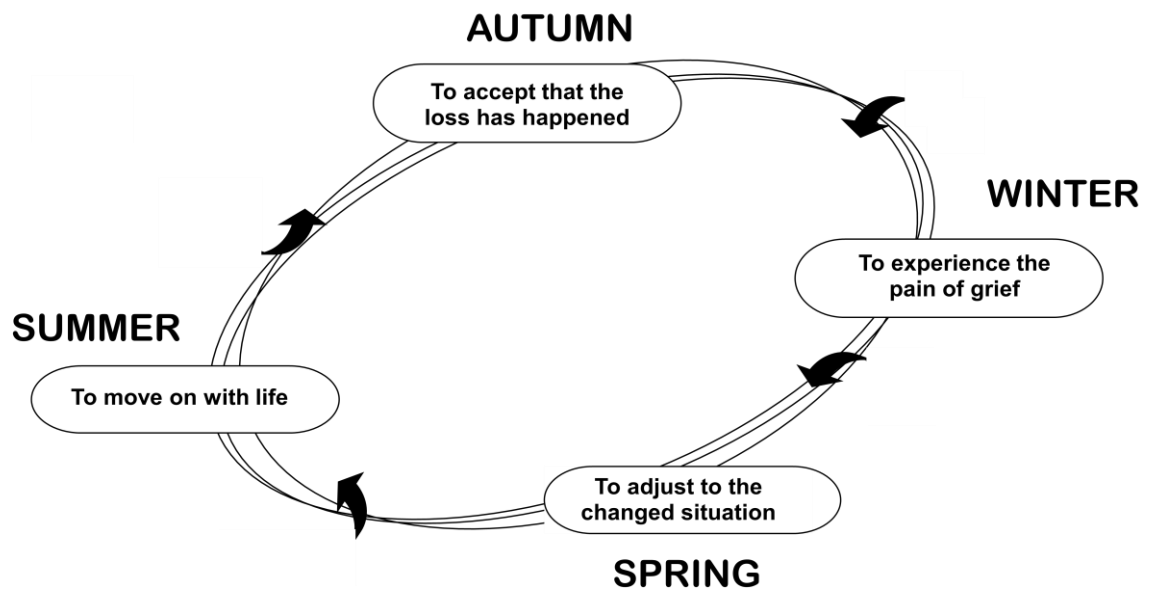
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*Change, Loss  
and Grief*

# *Tasks of Grieving*

(William Worden)

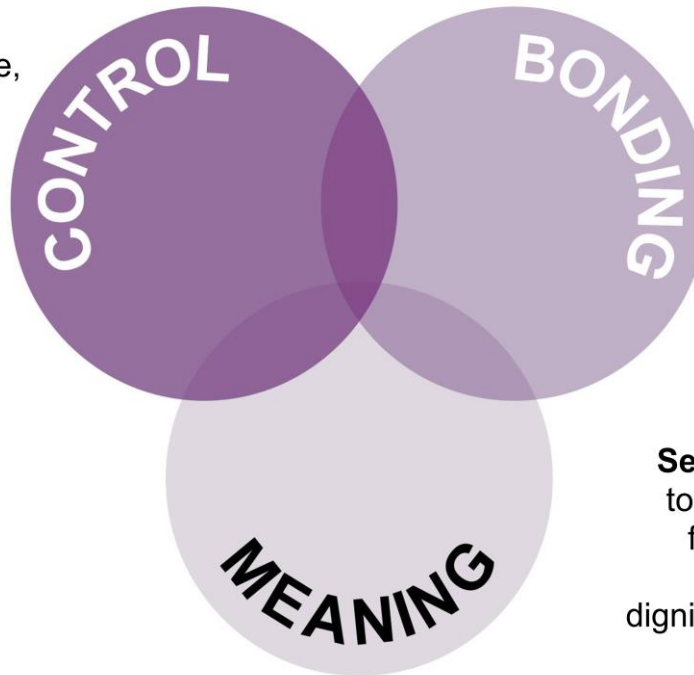


## *Some Thoughts About Loss*

- A loss reaction can occur when things change in our lives.
- Our reactions to loss depend on how attached we are to the person or object.
- Being able to acknowledge the significance of a loss is important.
- One of the reasons that death, separation and divorce affect us so much is that it means our life is never the same.
- We all respond to the changes in different ways.
- Loss experiences are painful, they are natural and an important part of growing and they happen all through life.

## *Basic Human Needs and Self Concept*

**Sense of control:**  
capability, competence,  
impact on one's own  
environment, power  
over one's self,  
use of social/life  
skills, power to  
change one's self  
and environment



**Sense of bonding:**  
with family / peers  
/ community, to  
feel / be wanted,  
to feel/be loved,  
to belong, to  
have basic  
needs met

**Sense of meaning:**  
to feel important, to  
feel relevant, self-  
esteem, sense of  
dignity/honour, able to  
accomplish tasks

Nancy Phillips, "Wellness During Childhood/Adolescent Development". Prevention Forum, Vol 10, Issue 4, July 1990



### **Common Myths About Grieving**

- ❖ Men don't cry and women do
- ❖ Men control their emotions and women don't
- ❖ Women need to talk about the experience and men don't.

### **Styles of Grieving**

- ❖ Intuitive
- ❖ Instrumental
- ❖ Blended

### **Intuitive Grievers**

- ❖ Experience strong affective reactions – helplessness, hopelessness and loneliness
- ❖ Expression mirrors inner feelings – Depressed mood, confusion, anxiety, loss of appetite, inability to concentrate, anger
- ❖ Gains strength and solace from talking about their experience and working through the process.

### **Instrumental Grievers**

- ❖ Experience of grief is primarily cognitive or physical – thinking about it or feeling physical symptoms
- ❖ Grief is often expressed cognitively or behaviourally – talking about the event or planning what needs to be done
- ❖ Adaptation generally involves thinking and doing – books, making plans, understanding.

### **Blended Grievers**

- ❖ Have elements of both
- ❖ Have a greater range of strategies they can access
- ❖ Tend to lean more to one style or other

### **Differences – not deficiencies**

At the core of the person,  
Each experience is different.

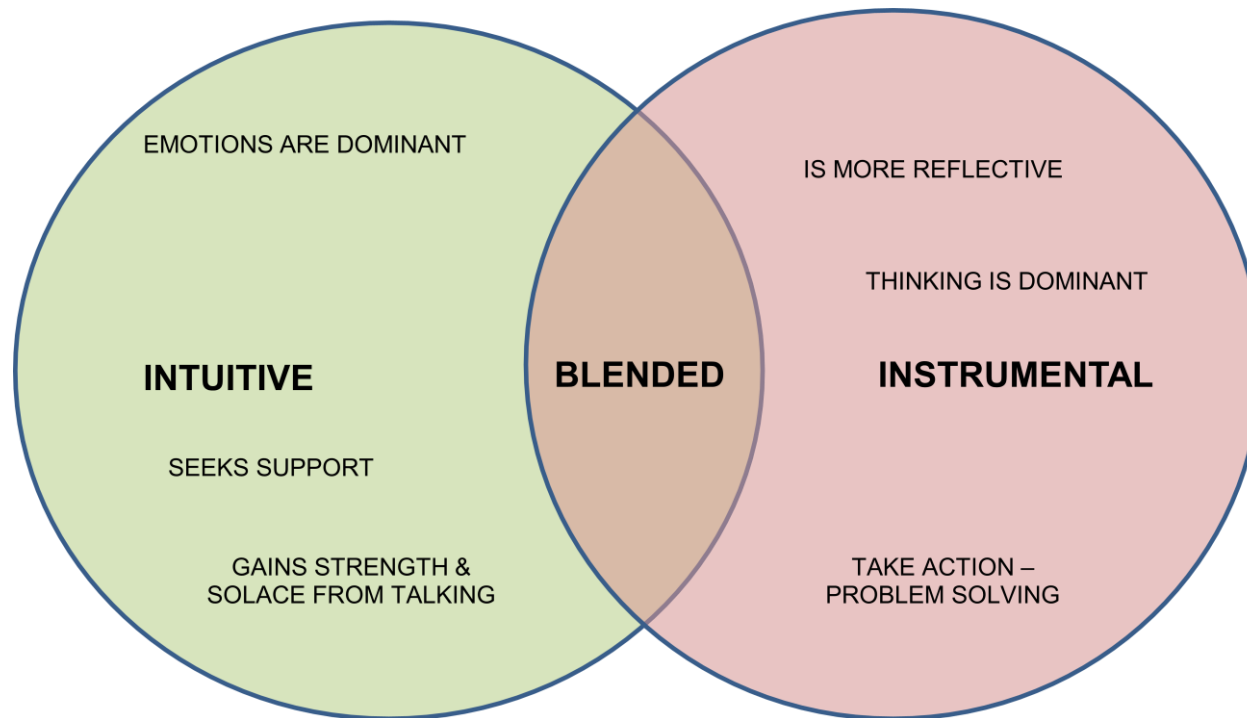
Each style has its own advantages  
and disadvantages.

### **Working with a Group**

Assess the people in your group – do not assume

- ❖ Intuitive – need safe environment to share feelings
- ❖ Instrumental – books to read, things to do, need to make sense of it
- ❖ Blended – may be one style then the next.

# *Styles of Grieving*



# *Children and Grief*

**Young people react to change and loss in very different ways.**

Signs of grief may include:

- withdrawal
- aggression
- anxiety
- sadness
- guilt
- regressions

**In dealing with their loss, the young person struggles with:**

- re-establishing their self-identity (who am I now?)
- fears of abandonment
- a need for reassurance
- trying to understand what is happening for their parents/carers
- feeling the need to shelter their parents from their own reactions
- needing to know the truth about what happened
- blaming themselves or others.

**Children need:**

- truthful information
- to be included in the grieving process
- ongoing support
- reassurance about adult grief
- to maintain appropriate activities
- to memorialise or maintain connection
- a 'good enough' or functioning parent or care-giver

Many children try to hide their grief to appear 'normal'.

**What can I do to assist a grieving young person?**

- let them know it is OK to be sad or angry or relieved
- talk about the changes
- give clear simple truthful information
- be patient with them
- understand they may find it hard to concentrate
- help them find ways to express their feelings
- support them in a return to activities where they participate with others.

*Listening*

# *The Gift of Listening*

Listening is the language of love. Listening enables me to reach out in new ways, especially when the other person has a problem and I want to be helpful.

Being a listener doesn't mean that I have to take responsibility for solving another's problem. But I can be "alongside" in loving concern, helping the other discover his/her own resources.

I listen to others in order to facilitate their:

- talking freely and openly about matters important to them
- gaining insights for solving their own problems
- clarifying their thoughts and values
- making decisions with which they are comfortable, taking action in accordance with their decisions.

In listening, it is important to:

- take time to listen - be truly interested – try to get into the other person's shoes
- be aware of the other's verbal and non-verbal behaviour
- let my behaviour show I am listening so that I have no need to say I'm listening
- enable expressions of feelings
- be accepting
- not moralise or judge – I don't need to play God
- overcome the temptation to quickly give advice
- talk less and hear more – I need not be afraid of silence
- respond reflectively – I am like another person's mirror
- avoid subtle ridicule or sarcasm
- keep practicing and improving my listening skills.

Sensitive listening helps me understand the complexity of another person's problem. It is all too easy for me to:

- think I understand people and their difficulties when I don't really pay attention to their thoughts and feelings
- think I understand a situation when I see only part of it and experience even less of it
- think I understand the problems people face when I have only a surface acquaintanceship with the problems or when I deal merely with symptoms and not causes.

UNDERSTANDING means that I recognise that the other person and I are two separate people with different awareness and life experiences – but that in a caring atmosphere, through open attentive communication, we can bridge that separateness and I can walk with another.

*When I truly listen, I give  
another person a most  
treasured gift –  
my time  
my presence  
myself.  
It can be a gift of healing.*

# *Listening*

There is more to listening than not talking!

The difference between real listening and pseudo-listening is to do with the intention. In real listening, the intention is to do with the other person, and in pseudo-listening, the intention is to do with yourself.

<b>Real listening</b>	<b>Pseudo listening</b>
To understand someone	To be liked
To enjoy someone	To avert rejection
To learn something	To gain one specific piece of information
To give help or solace.	To buy time to prepare your next comment
	So someone will listen to you
	To find a point of vulnerability to take advantage of
	To get ammunition for attack
	To be considered good/kind/nice
	To avoid hurting or offending someone
	To validate your own point of view.

- We all pseudo-listen sometime. Problems can occur when more pseudo-listening is happening than real listening.
- The more real listening you do, the better your relationships are likely to be.

## *Active Listening... Some Helpful Hints*

### **Things to Try**

Put the focus of attention totally on the speaker.

Repeat conversationally and tentatively, in your words, your understanding of the speaker's meaning.

Feed back feelings, as well as content (probe, if appropriate, eg *"How do you feel about that?"* or *"How did that affect you?"*)

Reflect back not only to show you understand, but also so the speaker can hear and understand his or her own meaning.

Try again if your active listening statement is not well received.

Be as accurate in the summary of the meaning as you can.

Challenge powerlessness and hopelessness subtly (eg. *"It is hopeless"*, *"It seems hopeless to you right now."* There's nothing I can do.", *"You can't find anything that could fix it?"*).

Allow silences in the conversation.

Notice body shifts and respond to them by waiting. Then, eg. *"How does it all seem to you now?"*

### **Things to Avoid**

Avoid talking about yourself.

Reject introducing your own reactions or well intentioned comments.

Try not to ignore feelings in the situation.

Avoid advising, diagnosing, baiting, reassuring, encouraging or criticising.

Dispense with thinking about what you will say next.

Avoid parroting the speaker's words or only saying "mm" or "ah, hah".

Don't pretend that you have understood if you haven't.

Avoid letting the speaker drift to less significant topics because you haven't shown you've understood.

Avoid vexing, changing, or improving what the speaker has said.

Don't change topics.

Resist filling in every space with your talk.

Don't neglect the non-verbal content of the conversation.



## Things not to say

Things happen for a reason.

It's all for the best.

Don't be sad.

I know how you feel.

Be brave/strong.

This will end soon.

You're standing up well.

You'll be fine.

That reminds me of...

Death is a part of life.

He/she led a full life.

It was God's will.

Something good comes out of everything.

You've a lot to be thankful for/

At least you have another child.

God never gives more than we can handle.

You'll have other children.

At least your baby didn't suffer long.

How did he do it? (suicide).

It was only a dog (cat, bird, horse etc.)

You can always get another cat.

It is a blessing.

He/she is in a better place.

## What can I say?

How sad I was to hear about (John's) death

How very sad I was to hear of your loss.

I'm here and I want to listen.

I'm here to listen if you would like to talk.

This is a very difficult time for you.

Words are so inadequate at this time.

I'm sorry you are faced with such sorrow.

I will never forget (Mary).

Love and prayers are with you.

Please accept my sincere sympathy.

My sympathy and thoughts are with you.

I know there are no words.

Let me know what I can do to help.

I'm here to listen, not to judge (suicide), or

I don't have the answers, but I'm here to help any way I can.

Pepper was a special dog.

What a comfort Dixie (cat) was to you. You will miss her

## *Blocks to Listening*

1. Comparing
  - Leads to one-upmanship.  
*"I am smarter more competent/more together/more tolerant/have suffered more/can do it better."*
2. Mind reading
  - Figuring out what the other is **really** thinking, feeling.
  - Often make assumptions about how others are reacting to you.
3. Rehearsing
  - Thinking about what to say next.
4. Filtering
  - Hearing only what you want to hear
5. Judging
  - Applying negative labels to the other  
*"What a bigot/wimp/idiot he/she is!"*
6. Dreaming
7. Identifying
  - Referring everything to your own experience.
8. Advising
9. Sparring
  - Leads to argument and debate
  - Discounting compliments
10. Being right
11. Derailing
  - Changing the subject or joking it off
12. Placating

# Tell Me About It

## A gentle guide to conversation with the recently bereaved

The following questions are just a few that may be of some help in aiding the beginning of a conversation. Certainly don't use them as a rapid-fire questionnaire, but sensitively select what you feel are appropriate, put in your own words/style, and listen carefully to the bereaved's response.

How many years married?

How long have you lived at the present address?

Have you children?

Where do they live?

Who now lives with you?

Who visits and helps?

Do you belong to a church, a club?

Did you discuss the impending death with the deceased and/or the family?

Their reactions?

Was the funeral service discussed with the deceased?

Was the 'funeral' helpful?

Are your relations with other members of your family closer ... unchanged ... or more distant?

To whom do you feel closest now?

Do your children talk about the dead person to you ... to each other?

Do you talk to your children about the dead person?

Has their behaviour pattern changed since the death?

Do you feel closer to them than you did before the bereavement?

Do you think that your faith has helped you?

Did your spiritual feelings or practice change at the time of the death?

Did you receive support from your church, minister, priest, lay pastoral leader etc?

Are you finding some answers to your (spiritual) questions?

Did you find the bereavement booklet mailed to you (from the hospice) of help?

Has reading about what others have to say about grief helped you in yours?

Have you visited the cemetery/grave?

Did you go alone?

How did you feel?

Have you visited the hospice since the death?  
If so, did you go for a particular purpose?  
Did you feel comfortable?

Do you keep reminders such as photographs where you can see them?  
May I see a photo?

**Questions more suitable several months (6-12) after the death**

Who or what do you think has helped you most during the year?  
Do you feel any closer to your friends?  
Have you made any new close relationships?  
Do you ever think about the possibility of re-marriage?  
Have you begun to return to any former activities which you had abandoned for a time?  
Do you go out more than you did?  
Have you begun to make plans for the future?  
If you had to try to single out any one thing which would you say was the hardest thing to bear this year?  
Do you have a clearer image of the dead person in your mind than you did right after the death?

# *Create Empathy*

Listen with your head and your heart.

Empathy is sensing another's feelings and attitudes as if we had experienced them ourselves. It is our willingness to enter another's world, and being able to communicate to that person our sensitivity to them. It is not blind sentimentality; it always retains some objectivity and distance. We do not lose our own identity, though we discover our common humanity.

## **Create empathy by:**

- taking seriously others' needs and concerns
- valuing feelings and attitudes
- respecting others' privacy, experience and values
- listening actively
- encouraging further elaboration and clarification
- using open body language and a warm vocal tone
- reserving judgement and blame
- displaying interest in what others communicate
- withholding unsought advice
- supporting others' attempts to find a solution
- making affirming statements and gestures.

uncovers complex  
needs and concerns

**Empathy**

encourages blossoming  
and growth

uncovers complex  
needs and concerns

support confidence  
and self-knowledge

# *Listen*

*When I ask you to listen to me  
and you start giving advice  
you have not done what I asked.*

*When I ask you to listen to me  
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,  
you are trampling on my feelings.*

*When I ask you to listen to me  
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems,  
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.*

*Listen! All I ask is that you listen.  
Not to talk or do – just hear me.*

*Advice is cheap: 50 cents will get you both Dorothy Dix and  
Dr Spock in the same newspaper.*

*And I can DO for myself; I'm not helpless.  
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.*

*When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,  
you contribute to my fear and weakness.*

*But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,  
no matter how irrational, then I quit trying to convince you  
and can get about the business of understanding what's behind this  
irrational feeling.*

*And when that's clear, the answers are obvious  
and I don't need advice.*

*So, please listen and just hear me, and if you want to talk ,  
wait a minute for your turn; and I'll listen to you.*

*Anonymous*

*Funeral  
Resources*

# *Archdiocese of Wellington*

## *Guidelines for Funerals*



# *Sacraments for the Sick and the Dying*

## **The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick**

Christ himself showed great concern for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick and commanded his followers to do likewise. This is clear from the gospels, and above all from the existence of the sacrament of anointing, which he instituted and which is made known in the Letter of James. Since then the Church has never ceased to celebrate this sacrament for its members by the anointing and the prayer of its priests, commending those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them (see James 5:14–16). Moreover, the Church exhorts them to associate themselves willingly with the passion and death of Christ (see Romans 8:17), and thus contribute to the welfare of the people of God.

Those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace in this time of anxiety, lest they be broken in spirit and, under the pressure of temptation, perhaps weakened in their faith.

This is why, through the sacrament of anointing, Christ strengthens the faithful who are afflicted by illness, providing them with the strongest means of support.

The celebration of this sacrament consists especially in the laying on of hands by the priests of the Church, the offering of the prayer of faith, and the anointing of the sick with oil made holy by God's blessing. This rite signifies the grace of the sacrament and confers it.

This sacrament gives the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick: by this grace the whole person is helped and saved, sustained by trust in God, and strengthened against the temptations of the Evil One and against anxiety over death. Thus the sick person is able not only to bear suffering bravely, but also to fight against it. A return to physical health may follow the reception of this sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person's salvation. If necessary, the sacrament also provides the sick person with the forgiveness of sins and the completion of Christian penance.

In the anointing of the sick, which includes the prayer of faith (see James 5:15), faith itself is manifested. Above all this faith must be made actual both in the minister of the sacrament and, even more importantly, in the recipient. The sick person will be saved by personal faith and the faith of the Church, which looks back to the death and resurrection of Christ, the source of the sacrament's power (see James 5:15), and looks ahead to the future kingdom that is pledged in the sacraments.

## **Recipients of the Anointing of the Sick**

The Letter of James states that the sick are to be anointed in order to raise them up and save them. Great care and concern should be taken to see that those of the faithful whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age receive this sacrament.

A prudent or reasonably sure judgment, without scruple, is sufficient for deciding on the seriousness of an illness, if necessary a doctor may be consulted.

The sacrament may be repeated if the sick person recovers after being anointed and then again falls ill or if during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious.

A sick person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for the surgery.

Elderly people may be anointed if they have become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present.

Sick children are to be anointed if they have sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by this sacrament. In case of doubt whether a child has reached the use of reason, the sacrament is to be conferred.

In public and private catechesis, the faithful should be educated to ask for the sacrament of anointing and, as soon as the right time comes, to receive it with full faith and devotion. They should not follow the wrongful practice of delaying the reception of the sacrament. All who care for the sick should be taught the meaning and purpose of the sacrament.

The sacrament of anointing is to be conferred on sick people who, although they have lost consciousness or the use of reason would, as Christian believers, have at least implicitly asked for it when they were in control of their faculties.

When a priest has been called to attend those who are already dead, he should not administer the sacrament of anointing. Instead, he should pray for them, asking that God forgive their sins and graciously receive them into the kingdom. But if the priest is doubtful whether the sick person is dead, he is to confer the sacrament, using the rite conditionally.

The anointing of the sick is not to be conferred on anyone who remains obdurately in open and serious sin.

## **Minister of the Anointing of the Sick**

The priest is the only proper minister of the anointing of the sick.

This office is ordinarily exercised by bishops, parish priests (pastors) and their assistants, chaplains of health care facilities, and superiors of clerical religious institutes.

These ministers have the pastoral responsibility both of preparing and helping the sick and others who are present, with the assistance of religious and laity, and of celebrating the sacrament.

The diocesan bishop has the responsibility of supervising celebrations at which many sick persons may come together to receive the sacrament.

For a reasonable cause any other priest may confer this sacrament with at least the presumed consent of the minister mentioned above, whom the priest need only inform later.

When two or more priests are present for the anointing of the sick person, one of them may say the prayers and carry out the anointings, saying the sacramental form. The others may take the remaining parts, such as the introductory rites, readings, invocations, or instructions. Each priest may lay hands on the sick person.

## **Requirements for Celebrating the Anointing of the Sick**

The matter proper for the sacrament is olive oil or, according to circumstances, other oil derived from plants.

The oil used for the anointing of the sick must be blessed for this purpose by the bishop or by a priest who has the faculty, either from the law or by special concession of the Apostolic See.

The law itself permits the following, besides a bishop, to bless the oil of the sick:

- a) those whom the law equates with diocesan bishops;
- b) in case of necessity, any priest, but only within the celebration of the sacrament.

The oil of the sick is ordinarily blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday.

If a priest is to bless the oil during the rite, he may bring the unblessed oil with him, or the family of the sick person may prepare the oil in a suitable vessel. If any of the oil is left after the celebration of the sacrament, it should be absorbed in cotton (cotton wool) and burned.

If the priest uses oil that has already been blessed (either by the bishop or by a priest), he brings it with him in the vessel in which it is kept. This vessel, made of suitable material, should be clean and should contain sufficient oil (soaked in cotton [cotton wool] for convenience). In this case, after celebrating the sacrament the priest returns the vessel to the place where it is kept with proper respect. He should make sure that the oil remains fit for use and should replenish it from time to time, either yearly when the bishop blesses the oil on Holy Thursday or more frequently if necessary.

The sick person is anointed on the forehead and on the hands. It is appropriate to divide the sacramental form so that the first part is said while the forehead is anointed, the latter part while the hands are anointed.

In case of necessity, however, it is sufficient that a single anointing be given on the forehead or, because of the particular condition of the sick person, on another suitable part of the body, while the whole sacramental form is said.

Depending on the culture and traditions of different peoples, the number of anointings may be increased and the place of anointing may be changed. Directives on this should be included in the preparation of particular rituals.

The following is the sacramental form with which the anointing of the sick is given in the Latin rite:

*Through this holy anointing  
may the Lord in his love and mercy help you  
with the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

*May the Lord who frees you from sin  
save you and raise you up.*

### **Viaticum for the dying**

When in their passage from this life Christians are strengthened by the body and blood of Christ in viaticum, they have the pledge of the resurrection that the Lord promised: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (John 6:54).

When possible, viaticum should be received within Mass so that the sick person may receive communion under both kinds. Communion received as viaticum should be considered a special sign of participation in the mystery which is celebrated in the eucharist: the mystery of the death of the Lord and his passage to the Father.

All baptised Christians who are able to receive communion are bound to receive viaticum by reason of the precept to receive communion when in danger of death from any cause. Priests with pastoral responsibility must see that the celebration of this sacrament is not delayed, but that the faithful are nourished by it while still in full possession of their faculties.

It is also desirable that during the celebration of viaticum, Christians renew the faith professed at their baptism, by which they became adopted children of God and coheirs of the promise of eternal life.

The ordinary ministers of viaticum are the parish priest (pastor) and his assistants, chaplains and, for all staying in the house, the superior in clerical religious institutes or societies of apostolic life.

In case of necessity or with at least the presumed permission of the competent minister, any priest or deacon is to give viaticum, or, if no ordained minister is available, any member of the faithful who has been duly appointed.

A deacon and other ministers follow the rite provided for “Viaticum outside Mass”.

### **Continuous Rite**

For special cases, when sudden illness or some other cause has unexpectedly placed one of the faithful in proximate danger of death, a continuous rite is provided by which the sick person may be given the sacraments of penance, anointing, and the eucharist as viaticum in a single celebration.

If death is imminent and there is not enough time to celebrate the three sacraments in the manner already described, the sick person should be given an opportunity to make a sacramental confession, even if it has to be a generic confession. After this the person should be given viaticum, since all the faithful are bound to receive this sacrament if they are in danger of death. Then, if there is sufficient time, the sick person should be anointed.

The sick person who, because of the nature of the illness, cannot receive communion should be anointed.

In danger of death, the law gives the faculty to confirm to parish priests (pastors) and in fact to any priest.

[Reference: *The Rites of the Catholic Church*]

Should one of the parish clergy or a chaplain other than the hospital chaplain be called by the patient or a relative to administer the Sacraments to a person in hospital, the priest should notify the hospital chaplain as soon as possible after attending the sick person.

# *Funerals*

## **Pastoral Guides**

The Archdiocesan Council of Priests, drawing on “The Order of Christian Funerals”, has prepared a pastoral guide for priests, “Before we go our separate ways”, to assist clergy in their ministry of consoling the bereaved and celebrating the funeral rites.

A companion guide, “The New Zealand Catholic Funeral” has also been prepared to help family members in preparing for the funeral.

It is recommended that “The New Zealand Catholic Funeral” be photocopied, so that copies can be shared with the family when the priest is making the funeral arrangement with them.

## **“Before we go our separate ways”**

### **A Pastoral Guide to the Order of Christian Funerals**

#### **“We have an everlasting home....”**

## **Introduction**

In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, by his death and resurrection has destroyed death forever.

Christians celebrate the funeral rites to offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now been returned to God, the author of life. We pray too for the person who has died asking for the forgiveness of sin and the gift of everlasting life.

*‘If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member’* (1 Cor 12:26). When a member of Christ’s Body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love. Christian consolation is rooted in that hope that comes from faith in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian hope faces the reality of death and grief but with an attitude of trust.

## **A Ministry of Consolation**

The Church calls each member of Christ’s Body to participate in the ministry of consolation : to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn.

The circumstances surrounding a loved one's death can vary immensely. The very old person who peacefully and quietly died, the young child tragically killed whilst playing on their bike. Suicide. A lengthy illness. No matter how death has taken place, the community of faith is called to that ministry of consolation with words of faith and support and acts of kindness.

Such assistance then allows members of the family to devote time to planning the funeral rites with the priest and other ministers. Often a lot has to be done in a relatively short period of time and sensitivity by all involved will enable the funeral to be planned in as less a pressured way as is possible.

### **Preparation for the Funeral**

In planning and carrying out the funeral rites, the priest and all other ministers should keep in mind the life of the deceased and the circumstances of death. They should take into consideration the spiritual and psychological needs of the family and friends of the deceased and their sense of loss. Planning of the funeral rites can take place at an appropriate time after death and before the vigil service. Ministers are then given the opportunity to explain the meaning and significance of each of the funeral rites, especially the vigil, the funeral liturgy, and the rite of committal.

If pastoral and personal considerations allow, the period before death may be an appropriate time to plan the funeral rites with the family and even with the person who is dying. This can help all come to terms with the reality of death and Christian hope.

The liturgical celebration involve the whole person, and so requires attention to all that affects the senses.

### **The Word of God**

In every celebration for the dead, the Church attaches great importance to the reading of the Word of God and accordingly is not to be omitted. The readings proclaim to the assembly the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's Kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life.

### **Music**

Music is integral to the funeral rites. It allows the community to express convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. It has the power to console and uplift the bereaved and to strengthen the unity of the assembly in faith and love. The music at funerals should support, console and uplift the participants and should help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ's victory over death and in the Christian's share in that victory.

## **A Journey of Farewell**

The time immediately following death is often one of bewilderment and may involve shock or heart-rending grief for the family and close friends. The Church then, in its rites, begins a journey of farewell. The ministry of the Church is one of gently accompanying the mourners.

The Vigil for the deceased is the principle rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy. It may be celebrated in the home of the deceased, in the funeral home or in some other suitable place. While it is normally celebrated in the Church, it may be celebrated in the home or on a marae. The Vigil is a very appropriate time for those more 'personal touches' e.g. eulogies, favourite songs which the funeral Mass is not able to accommodate.

It is also comforting to use the other three brief rites 'Prayers after Death, Gathering in the Presence of the Body and Transfer of the Body to the Church or Place of Committal'. These rites are signs of the concern of the Christian community. The circumstances for the celebration of these rites may vary from place to place and from culture to culture. The rites given are models only, for adaptation according to circumstance.

The funeral liturgy is the central liturgical celebration of the Christian community for the deceased. When one of its members dies, the Church encourages the celebration of the Mass. When Mass cannot be celebrated, the Funeral Liturgy outside Mass is celebrated.

At the funeral liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery.

The final commendation is a final farewell by the members of the community, an act of respect for one of their members, whom they entrust to God. It also acknowledges the reality of separation and affirms that we share the same destiny.

The rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith is caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be used at the grave or crematorium. In committing the body to its final resting place, the community expresses the hope that the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection.



## **Our Local Church**

In the Archdiocese of Wellington we wish all to experience a Church who carries out its ministry of consolation to the full, irrespective of whether or not the family has much evident connection to the Church community. Indeed, at a time like this, we can give great witness to what it means to being a caring community of faith.

Let us become very familiar with the Order of Christian Funerals (1989) and recognise the treasury of prayer contained in it, with its depth of understanding for any number of circumstances surrounding death, and put time into preparing every funeral liturgy and acknowledge the unique nature of each.

We acknowledge the work of the Funeral Directors in our local communities and do all we can to foster a working partnership with them. It is good to make personal contact with them, rather than all details of funeral arrangements being made over the phone. Let us offer our support to them.

Even if we have not known the deceased, we don't need to make the presumption that we can't capture their spirit by listening to relatives talk, seeing photographs and the like. The knowledge will be very beneficial when presiding at a funeral liturgy. It is also another part of our pastoral care. Never say "I did not know the person well".

To the extent that it is possible, we can avoid the use of personal pronouns and use the name of the deceased.

In making initial contact with the family, let us get a 'feel' for what may be more appropriate or comfortable for them. Given the shock, the many things which need to be done, family members may find it difficult to know where to begin.

In the talking through of the funeral arrangements let us be sensitive, whilst also knowing our own Catholic traditions and the comfort they do give. Let us not arrive with a funeral already arranged in our own minds and impose it on the family. Let us talk, reflect, listen and discuss the many options which exist.

Given the diversity of culture in our Archdiocese, we may need to become conversant with funeral customs of the tangata whenua, especially the tangihanga, and the many other cultures which bless our Diocese. Never be afraid to ask. At times too, we will be aware of the supplementary customs from other Institutions such as the RSA, the Fire Service and the like.

Earlier on we mentioned the way music sets a mood which words alone cannot do. Whilst the ideal is to have music which reflects the Paschal mystery, hope and consolation, families do request favourite songs, or songs which they like. Whilst the use

of non sacred music is not encouraged if it is we are to ensure that those songs are not discordant with the Christian message, but ones which we may be able to use to explain the mystery of death and resurrection. Familiarity with the lyrics then is essential, as some lyrics are inappropriate for Christian funerals.

Whilst we ultimately celebrate the Paschal Mystery at our funeral rites, we also are farewelling a loved member of a family. The request is often made for some, if not many, to speak in the form of tributes. These should be brief and not be many and are to take place directly after the opening greeting. This protects the integrity of the liturgy.

It may be important to give some guidance so as the tributes don't form a disproportionate part of the funeral liturgy. It is the policy of this Archdiocese to have no more than one eulogy at the funeral Mass.

Good preparation will enable us to cope with the unexpected, and having worked out in advance what will be done when difficult situations arise will be to your advantage.

Do ensure that the Clergy Record from the Funeral Director is given to the person who records the death in the appropriate register.

Every funeral, even when the deceased is not a Catholic, may be an opportunity of awakening and building up whatever faith is present.

This is a ministry of hope and consolation, one that the Church calls us to do with great care and sensitivity.

*“Be mindful of our brothers and sisters  
who have fallen asleep in the peace of Christ,  
and all the dead whose faith only you can know.  
Lead them to the fullness of the resurrection  
and gladden them with the light of your face.”  
Amen.*

# *The New Zealand Catholic Funeral*

## **A Pastoral Guide to the Order of Christian Funerals**

People are usually very impressed by Catholic funerals and the way we honour and pray for our dead. The richness of our tradition and symbolism within the ritual combine to highlight our Christian faith enabling us to confront the reality of death.

*“God loved the world so much , he gave his only Son,  
that all who believe in him might have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

### **When Death Comes**

*“The time immediately following death is often one of bewilderment and may involve shock or heartrending grief for the family and close friends. The ministry of the Church at this time is one of gently accompanying the mourners in their initial adjustment to the fact of death and to the sorrow this entails.” -Order of Christian Funerals #52.*

The time between death and the funeral is seldom easy. You have to break the news to relatives and friends, meet the requirements of any Will, provide personal details for the Funeral Director and, in the case of a sudden death, the Police, arrange a funeral, and be available for callers. You may even have to put aside your own grief to comfort others, especially young children.

Contact the Parish Priest as early as possible. That way the resources of the parish will be quickly available and you will be relieved of much anxiety and concern. Even if you have been away from the Church for some time you will find welcome and sympathy. You should never let fear or embarrassment keep you from the embrace of the Church, especially in this time of deep sadness and loss.

The story of the death is one you will find yourself telling over and over as people call to offer sympathy. There will also be happier moments as memories are shared. Both are important in coming to realise the enormity of what has happened. There must also be space for the story of Jesus - his death and rising to new life, his refusal to let death have the last word. As we reflect on the life of the person who has died and on the life and death of Jesus Christ, we begin to see that our loved one matters so much to God that God wants this person to live forever.

*“Father, I want those you have given me  
to be with me where I am,  
so that they may always see the glory  
you have given me because you loved me  
before the foundation of the world.” (John 17: 24)*

## The Vigil

*"In many circumstances the vigil will be the first opportunity for friends, neighbours, and members of the local community to show their concern for the family of the deceased gathering for prayer."* -Order of Christian Funerals #52

It is not uncommon for a grieving family to say, "It is our relative's funeral, why can't we just do what we like?" This is to misunderstand that the liturgy is the Church's prayer. While there is room for personal preference, there are also principles to be followed.

The Vigil (prayer in the Church, on the marae, in the family home or funeral parlour on the night before the funeral) is the first moment of *public* prayer. There may have already been times of prayer for the deceased and the family, but the *Vigil* is the time for the *community* to gather. This can be an occasion for remembering, giving thanks, praying for forgiveness of sins and for strength and peace for the family who mourn. Ideally the Vigil should be in the parish church, which often will have been the place where the Christian life of the deceased has been inspired and celebrated.

The structure of the Vigil Liturgy is very simple:

- (1) a greeting and an opening song (well chosen music can touch people at levels words often cannot reach)
- (2) Scripture and response, or some non-scriptural poems or readings (such readings are more appropriate here than at the funeral Mass)
- (3) a brief homily or reflection
- (4) Intercessions
- (5) the Lord's Prayer and
- (6) a concluding prayer and a blessing.

The Rosary has been a traditional vigil prayer and this may still be the preferred choice. Some may choose a selection of Rosary meditations, readings and intercessions. People can request whatever structure suits them.

The Vigil is the proper place for tributes, eulogies and reminiscing. It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Wellington to encourage no more than one eulogy at the funeral Mass.

### **In Church: Gathering in Community**

*"At the funeral liturgy the community gathers with the family and friends of the deceased to give praise and thanks to God for Christ's victory over death, to commend the deceased to God's tender mercy and compassion, and to seek strength in the proclamation of the paschal mystery."* -Order of Christian Funerals #129

For most Catholics, a Catholic funeral service means a Requiem Mass. Simply put, the Mass is a sharing in the meal provided for us by God through Jesus. It is this sacred meal which bridges the distance between life and death. In appropriate circumstances, for example when the mourners are not Catholic or have ceased to practice the faith, there is provision for a Prayer Service (a Liturgy of the Word). However, Mass should be regarded as the norm even for suicides and for unbaptised children.

The funeral liturgy, whether or not it is a Mass, focuses on the story of Jesus. There is, of course, room for remembering the life which has just ended, but the heart of the celebration is the hope Christ's death and resurrection holds for all of us, and especially the fullness of life promised to the one who has died.

That belief finds its expression in word (Scripture and prayer), in song and symbol (holy water, which recalls baptism; the Easter candle, sign of Christ's risen presence; incense to honour the holiness of human flesh and symbolising prayer ascending to God).

In the Homily, which follows the Scripture readings, the priest will share something of the hope they offer and connect the life of the person who has died with the message of the Scriptures. Confronted with the mystery of death human words are totally inadequate. Knowing this, the priest will endeavour to give relevance to the comfort and hope of God's word. At no time is the announcement of the Good News more appropriate and more necessary than at the time of death.

The rite holds a treasury of readings and prayers, hymns and songs. Choose those which speak to your heart and memories. Remember you are offering the *Church's* prayer so it must reflect the Church's beliefs and practices. There is a further opportunity to weave your own concerns into the Prayers of Intercession. If you are unsure about preparing such prayers, then ask your priest or someone in the parish to help.

### **At the Cemetery: Saying the Last Goodbye**

*"The rite (of committal) can help the mourners face the end of one relationship with the deceased and to begin a new one based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude and the hope of resurrection and reunion."* -Order of Christian Funerals #213

The funeral rite calls the Rite of Committal "a stark and powerful expression" of final separation in this life. This part of the Funeral Rite in some way challenges the discomfort we sometimes feel with death by urging us to stand beside the grave, face-to-face with death's finality, but at the same time expressing hope in a life that will never end.

The rite indicates a new development when it states that this last part of the funeral liturgy may be celebrated at the crematorium. For centuries, Christians buried their dead, remembering that Jesus lay in a tomb. The Church continues to encourage burial, but does recognize cremation as a practical alternative to burial. Once cremation was condemned by the Church as challenging Christ's power to raise the dead, but in 1963 the Church relaxed its ban on cremation, permitting it for such "good reasons" as national custom, financial or hygienic concerns, or even scarcity of burial space. In 1983 the revised Code of Canon Law (the law of the Church) reaffirmed the permission for cremation, however it "earnestly encourages" the time-honoured practice of burial, and says that cremation is permitted as long as it is not done for reasons which "contradict Christian belief."

The committal is a short and simple service, it includes a brief Scripture reading and a blessing over the grave. The body is then entrusted to its final resting place with a powerful reminder of future resurrection. Prayers of intercession are offered for the dead and for family and friends, and the rite concludes with a blessing.

It is appropriate then that there is some gesture of farewell, this will help you to feel that you have done all you can do for your dead and give you a sense of conclusion. Some people wish to place flowers on the casket, others earth, or some may even wish to fill in the grave.

This document is entitled THE NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC FUNERAL, it is hoped that this pamphlet will help all to see the difference between a New Zealand funeral and a New Zealand *Catholic* funeral.

In a culture where many people leave the Church and return to the day's business, the Catholic funeral rite encourages us to accompany the body on its final journey to the cemetery and to stand beside the grave with the mourners. It is hoped that people see the three parts of the Order of Christian Funerals as a whole and that they participate in as much as possible of the Vigil Prayers, the Requiem Mass, and the Burial.

The New Zealand *Catholic* Funeral is full of faith and hope.

*"the community (priest and people) seeks to be with the mourners in their need and to provide an atmosphere of sensitive concern and confident faith. In prayer and gesture those present show reverence for the body of the deceased as a temple of the life-giving Spirit and ask, in that same Spirit, for the eternal life promised to the faithful."* - Order of Christian Funerals # 110

## Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass

*I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me shall never die.*

In the funeral liturgy outside Mass the community gathers to hear the message of Easter hope proclaimed in the liturgy of the word and to commend the deceased to God.

This rite may be used for various reasons:

1. when the funeral Mass is not permitted, namely, on solemnities of obligation, on Holy Thursday and the Easter Triduum, and on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter Season; (cf GIRM 336)
2. when in some places or circumstances it is not possible to celebrate the funeral Mass before the committal, for example, if a priest is not available;
3. when for pastoral reasons the pastor and the family judge that the funeral liturgy outside Mass is a more suitable form of celebration.

The funeral liturgy outside Mass is ordinarily celebrated in the parish church, but may also be celebrated in the home of the deceased, a funeral home, parlour, chapel of rest, or cemetery chapel.

The readings are those of the Lectionary for Mass, 'Masses for the Dead.' The intercessions should be adapted to the circumstances. Models are given in place and in Part V, no. 401. The celebration may also include holy communion.

In the choice of music for the funeral liturgy, preference should be given to the singing of the entrance song, the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation, and especially the song of farewell at the final commendation.

The minister who is a priest or deacon wears an alb with stole (a cope may be used, if desired); a lay-person who presides wears the liturgical vestments approved for the region.

### OUTLINE OF THE RITE

#### INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting  
Sprinkling with Holy Water  
(Placing of the Pall)  
Entrance Procession  
(Placing of Christian Symbols)  
Invitation to Prayer

Opening Prayer

## **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

Readings

Homily

General Intercessions

The Lord's Prayer

## **FINAL COMMENDATION**

Invitation to Prayer

Silence

(Signs of Farewell)

Song of Farewell

Prayer of Commendation

## **PROCESSION TO THE PLACE OF COMMITMENT**

### **FUNERAL LITURGY OUTSIDE MASS**

If the rite of reception of the body takes place at the beginning of the funeral liturgy, the introductory rites are those given here. If the rite of reception of the body has already taken place, the liturgy begins with an entrance song and the greeting followed by the invitation to prayer .

### **INTRODUCTORY RITES**

#### **GREETING**

The presiding minister, with assisting ministers, goes to the door of the church and using one of the following greetings, or in similar words, greets those present.

- A. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
R/ And also with you.
- B. The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
R/ And also with you.
- C. The grace and peace of God our Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, be always with you.  
R/ And also with you.
- D. May the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, be with you.  
R/ And also with you.

#### **SPRINKLING WITH HOLY WATER**

The presiding minister then sprinkles the coffin with holy water, saying:

In the waters of baptism

N. died with Christ and rose with him to new life.

May he/she now share with him eternal glory.



### **(PLACING OF THE PALL)**

If it is the custom in the local community, the pall is then placed on the coffin by family members, friends, or the minister.

### **ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

The Easter candle may be placed beforehand near the position the coffin will occupy at the conclusion of the procession. The presiding minister and assisting ministers precede the coffin and the mourners into the church. During the procession a psalm, song, or responsory is sung.

### **(PLACING OF CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS)**

A symbol of the Christian life, such as a Book of the Gospels, a Bible, or a cross, may be carried in procession, then placed on the coffin, either in silence or as a text.

On reaching the altar, the presiding minister, with the assisting ministers, makes the customary reverence and goes to the chair.

### **INVITATION TO PRAYER**

When all have reached their places, the presiding minister, using the following or similar words, invites the assembly to pray.

My brothers and sisters,  
we have come together to renew our trust in Christ  
who, by dying on the cross, has freed us from eternal death  
and, by rising, has opened for us the gates of heaven.  
Let us pray for our brother/sister,  
that he/she may share in Christ's victory,  
and let us pray for ourselves,  
that the Lord may grant us  
the gift of his loving consolation.

### **OPENING PRAYER**

After a brief period of silent prayer, the presiding minister sings or says one of the following prayers

#### **A. Outside the Easter season**

Almighty God and Father,  
it is our certain faith  
that your Son, who died on the cross, was raised from the dead,  
the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep.  
Grant that through this mystery  
your servant N., who has gone to his/her rest in Christ,  
may share in the joy of his resurrection.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

R/ Amen.

B. Outside the Easter season

O God,  
to whom mercy and forgiveness belong,  
hear our prayers on behalf of your servant N.,  
whom you have called out of this world;  
and because he/she put his/her hope and trust in you,  
command that he/she be carried safely home to heaven  
and come to enjoy your eternal reward.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever,

R/ Amen.

C Outside the Easter season

O God,  
in whom sinners find mercy and the saints find joy,  
we pray to you for our brother/sister N.,  
whose body we honour with Christian burial,  
that he/she may be delivered from the bonds of death.  
Admit him/her to the joyful company of your saints  
and raise him/her on the last day  
to rejoice in your presence for ever.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

R/ Amen.

D. During the Easter season

God of loving kindness,  
listen favourably to our prayers:  
strengthen our belief that your Son has risen from the dead  
and our hope that your servant N. will also rise again.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

R/ Amen.

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

### READINGS

After the introductory rites, the liturgy of the word is celebrated. Depending upon pastoral circumstances, either one or two readings may be read before the gospel reading.

### HOMILY

A brief homily should be given after the gospel reading.

### GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

One of the following intercessions or those given in no. 401, may be used or adapted to the circumstances, or new intercessions may be composed.

#### A.

God, the almighty Father, raised Christ his Son from the dead; with confidence we ask him to save all his people, living and dead:

For N. who in baptism was given the pledge of eternal life, that he/she may now be admitted to the company of the saints.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer.

For our brother/sister who ate the body of Christ, the bread of life, that he/she may be raised up on the last day.

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer.

*(For a deacon: For our brother N., who proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ and served the needs of the poor, that he may be welcomed into the sanctuary of heaven.*

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer)

*(For a bishop or priest: For our brother N., who served the Church as a priest, that he may be given a place in the liturgy of heaven.*

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer)

For our deceased relatives and friends and for all who have helped us, that they may have the reward of their goodness.

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer

For those who have fallen asleep in the hope of rising again, that they may see God face to face.

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer.

*(For the mourners: For the family and friends of our brother/sister N., that they may be consoled in their grief by the Lord, who wept at the death of his friend Lazarus.*  
Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer)

For all of us assembled here to worship in faith, that we may be gathered together again in God's kingdom.

Lord in your mercy:

R/ Lord, hear our prayer.

The presiding minister then concludes:

God, our shelter and our strength,  
you listen in love to the cry of your people:  
hear the prayers we offer for our departed brothers and sisters.  
Cleanse them of their sins  
and grant them the fullness of redemption.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

**B.**

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father, where he intercedes for his Church. Confident that God hears the voices of those who trust in the Lord Jesus, we join our prayers to his:  
In baptism N. received the light of Christ. Scatter the darkness now and lead him/her over the waters of death.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer.

Our brother/sister N. was nourished at the table of the Saviour. Welcome him/her into the halls of the heavenly banquet.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer.

*(For a religious: Our brother/sister N. spent his/her life following Jesus, poor, chaste, and obedient. Count him/her among all holy men and women who sing in your courts.*

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer.)

*(For a bishop or priest: Our brother N. shared in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, leading God's people in prayer and worship. Bring him into your presence where he will take his place in the heavenly liturgy.*

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer.)

(*For a deacon:* Our brother N. served God's people as a deacon of the Church. Prepare a place for him in the kingdom whose coming he proclaimed.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer.)

Many friends and members of our families have gone before us and await the kingdom. Grant them an everlasting home with your Son.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Many people die by violence, war, and famine each day. Show your mercy to those who suffer so unjustly these sins against your love, and gather them to the eternal kingdom of peace.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Those who trusted in the Lord now sleep in the Lord. Give refreshment, rest, and peace to all whose faith is known to you alone.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

(*For the mourners:* The family and friends of N. seek comfort and consolation. Heal their pain and dispel the darkness and doubt that come from grief.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer )

We are assembled here in faith and confidence to pray for our brother/sister N. Strengthen our hope so that we may live in the expectation of your Son's coming.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

The presiding minister then concludes:

Lord God, giver of peace and healer of souls,  
hear the prayers of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ,  
and the voices of your people,  
whose lives were purchased by the blood of the Lamb.  
Forgive the sins of all who sleep in Christ  
and grant them a place in the kingdom.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Using one of the following invitations, or in similar words, the minister invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer

A. Now let us pray as Christ the Lord has taught us:

B. With longing for the coming of God's kingdom, let us offer our prayer to the Father:

All say:

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation:  
but deliver us from evil.

The celebration may include holy communion.

If the final commendation is to be celebrated at the place of committal, the procession to the place of committal begins following the Lord's Prayer or the prayer after communion.

#### **FINAL COMMENDATION**

Following the Lord's Prayer (or the prayer after communion), the presiding minister goes to a place near the coffin. The assisting ministers carry the censer and holy water, if these are to be used.

A member or a friend of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased before the final commendation begins.

#### **INVITATION TO PRAYER**

Using one of the following invitations, or in similar words, the presiding minister faces the people and begins the final commendation.

- A. Before we go our separate ways, let us take leave of our brother/sister. May our farewell express our affection for him/her; may it ease our sadness and strengthen our hope. One day we shall joyfully greet him/her again when the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys even death itself.
- B. Trusting in God, we have prayed together for N. and now we come to the last farewell. There is sadness in parting, but we take comfort in the hope that one day we shall see N. again and enjoy his/her friendship. Although this congregation will disperse in sorrow, the mercy of God will gather us together again in the joy of his kingdom. Therefore let us console one another in the faith of Jesus Christ.

#### **SILENCE**

All pray in silence.

**(SIGNS OF FAREWELL)**

The coffin may now be sprinkled with holy water and incensed, or this may take place during or after the song of farewell.

**SONG OF FAREWELL**

The song of farewell is then sung. The following may be used or some other song may be sung.

Saints of God, come to his/her aid!

Hasten to meet him/her, angels of the Lord!

R/ Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, take you to himself;

may angels lead you to the bosom of Abraham.

R/ Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High.

Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord,

and let perpetual light shine upon him/her.

R/ Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High.

**PRAYER OF COMMENDATION**

The presiding minister then says one of the following prayers.

**A.**

Into your hands, Father of mercies,

we commend our brother/sister N.

in the sure and certain hope

that, together with all who have died in Christ,

he/she will rise with him on the last day.

(We give you thanks for the blessings

which you bestowed upon N. in this life:

they are signs to us of your goodness

and of our fellowship with the saints in Christ.)

Merciful Lord, turn toward us and listen to our prayers:

open the gates of paradise to your servant

and help us who remain

to comfort one another with assurances of faith,

until we all meet in Christ

and are with you and with our brother/sister for ever

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/ Amen.

**B.**

To you, O Lord, we commend the soul of N. your servant;

in the sight of this world he/she is now dead;

in your sight may he/she live for ever

Forgive whatever sins he/she committed through human weakness

and in your goodness grant him/her everlasting peace.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

### **PROCESSION TO THE PLACE OF COMMITTAL**

An assisting minister, or in the absence of an assisting minister, the presiding minister says:

In peace let us take our brother/sister to his/her place of rest.  
If a symbol of the Christian life has been placed on the coffin, it should be removed at this time.

The procession then begins: the presiding minister and assisting ministers precede the coffin; the family and mourners follow.

One or more of the following texts or other suitable songs may be sung during the procession to the entrance of the church. The singing may continue during the journey to the place of committal.

- A. The following antiphon may be sung with verses from Psalm 24 or separately.  
May the angels lead you into paradise;  
may the martyrs come to welcome you  
and take you to the holy city,  
the new and eternal Jerusalem.
- B. The following antiphon may be sung with verses from Psalm 115, or separately.  
May choirs of angels welcome you  
and lead you to the bosom of Abraham;  
and where Lazarus is poor no longer  
may you find eternal rest.
- C. Whoever believes in me,  
even though that person die, shall live.  
R/ I am the resurrection and the life.  
Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.  
R/ I am the resurrection and the life.
- D. The following psalms may also be used. Psalm 117, Psalm 41,  
Psalm 92, Psalm 24, Psalm 118.



## Rite Of Committal

*Joseph took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in a shroud, and laid him in a tomb.*

The rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb, or crematorium and may be used for burial at sea. Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the site of committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of interment, rather than at a cemetery chapel.

Two forms of the rite of committal are provided here: 'Rite of Committal' and 'Rite of Committal with Final Commendation.' The first form is used when the final commendation is celebrated as part of the conclusion of the funeral liturgy. The second form is used when the final commendation does not take place during the funeral liturgy or when no funeral liturgy precedes the committal rite.

In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.

### **STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE RITE OF COMMITTAL**

Both forms of the committal rite begin with an invitation, Scripture verse, and a prayer over the place of committal. The several alternatives for the prayer over the place of committal take into account whether the grave, tomb, or resting place has already been blessed and situations in which the final disposition of the body will actually take place at a later time (for example, when the body is to be cremated or will remain in a cemetery chapel until burial at a later time).

The rite of committal continues with the words of committal, the intercessions, and the Lord's Prayer.

The rite of committal with final commendation continues with an invitation to prayer, a pause for silent prayer, the sprinkling and incensing of the body, where this is customary, the song of farewell, and the prayer of commendation

The act of committal takes place after the words of committal (in the rite of committal with final commendation, after the prayer of commendation) or at the conclusion of the rite. The act of committal expresses the full significance of this rite. Through this act the community of faith proclaims that the grave or place of

interment, once a sign of futility and despair, has been transformed by means of Christ's own death and resurrection into a sign of hope and promise.

Both forms of the rite conclude with a prayer over the people, which includes the verse *Eternal rest*, and a blessing. Depending on local custom, a song may then be sung and a gesture of final leave-taking may be made, for example, placing flowers or soil on the coffin.

#### **ADAPTATION**

If there is pastoral need for a longer committal rite than those provided here, for example, when the funeral liturgy has been celebrated on a previous day or in a different community, the minister may use the appropriate form of the committal rite and adapt it, for example, by adding a greeting, song, one or more readings, a psalm, and a brief homily. When there has been no funeral liturgy prior to the committal rite, the 'Rite of Committal with Final Commendation' may be used and similarly adapted.

The rite of committal may be celebrated in circumstances in which the final disposition of the body will not take place for some time, for example, when winter delays burial or when ashes are to be interred at some time after cremation. The rite of committal may then be repeated on the later occasion when the actual burial or interment takes place. On the second occasion the rite may include a longer Scripture reading as well as a homily.

In the case of a body donated to science, the rite of committal may be celebrated whenever interment takes place.

#### **MINISTRY AND PARTICIPATION**

The community continues to show its concern for the mourners by participating in the rite of committal. The rite marks the separation in this life of the mourners from the deceased, and through it the community assists them as they complete their care for the deceased and lay the body to rest. The act of committal is a stark and powerful expression of this separation. When carried out in the midst of the community of faith, the committal can help the mourners to face the end of one relationship with the deceased and to begin a new one based on prayerful remembrance, gratitude, and the hope of resurrection and reunion.

By their presence and prayer members of the community signify their intention to continue to support the mourners in the time following the funeral.

The singing of well-chosen music at the rite of committal can help the mourners as they face the reality of the separation. At the rite of committal with final commendation, whenever possible, the song of farewell should be sung. In either

form of the committal rite, a hymn or liturgical song that affirms hope in God's mercy and in the resurrection of the dead is desirable at the conclusion of the rite.

In the absence of a parish minister, a friend or member of the family should lead those present in the rite of committal. The minister should vest according to local custom.

## **OUTLINE OF THE RITE**

INVITATION

SCRIPTURE VERSE

PRAYER OVER THE PLACE OF COMMITTAL

COMMITTAL

INTERCESSIONS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

## **RITE OF COMMITTAL**

### **INVITATION**

When the funeral procession arrives at the place of committal, the minister says the following or a similar invitation.

Our brother/sister N. has gone to his/her rest in the peace of Christ. May the Lord now welcome him/her to the table of God's children in heaven. With faith and hope in eternal life, let us assist him/her with our prayers.

Let us pray to the Lord also for ourselves. May we who mourn be reunited one day with our brother/sister; together may we meet Christ Jesus when he who is our life appears in glory.

### **SCRIPTURE VERSE**

One of the following verses or another brief Scripture verse is read. A fuller Scripture reading may be used.

The minister first says - We read in sacred Scripture:

**A. *Matthew 25:34***

Come, you whom my Father has blessed, says the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

**B. *John 6:39***

This is the will of my Father, says the Lord, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but that I should raise it on the last day.

**C. *Philippians 3:20***

Our true home is in heaven, and Jesus Christ whose return we long for will come from heaven to save us.

**D. Revelation 1:5–6**

Jesus Christ is the first-born of the dead;  
glory and kingship be his for ever and ever Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE PLACE OF COMMITTAL**

The minister says one of the following prayers:

- A. If the place of committal is to be blessed:  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
by your own three days in the tomb,  
you hallowed the graves of all who believe in you  
and so made the grave a sign of hope  
that promises resurrection  
even as it claims our mortal bodies.  
Grant that our brother/sister may sleep here in peace  
until you awaken him/her to glory,  
for you are the resurrection and the life.  
Then he/she will see you face to face  
and in your light will see light  
and know the splendour of God,  
for you live and reign for ever and ever  
R/ Amen.
- B. If the place of committal has already been blessed:  
All praise to you, Lord of all creation.  
Praise to you, holy and living God.  
We praise and bless you for your mercy,  
we praise and bless you for your kindness.  
Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
R/ Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
You sanctify the homes of the living  
and make holy the places of the dead.  
You alone open the gates of righteousness  
and lead us to the dwellings of the saints.  
Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
R/ Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
We praise you, our refuge and strength.  
We bless you, our God and Redeemer.  
Your praise is always in our hearts and on our lips.  
We remember the mighty deeds of the covenant.  
Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
R/ Blessed is the Lord, our God.  
Almighty and ever-living God,

remember the mercy with which you graced your servant N. in life.  
Receive him/her, we pray, into the mansions of the saints.  
As we make ready our brother's/sister's resting place,  
look also with favour on those who mourn  
and comfort them in their loss.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

- C. When the final disposition of the body is to take place at a later time:  
Almighty and ever-living God,  
in you we place our trust and hope,  
in you the dead, whose bodies were temples of the Spirit, find everlasting peace.  
As we take leave of our brother/sister,  
give our hearts peace in the firm hope  
that one day N. will live  
in the mansion you have prepared for him/her in heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

#### COMMITTAL

The minister then says the words of committal. One of the following  
formularies may be used.

- A. Because God has chosen to call our brother/sister N. from this life to himself,  
we commit his/her body to the earth (*or the deep or the elements or its resting  
place*),  
for we are dust and unto dust we shall return.  
But the Lord Jesus Christ will change our mortal bodies to be like his in glory,  
for he is risen, the firstborn from the dead.  
So let us commend our brother/sister to the Lord,  
that the Lord may embrace him/her in peace  
and raise up his/her body on the last day.
- B. In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life  
through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we commend to Almighty God our brother/sister N.,  
and we commit his/her body to (*the ground or the deep or the elements or its  
resting place*):  
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.  
The Lord bless him/her and keep him/her,  
the Lord make his face to shine upon him/her and be gracious to him/her,  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon him/her and give him/her peace.  
The committal takes place at this time or at the conclusion of the rite.

## INTERCESSIONS

One of the following intercessions may be used or adapted to the circumstances, or new intercessions may be composed.

### A. The minister begins:

For our brother/sister, N., let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me shall live even in death and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.'

Lord, you consoled Martha and Mary in their distress; draw near to us who mourn for N., and dry the tears of those who weep.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

You wept at the grave of Lazarus, your friend; comfort us in our sorrow.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

You raised the dead to life; give to our brother/sister eternal life.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

You promised paradise to the repentant thief; bring N. to the joys of heaven.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

Our brother/sister was washed in baptism and anointed with the Holy Spirit; give him/her fellowship with all your saints.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

He/she was nourished with your body and blood; grant him/her a place at the table in your heavenly kingdom.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

Comfort us in our sorrow at the death of N.; let our faith be our consolation, and eternal life our hope.

We pray to the Lord:

R/ Lord, have mercy.

B. The minister begins:

Dear friends, in reverence let us pray to God, the source of all mercies.

Gracious Lord, forgive the sins of those who have died in Christ.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Remember all the good they have done.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Welcome them into eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Let us pray for those who mourn.

Comfort them in their grief.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Lighten their sense of loss with your presence.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Increase their faith and strengthen their hope.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Let us pray also for ourselves on our pilgrimage through life.

Keep us faithful in your service.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

Kindle in our hearts a longing for heaven.

Lord, in your mercy:

R/ Hear our prayer

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

In the following or similar words, the minister invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer

With longing for the coming of God's kingdom, let us pray:

All say:

Our Father who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation:  
but deliver us from evil.

#### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

The minister says one of the following prayers.

- A. God of holiness and power,  
accept our prayers on behalf of your servant N.;  
do not count his/her deeds against him/her,  
for in his/her heart he/she desired to do your will.  
As his/her faith united him/her to your people on earth,  
so may your mercy join him/her to the angels in heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.
- B. Almighty God,  
through the death of your Son on the cross  
you destroyed our death;  
through his rest in the tomb  
you hallowed the graves of all who believe in you;  
and through his rising again  
you restored us to eternal life.  
God of the living and the dead,  
accept our prayers  
for those who have died in Christ  
and are buried with him in the hope of rising again.  
Since they were true to your name on earth,  
let them praise you for ever in the joy of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

#### **PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

The assisting minister says:

Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.  
All pray silently. The minister, with hands outstretched, prays over the people:  
Merciful Lord,  
you know the anguish of the sorrowful,  
you are attentive to the prayers of the humble.  
Hear your people



who cry out to you in their need,  
and strengthen their hope in your lasting goodness.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/ Amen.

The minister then says the following:

Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord.

R/ And let perpetual light shine upon him/her

May he/she rest in peace.

R/ Amen.

May his/her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R/ Amen.

A. A minister who is a priest or deacon says:

May the peace of God,  
which is beyond all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God  
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

R/ Amen.

May almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R/ Amen.

B. A lay minister invokes God's blessing and signs himself or herself with the sign of the cross, saying:

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
bless and console us  
and gently wipe every tear from our eyes:  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R/ Amen.

The minister then concludes:

Go in the peace of Christ.

R/ Thanks be to God.

A song may conclude the rite. Where it is the custom, some sign or gesture of leave-taking may be made.

## *Prayers and Reflections*

*"When a person is born, we celebrate; when they marry we jubilate; but when they die, we act as if nothing happened."* – Margaret Mead

### **A Prayer for the World**

Let the rain come and wash away  
the ancient grudges,  
the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations.  
Let the rain wash away the memory  
of the hurt, the neglect.  
Then let the sun come out and  
fill the sky with rainbows.  
Let the warmth of the sun heal us  
wherever we are broken.  
Let it burn away the fog so that  
we can see each other clearly.  
So that we can see beyond labels,  
beyond accents, gender or skin colour  
Let the warmth and brightness  
of the sun melt our selfishness,  
so that we can share the joys and  
feel the sorrows of our neighbours.  
And let the light of the sun  
be so strong that we will see all  
people as our neighbours.  
Let the earth, nourished by rain,  
bring forth flowers  
to surround us with beauty.  
And let the mountains teach our hearts  
to reach upward to heaven.  
Amen.

## **A Hospice Prayer**

O, gracious and eternal God, we gather here this evening mindful that each of us has been the recipient of so many marvellous blessings that you have bestowed upon us. Most of all, we are aware that you have given us the gift of life and day after day, we are blessed with the constancy of your love.

As we seek to understand the deeper meaning of our existence, we know that you have given us freedom of choice and have made us to be responsible, not only for ourselves but also for the needs of one another.

We are able to face both life and death realistically because of your grace, which sustains us. You have created us with not only the ability but also the willingness to minister to those whose early end is near.

How wonderful it is to have organisations such as hospice that tries honestly, thoughtfully and sincerely to reach out in a humane way to be there for those in need.

Therefore, bless our organisation that it may ever stand ready and be receptive to those in our communities who face monumental decisions. Help us to always respond positively in a constructive and helpful way, not only to the sick but to their families as well.

We ask that you bless our marvellous hospice staff, its many caring volunteers, and those of us who stand in the wings ready to support their effort.

What I am trying to say, O Father, is bless us all so that we may be a blessing not only to you but to one another.

Amen

## Death is Nothing at All

Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room.  
I am I, and you are you. Whatever we were to each other that we still are.  
Call me by my old familiar name, speak to me in the easy way which you always  
used. Put no difference in your tone, wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.  
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Let my name be ever the household word  
that it always was, let it be spoken without effect,  
without the trace of shadow on it. Life means all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was; there is unbroken continuity.  
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am waiting for you, for  
an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner.

All is well

- Canon Henry Scott Holland of St Paul's Cathedral

## What is Dying?

A ship sails and I stand watching till she fades on the horizon,  
and someone says, "she is gone". Gone where? gone from my sight, that is all;  
she is just as large as when I saw her. ..

The diminished size and total loss of sight is in me, not in her,  
and just at the moment when someone says "she is gone",  
there are others who are watching her coming,  
and other voices take up a glad shout, "there she comes!"...

and that is dying.

- Bishop Brent

[Full version –

What is dying? I am standing on the sea shore. A ship sails to the morning  
breeze and starts for the ocean. She is an object of beauty and I stand  
watching her till at last she fades on the horizon, and someone at my side  
says, "she is gone." Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all: she is just  
as large in the masts, hull and spars as she was when I saw her, and just as  
able to bear her load of living freight to its destination. The diminished size  
and total loss of sight is in me, not her: and just at the moment when  
someone at my side says, "she is gone", there are others who are watching  
her coming, and other voices take up a glad shout, "there she comes" – and  
that is dying.

## Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep

I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow;  
I am the diamond glints on snow;  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain;  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you waken in the morning's hush;  
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circles flight;  
I am the soft star that shines at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there, I did not die.

- *Mary Frye*

### Variation

In those quiet moments in the still of the night,  
remember to rejoice and celebrate life.  
Do not think of me gone and weep, I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow, I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on the grain, I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine.  
You will hear my gentle voice and remember to rejoice.  
Never give up your fight and remember always  
to Celebrate Life... - *Author unknown*

He who has gone, so we but cherish his memory, abides with us, more potent, nay,  
more present than the living man. - *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

Life is eternal and love is immortal;  
And death is only an horizon  
And an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.  
- *Rossitor W Raymond*

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what  
never dies. - *William Penn*

**De Profundis** Psalm 130

Lord, hear my voice!  
O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading.  
If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,  
Lord who would survive?  
But with you is found forgiveness:  
For this we revere you.  
My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word.  
My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak.  
Let the watchman count on daybreak  
and Israel on the Lord.  
Because with the Lord there is mercy  
and fullness of redemption.  
Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.

**Commentary:** The psalmist was praying at a time of great sadness and despair for himself and the Hebrew people. He could see no way in which the sadness would end. That is why he calls to God 'out of the depths'. He was also deeply conscious of his own sins and the people's sins, but knew he could rely on God's promise of loving forgiveness. He hoped in God with the confidence of someone who at the darkest hour of the night looks forward to the light of dawn. This psalm has been one of the Church's favourite prayers for the dead. It applies to the whole church. It applies to the dead person, who returns to God as a sinner, trusting in God's love and compassion, looking beyond dying to the morning light of eternal life with God. It applies also to us who are left in the depths of sorrow, repenting of our own sins too and confidently looking forward to sharing the same everlasting light of heaven. *(Contributed by Rev Richard Rutt)*

Death is not extinguishing the light. It is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come. - *Rabindranath Tagore*

In one of the stars, I shall be living.  
In one of them, I shall be laughing.  
And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing  
when you look at the sky at night.  
- *The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

The day which we fear as our last is but the birthday of eternity. - *Seneca*

Let us all understand that death is not an eraser. It does not remove the deeds or the meanings that existed in anyone's life. It does not make poor men rich or great men fallible. And when death comes, let us not romanticise its presence nor the person it takes from us. Let us see death for what it really is: a border that we all must cross; a border that, more than any other, defines the lives we are able to lead. Do not mourn for those who cross over. Rather, reflect on the definition they've left behind. It is the only truth we are able to know here on earth. When the definition is great, then celebrate it. When it is lacking, then learn from it and improve on it. And use it to make your own definition more truthful and loving and miraculous.

- from 'Gideon'

### **I'm Free**

Don't grieve for me for now I'm free,  
I'm following the path God laid for me.  
I took his hand when I heard him call,  
I turned my back and left it all.  
I could not stay another day  
To laugh, to love, to work or play.  
Tasks left undone will stay that way,  
I found that peace at close of day.  
If my parting has left a void  
Then fill it with remembered joy  
A friendship shared, a laugh a kiss,  
Ah yes, these things I, too, will miss.

But not burdened with times of sorrow,  
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.  
My life has been full, I've savoured much,  
good friends, good times,  
loved ones touch.  
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief  
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief,  
lift up your hearts and share with me,  
God wanted me now,  
He set me free.

- Author unknown

### **When You Feel Lonely**

When you feel lonely,  
when a person you love passes away,  
look to the night sky on a clear day.  
The star that to you appears to be bright,  
will be your loved one  
looking upon you during the night.  
The lights of heaven are what shows through  
as your loved one watches all that you do.  
When you feel lonely for the one that you love,  
look to the heavens in the night sky above.

- unknown

## I'm Not Gone

Don't cry for me,  
now that I am free.  
Just look around anywhere,  
and that is where I'll be.

For I am the daylight,  
when the sun starts to rise.  
I'm the bright rainbow,  
you see with your eyes.  
I'm the tiny raindrops,  
that sprinkle in the wind.

I'll always be here with you,  
for there really is no end.

I'm the dew that's on the ground,  
and the quietness all around.

Yes, I am so very happy,  
with this new life I have found.

I'm the peaceful summer breeze,  
that flows softly through the trees.  
I'm the bluebird in the sky,  
that sings with such ease.

Yes, I am so very happy,  
so happy to be free.  
Understand my family and friends  
and don't you cry for me.

- Sheila Pearce

## Farewell My Friend

It was beautiful as long as it lasted  
the journey of my life.

I have no regrets whatsoever  
save the pain I'll leave behind.

Those dear hearts who love and care...  
and the strings pulling at the heart and soul...  
the strong arms that held me up  
when my own strength let me down.

At every turning of my life I came across good friends,  
friends who stood by me,  
even when the time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell my friends  
I smile and bid you goodbye.

No, shed no tears for I need them not,  
all I need is your smile.

If you feel sad, do think of me,  
for that's what I'll like when you live in the hearts of those  
you love, remember then  
you never die.

- Rabindranath Tagore

Be of good cheer about death and know this as a truth – that no evil can happen to a  
good man, either in life or after death. - Socrates

Is death the last sleep? No – it is the last and final awakening. - Sir Walter Scott



## Miss Me But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road  
and the sun has set on me,  
I want no rites in a gloom filled room,  
Why cry out for a soul set free.  
Miss me a little – but not too long,  
and not with your head bowed low.  
Remember the love that we once shared.  
Miss me – but let me go.  
For this is a journey that we all must take,  
and each must go alone.  
It's all a part of the Master's plan,  
a step on the road to home.  
When you are lonely and sick of heart,  
go to the friends we know  
and bury your sorrows in doing good  
deeds.  
Miss me – but let me go.  
- *unknown*

## Remembrance

Remembrance is a golden chain  
death tries to break,  
but all in vain.  
To have, to love, and then to part  
is the greatest sorrow of one's heart.  
The years may wipe out many  
things  
but some they wipe out never/  
Like memories of those happy times  
when we were all together/  
- *unknown*

## Remember me when I am gone away

Remember me when I am gone away.  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
when you can no more hold me by the hand,  
nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
you tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me: you understand  
it will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
and afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
for if the darkness and corruption leave  
a vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
better by far you should forget and smile  
than you should remember and *be sad*.  
- *Christina Rossetti*

For what is it to die, but to stand in the sun and melt into the wind? And when the  
earth has claimed our limbs, then we shall truly dance. - *Kahil Gilbran*

### **God's Lent Child**

I'll lend you for a little while, a child of mine, God said  
for you to love the while he lives and mourn for when he's dead.  
It may be six or seven years, or forty-two or three  
but will you, till I call him back, take care of him for me?  
He'll bring his charms to gladden you and should his stay be brief  
you'll always have his memories as a solace in your grief.  
I cannot promise he will stay, since all from earth return,  
but there are lessons taught below I want this child to learn.  
I've looked this whole world over in my search for teachers true  
and from the folk that crowd life's lane I have chosen you.  
Now will you give him all your love and not think the labour vain,  
nor hate me when I come to take this lent child back again?  
I fancy that I heard them say "Dear God thy will be done.  
For all the joys this child will bring the risk of grief we'll run.  
We will shelter him with tenderness, we'll love him while we may,  
and for all the happiness we've ever known, we'll ever grateful stay.  
But should the angels call him much sooner than we'd planned  
we will brave the bitter grief that comes and try to understand."

- *unknown*

### **To Those I Love and Those Who Love Me**

When I am gone, release me let me go  
I have so many things to see and do.  
You mustn't tie yourself to me with tears  
be happy that we had so many years.  
I gave you my love, you can only guess  
how much you gave to me in happiness.  
  
I thank you for the love you have shown  
but now it's time I travelled alone.  
so grieve a while for me if grieve you must  
then let your grief be comforted by trust.  
It's only for a while that we must part  
so bless the memories within your heart.  
I won't be far away, for life goes on.  
  
So if you need me call and I will come  
though you can't see or touch me I'll be there.  
And if you listen with your heart you'll hear  
all of my love around you soft and clear.  
And then when you must come this way alone  
I'll greet you with a smile and welcome you home.

*Setting up the  
Ministry*

# *Bereavement Ministry*

So, you've done the training! What's next?

## **How to set it up on an ongoing basis and to do it!**

1. Gather together for a planning meeting and to write your terms of reference. This may sound very grand but to set this ministry on sustainable grounds, you need to agree on what the parameters of the ministry are, for example what you are calling people to in this ministry and what you are not, how long you are inviting them to commit to the ministry, who the ministry is for, how often you will meet, how you will de-brief, your ongoing needs are – both financially and by way of resources etc.

**NB. Most of the activities related to the Bereavement Ministry will be undertaken at the request of or with the blessing of the parish priest or lay pastoral leader.**

2. One parish divided the ministry into two core activities:
  - pastoral care leading up to and immediately following a bereavement
  - ongoing parish pastoral care initiatives relating to bereavement.

## **Pastoral Care leading up to and immediately following a bereavement**

### ➤ *Liturgy:*

Create resource of readings, music, poems, service options, CD's, overheads.  
Use Internet to Google search 'Prayers for the Bereaved'.  
Help put together mass or service for those that would like it.

### ➤ *Practical Assistance:*

Food (could have a list of people you can call upon to make dinners, hospitality food, etc).  
Housework  
Answering the phone, taking messages  
Pick-ups from airport etc  
Offering a bed to relatives  
Being a driver etc.

➤ *Emotional Support:*

Phone calls to bereaved families.

Send a sympathy card to the bereaved's family from the parish.

The 'being with' of bereavement ministry –

- remembering that people hunger for someone to simply listen
- that listening does not mean fixing, having answers, advising
- that listening establishes relationships and trust
- that it's not about your grieving, but someone's else's.

➤ *Financial support:*

Begin a fund for families in need around bereavement.

➤ *Ongoing support of families following a bereavement:*

Seasons for Growth for children and adults

Visiting as long as needed

Being a connector to different helping grief agencies.

**Ongoing parish pastoral care initiatives relating to bereavement**

➤ *Liturgy:*

Make a remembrance book for the whole year, to be kept in the church permanently, perhaps in a dedicated space.

Collect funeral service sheets from each funeral as a resource and also as a remembrance.

Keep a diary of parish deaths, and recording people's names into a Parish Remembrance Book.

One parish chose to make small wooden crosses with the names of the deceased. These were honoured in the church for a year and then presented to the family.

➤ *Emotional Support:*

Ongoing visiting

Send a card from the parish at the time of the anniversary

Ensure that when someone from the parish dies the person is removed from the planned giving roll.

➤ *Mass of Remembrance:*

Every November prepare with the Liturgy Committee, a Mass of Remembrance for those who have died during the year.

Put photographs, taken from the funeral service sheets, in the foyer of the church with tea-light candles below them.

# Te Omanga Hospice - Bereavement Care

## Some 'Definitions'

Bereavement is a state involving loss. In fact, to bereave means "to take away from, to rob, to dispossess". During the time of bereavement, we suffer all the pains of loss and grief. The time of bereavement may be months or even years.

Loss – When someone close to us dies, we lose their love, their friendship and their physical presence. To be healthy, positive people again we have to acknowledge and accept this loss. Although we do not have the physical presence of the person we have loved anymore, we do have all the memories, photos and mementoes of the times, places and things we shared together. These memories may at first be painful reminders of our loss, but in time can provide comfort.

Grief refers to the sorrow, anger, guilt and confusion that can arise when we have suffered a loss or are bereaved. In fact grief is the total person (emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual) response to the loss (or the threatened loss – i.e. anticipatory grief) of anyone that has significance for me. Grief is the normal, expected reaction to the loss of a loved one.

## Aim of Bereavement Care

- ❖ To allow the bereaved the opportunity to review experiences leading up to the death, with someone who cares yet is sufficiently remote and therefore non-threatening and non-judgemental.
- ❖ To offer reassurance and support, and by so doing facilitate the healthy expression of grief.
- ❖ To be aware of signs which may indicate that grieving is not proceeding normally (absent, delayed, exaggerated or prolonged), and to refer these people for professional help.
- ❖ To help people cope with the various transitions which lead to the acceptance of the reality of the loss, readjustment, and the restoration of self-confidence and independence.

## Why Bereavement Care?

Hospice Philosophy has always emphasised that the unit of care is the patient/family group. Care, therefore should not cease with the death of the patient.

Grief is, in the majority of cases, a perfectly normal process. Most people come through the process of grieving 'with a little help from their friends'. Some (a small minority) require psychiatric help, but there is a sizeable intermediate group for whom the opportunity to talk

through some of the problems of bereavement with a concerned person from outside the family, will substantially reduce the risk of more serious problems arising later. It is to this intermediate group that bereavement care is focused. Approximately one third of the families of patients who die on the Te Omanga programme are assessed as “possibly needing BC!”

## **Visiting**

The initial contact is made by the volunteer visitor (the hospice may have informed the family that ongoing support is available), who will also decide on the frequency and type of subsequent contacts. The visitor may find that the support and understanding coming from family and friends are far greater than expected, and if the bereaved person is coping well, perhaps only a few visits will be necessary.

The visitor, as someone apart from the immediate family, occupies a unique role which simply is not available to those who are too close, “too involved” and too susceptible to the hurt that others, quite unintentionally, may give. That the bereavement visitor has no exact solution to offer, no recognised service or observable skill, no title indicating a degree of knowledge or experience in which confidence can immediately be established, are perhaps the visitors’ greatest assets. At last a person – just a person – independent, sensitive, offering support and that without judgement.

## **The First Contact**

The purpose of the first visit will be to introduce both yourself (as the visitor) and the service being offered.

It would include:

- ❖ Your name.
- ❖ The source of the Service – Te Omanga Hospice.
- ❖ Your role – visitor from the Bereavement Support Team.  
(If visiting also with the terminally ill patient you may wish to delete “bereavement”.)
- ❖ The nature of the service – concern for the well-being of family members (key persons) who have had a recent loss at the hospice.
- ❖ Need for clarification – further conversation may indicate a need to reassure the key person about the motives behind the contact, confidentiality within the support team, or a preference to be excluded from the service.

The first call should be an unannounced pop-in visit, rather than contact by phone. Many people, if an appointment is made, will prepare physically and emotionally and thus the value of the visit can be lost and any assessment confused. Petrol may be wasted, time lost, but the contact made without warning is usually so much more meaningful.

Normally the first session together should not go on for any more than an hour. Beyond that time, visits tend to become repetitive rather than productive and can be exhausting to both parties.

### **Note Taking**

To help in subsequent visits, be careful to record your impressions and significant comments made by the bereaved person. Do this right after each visit. Also make a note when you believe you should make contact again. If feeling uneasy about the visit, don't delay in contacting the co-ordinator.

### **On-going Contact**

Continue to remain in touch with the bereaved. Do remember that grief does not cease after a few visits ... nor a month or two ... or three or four ... ! Maintain a contact through the use of the phone; the home visit; "could you meet me for lunch ... morning tea etc?" and the occasional card, reassuring the bereaved of your care.

Please remember that one of the most important things you can do during the total grief process – from beginning through to readjustment, is to listen, listen, listen! Listen without heavy advising or lecturing. Listen with quiet enquiries and questions at appropriate times (see "*Tell Me About It*" at end of this). Grief wants to be heard. It not only wants to be heard, it needs to be heard. Do not be afraid of your silence as you listen to a bereaved person.

Also say what you deeply feel when it is appropriate. Many people who seek to give comfort are timid in saying what they deeply feel. Be honest and simplistic in your statements and they will be genuinely appreciated. Always affirm the grieving person.

### **Evaluation and Team Support**

Although the service of bereavement visiting does not involve a regular pattern of calls and visits, it must be stressed that the effectiveness of the visiting team centres upon the regular six weekly meetings of visitors, their co-ordinator and selected hospice staff. These meetings provide the essential support, advice and sharing of problems – and joys – so that visitors never feel alone in their work or overwhelmed and at a loss in dealing with certain 'problem cases' in their care. These meetings also prove to be learning and training experiences, supplementing the actual visits.



## Practical Suggestions for Helping Others in Time of Need

*Written by  
Wendy Bergren  
for Foccus on the Family*

I am a married young women struggling to beat cancer. My husband and I have three children; a baby, pre-schooler and a first grader. Since I am severely ill, we depend on our friends for survival. Over the months, so many have asked: "What can I do to help?" Here are some ideas....

1. Cook a dinner for my family, but offer a choice of two courses. One week, we got tuna noodle casserole four nights in a row from well-meaning friends! Also, bring the goods in disposable containers or marked pots. If I can't return your casserole, I will cry at my powerlessness and confusion.
2. Bake homemade cookies or brownies and bring them frozen so I can have the delights of sending off fresh goodies in a lunchbox the next morning. This will give me the fun of feeling like a mum.
3. Make your offer specific. Say, "I want to come over Monday at 3.00pm to bake cookies or clean your pantry shelf, or whatever." If you say, "Call me any time for anything," I won't know what you want to do, or when you are free. So I probably won't ask.
4. Offer to babysit – even if my husband and I stay home. This gives us the freedom of a private adult life in a place my illness can be coped with.
5. Help with holidays, birthdays and anniversaries. Ask if there are any special gifts, cards or wrapping papers you could pick out for me. How many times I have wanted to give my husband a special "Thank you" card or put up holiday decoration, but have been unable to do so.
6. Help my children attend birthday parties by bringing home pre-wrapped children's birthday party gifts to our home for future use.
7. Call before you visit, but drop by for 20 minutes when you can. Don't assume sickness requires rest at the expense of communications. (Loneliness is the greatest interrupter of sleep.) A spur-of-the-moment visit can be dissuaded without hurting feelings. But if I plan and look ahead to your visit for weeks and then you cancel, I will feel more will and more debilitated than before.

8. Ask me who you know that I might like to see and bring them by. Often I am too shy to approach a friend of my own. My whole life consists of asking favours and I may just be too tired to make social requests, too.
9. Take snapshots of my children over the months. This gives me a feeling that there are permanent records of the happenings I must miss.
10. Offer to run two meaningless errands a week for our family. The small stuff – like no hair ribbons, or cologne, or clean suits – fall by the wayside otherwise.
11. Allow me to feel sad, or to prepare for the worst. One of the most difficult problems of serious illness is that everyone wants to encourage the patient. But sometimes, having a good cry with a friend who allows it will be the tension escape – as then a dam is broken. I have one friend who lets me call when I feel sad or lonely or ready to give up – and by the time I finish dialling her number and hear her answer “Hello” the fear is gone. Sometimes the greater part of the cure is the release of fear.
12. Even if the joke is terrible, tell it! Share your humour. Bring *Reader's Digest* and read aloud. Describe what is funny out there. It may not tickle my ribs today, but tomorrow I may relish it! Speak to the part of me that is more alive than dead, for that is the real me.
13. Touch me. The isolation of being an invalid makes the power of love sweeter.
14. Offer to watch TV with me some afternoon when an old movie is on. Bring a book or magazine in case I fall asleep. This gives me the satisfaction of providing enjoyable company without the responsibility of entertaining you.
15. Say the word cancer around me and talk about the real life you are living. This helps me feel less like an untouchable and more like I am still involved with the world of normalcy. One of the hardest things for me as an invalid is the problem of conversation with my husband. If you don't talk to me about the life outside, I am left with only illness and TV to talk with him, and this is hard.
16. Tell me how great I look considering what I'm going through. I know I look sick, but I still need to feel honestly attractive.
17. Encourage your husband to come over to visit my husband in the evenings. One of the greatest gifts I have is my husband: yet my illness has eliminated many of his pleasures. How happy I am when I hear him laughing with a friend in his shop or cheering Monday night football and popping popcorn with a pal.

18. Pray for me and say you are doing so. The fact that you have faith gives me faith.
19. Talk to me of the future. Next week, next year, ten to twenty years! The power of planning is incredible. Talk to me of my baby's senior graduation, and I can get through next week. Bring by travel folders for my silver anniversary trip, or discuss possible hairstyles for when my hair grows back. If you look ahead, I can too.
20. Remind me of the abundant life that awaits me and is promised. But also recall that there is comfort to be had here and now, in the midst of my illness. The bible tells us that Christ is the healer, the comforter, the understanding fellow-sufferer. He brings cure and respite, not illness: and He holds me in the cup of His hand. Offer to be here with me now, as He is and will be with me forever. The fact that you could care so much in this moment tells me how much He cares for me in all moments.

## **Guidelines About Confidentiality and Making Referrals**

### **Confidentiality:**

#### **A) Do**

- Respect privacy; ask only for information you need to assess the situation, though be open to as much as the person wants to share
- Use active, non-judgemental listening skills
- Maintain confidential relationships (unless there is a clear threat of serious harm to them or to another).

#### **B) Do not**

- Leave names or phone numbers lying around
- Talk about the situation within hearing of non-involved others
- Discuss the situation in more detail than necessary to assess it and get the needed help
- Discuss the situation for entertainment
- Use identifying information without permission.

### **Making Referrals:**

#### **A) When to refer – signs which may indicate need for counselling or crisis intervention referral:**

- Major unexplainable changes in behaviour
- Serious depression signs over 2-3 weeks in duration
- Suicidal or homicidal statements or signs
- Child abuse.

#### **B) Choosing a referral source – things to know about a referral source (you might call ahead if you don't know):**

- Is this referral source appropriate for this problem?
- Requirements for service? Fee?
- What is the referral procedure?
- How soon can they be served?

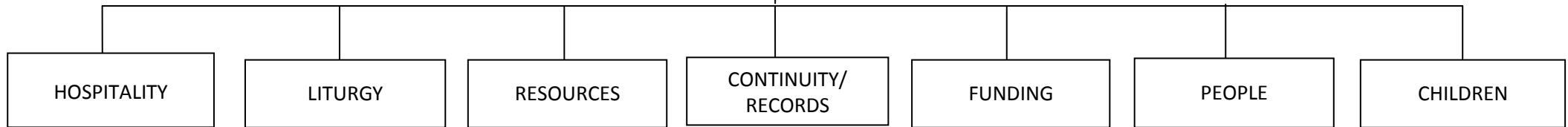
#### **C) How to refer: when possible get the hurting person to make the contact him/herself with your support – perhaps in your presence during the phone call.**

- Offer to go with the person if the situation appears life threatening and you can do that
- If you are feeling unsure of what to do or concerned that the hurting person isn't following through, call your Catholic counselling agency or any other mental health professional for consultation.

# Sample Parish Bereavement Ministry Set-up and Programme

To establish a grief support network within the St Anne's parish community. This network will be grounded in prayer, good social work practices, protection principles and be race and gender inclusive. This will be a voluntary outreach, with people working and growing in the area they feel called.

Establish a self sustaining grief support network. I will find people from within the community to found this ministry, and organise ongoing support/training/mentorship outside and within the parish.



- ▶ Food at funeral
- ▶ Greeters and ushers
- ▶ Food to bereaved home

- ▶ November mass
- ▶ Perhaps one more memorial service in the year
- ▶ Ledger for the church made up in months
- ▶ Special place within the church where candles can be lit, photos can be left to remember the dead (monthly)

- ▶ Community resources
- ▶ Counsellors
- ▶ Health professionals
- ▶ Archdiocesan Parish Leadership Ministry Vicariate

- ▶ Names of all those in the parish who have suffered a death in the last 2 years
- ▶ A record of anniversaries, 1 mth, 3mths, 6mth, 1 yr, 18 mths. Maybe wedding anniversary
- ▶ Cards to be sent out on special days
- ▶ Invitations sent out to memorial mass
- ▶ Upkeep of the church memorial book

- ▶ From the parish
- ▶ By running hospitality, and charging less than catering company. Profit goes toward training and resources

- ▶ Volunteers within St Anne's
- ▶ Religious within St Anne's
- ▶ Local funeral homes
- ▶ Samoan leaders
- ▶ Vietnamese leaders
- ▶ Catholic Social Services
- ▶ St Anne's School
- ▶ Seasons for Growth
- ▶ Archdiocesan Parish Leadership Ministry Vicariate

- ▶ St Anne's School will run a Seasons for Growth programme in November
- ▶ Staff at the school are developing a resource for how to cope with a death in the family of a member of the school community
- ▶ Have displays in the church
- ▶ Be a music resource for funerals
- ▶ Be part of the hospitality at a funeral serving tea and coffee.

*Resources and  
Articles for  
Bereavement  
Ministry*

## Bereavement Ministry Reading List

### Ageing

1. Coleman, Peter (ed.) "Adjustment in later Life", ***Ageing in Society: an Introduction to Social Gerontology***. London: Sage Publications, 1990
2. Hurlock, Elizabeth, ***Developmental Psychology***. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980
3. Sax, Sidney. "Public Policy and Ageing", ***St Mark's Review 155***. St. Mark's Review, Spring, 1993.
4. Wicks, Robert J. and Parsons, Richard D. (eds.), "Midlife Transitions in Men and Women", ***Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counselling***. New York, Integration Books/Paulist Press, 1993, vol.2.

### Funerals

1. Elich, Tom (ed.). ***Life is Changed...not ended***. Brisbane: The Liturgical Commission, 1996.
2. Emerson, Sally (edited). Some beautiful prayers and hymns.

### Suffering and Weariness

1. Yancy, Philip. ***Where is God When it Hurts and Disappointment with God***. \*\*\*A large tome with two books, the first (Where is God...) dealing with pain, why we have pain, both physical and psychological, and discusses ways and means of dealing with pain and suffering. In the second book (Disappointment with God) Phillip talks about our experience of disappointment with God, explores why we experience it, and how we can overcome it. In both books, Phillip is NOT judgemental nor is he prescriptive.

### Suicide

1. Hewett, John H. ***After Suicide***. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980.

### Understanding Death

1. Brooks, Geraldine. ***Year of Wonders*** (a Novel of the Plague). London: Fourth Estate, 2001. \*\*\*Superb novel.
2. Carmody, John. ***Conversations with a Dying Friend***. New York: Paulist Press, 1992. \*\*Good Book.
3. Gaarder, Jostein. ***The Christmas Mystery***. Great Britain: Phoenix House, 1996. \*\*\*A beautiful story about a child dying.
4. The Bible Societies. (1976) ***Good News Bible (Today's English Version)*** William Collins & Sons Co. Ltd, Glasgow. \*\*\*

5. Grollman, Earl A. ***Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers***. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. \*\*\*Excellent book about death and grieving for teenagers.
6. Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. ***On Death and Dying***: New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969. \*\*Seminal Work. She really started the palliative care movement.
7. Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. ***Working it Through (An Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Workshop on Life, Death and Transition)***. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982.
8. MacLeod, Rod. ***Snapshots on the Journey through Death and Remembrance***. Selected Poems. Steel Roberts. Wellington, New Zealand. 2002.
9. Manning, Margaret. ***The Hospice Alternative***. Good background reading to the modern hospice concept. Chapter 3, "Philosophy of Hospice Care", particularly good.
10. Melonnie, Bryan. ***Beginnings and Endings and Lifetimes In Between***. Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Fiji. 1991
11. Rodegast, P. & Stanton, J. ***Emmanuel's Book***. New York: Bantam, 1987.
12. Tolstoy, Leo. ***The Death of Ivan Ilyich and other Stories***. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1960. \*\*\*A very good story about the death of a middle aged judge.

### **Understanding Grief**

1. Ainley, Roisa. ***Death of a Mother – Daughters' Stories***. Harper Collins, Glasgow. 1994
2. Austin, Valerie. Clarke-Smith, Charles. ***Widowed – What Now***. Written to help widowed New Zealanders, their children, relatives and friends. Many contributors.
3. Bolstad, R. Hamblet, M. Ohlson, T. Hardie, J. ***Communicating Caring – A Guide for Health Workers and Caregivers***. Longman Paul, New Zealand. 1992
4. Briggs, Lauren Littauer. ***The Art of Helping. What to Say and Do When Someone is Hurting***. Nice practical ways of dealing with many different situations, including words to write in a card, gifts and even recipes.
5. Demetriades, Dimitra. ***Fatherless Daughters***. Hodder & Stouton. Wellington, New Zealand. 1997
6. Finkbeiner, Ann. ***After the Death of a Child***. The Free Press. Sydney. 1996
7. Frementz Jill. ***How it Feels When a Parent Dies***. Young people aged 7-18 telling how they felt. Very good for all ages in helping towards an understanding attitude.
8. Gaffney, D.A. ***The Seasons of Grief: Helping Children Grow Through Loss***. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
9. Gravelle, K., Haskins, C. ***Teenagers Face to Face with Bereavement***. Julian Messner. United States. 1989
10. Greening, Kindah. ***When grief leaves the dictionary & comes to your home: 100 Do's and Don't's for The Griever and The Helper*** Burleigh QLD: Healing Hurting Hearts



- Ministry, 1999. \*\*\*Very, very good book for those in midst of grief. Available from the Senior Minister's Library.
11. Hager, Mandy. **Tom's Story**. Mallinson Rendall and Mary Potter Hospice, Wellington, New Zealand. 1995
  12. Heaney, Pam. **Coming to Grief**. New Zealand
  13. Klass, D. Silverman, P. Nickman S. **Continuing Bonds, New Understandings of Grief**. Taylor Francis. United States. 1996
  14. Kushner, Harold. **When Bad Things Happen to Good People**. Pan Books, 1982.
  15. Lewis, C.S. **A Grief Observed**. London: Faber & Faber, 1961. \*\*\*The movie *Shadowlands* was based on this book; it stars Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger.
  16. Mental Health Foundation. **Grief Especially for Young People**. Mental Health Foundation. New Zealand, 1994
  17. Metge, Joan. **Talking Past Each Other – Problems of Cross-cultural Communication**. Victoria Press, Wellington, New Zealand. 1995
  18. McKissock, Mal. **Coping with Grief**. Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992.
  19. Olson, B. K. **Energy Secrets for Tired Mothers on the Run**. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications Inc., 1993.
  20. Parachin, Victor M. **The Lord is My Shepherd: A Psalm for the Grieving**. USA: Liguori Publications, 1992. \*\*\*A very good, soothing book (easy reading).
  21. Parks, Colin Murray. **Bereavement Studies of Grief in Adults**. A comprehensive review of his research and the development of services for the bereaved. Chapter 10 "Helping the Bereaved" is very helpful.
  22. Rando, Therese. **Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone You Loves Dies**. Lexington, 1988.
  23. Sebold, Alice. **The Lovely Bones**. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 2002. \*\*\*An extremely good book about how a family copes with the gruesome death of a daughter. (Recently made into a movie by Peter Jackson.)
  24. Staudacher, Carol. **Men and Grief**. New Harbinger Pub Inc., 1991
  25. Tatelbaum, Judy. **The Courage to Grieve**. Great Britain: Cedar Books, 1981. \*\*Some good ideas in this book.
  26. Tansley, Tangea. **For Women Who Grieve** (Twelve Steps to Life After the Death of Your Partner). Port Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian Pty. Ltd., 1995.\*\*
  27. Tonkin, Lois. **Helping the Hurt. How to Understand and Help Grieving Children and Teenagers**. Port Hills Press, Christchurch. 2001
  28. Tonkin, Lois. **Still Life Hidden Stories of Stillbirth and Forbidden Grief**. Hazard Press, Christchurch. 1998

29. Westberg, Granger. **Good Grief.** A helpful description of the pattern of grief – a look at ten stages of phases of grief.
30. Williams, Ruthann (OP). **Healing Your Grief.** Mineola: Resurrection Press, 1995.
31. Zagdanski, Doris. **Stuck for Words – what to Say to Someone Who is Grieving.** A user-friendly book. Contains excellent material on listening and empathy. Hill of Content, Melbourne. 1994
32. Zagdanski, Doris. **How Teenagers Cope with Grief.** Hill of Content Melbourne. 1994

### Visitation

1. Lyons, James B. **You Visited Me: A Pastoral Care Companion,** New Zealand: James Lyons, 1998. \*\*\*Excellent little book, easy reading, beautiful prayers.
2. Normile, Patti. **Visiting the Sick (A Guide for Parish Ministers).** Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1992. \*\*\*Excellent little book – how to for pastoral care workers.
3. Speck, Peter **Being There (Pastoral Care in Time of Illness).** Great Britain: Holy Trinity Church, 1988.
4. Geoffrey Dyne, **Bereavement Visiting.** Describes the St Christopher's Hospice (London) Bereavement Service. Contains care studies.

### **Booklist for Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand Inc.**

#### **New Zealand Books:**

A Nest of Cuckoos	Heather Marshall - Hutchison Auckland, (1985) <i>A light-hearted look at widowhood</i>
A Time to Grieve	Merren Parker Read - Methuen 1981 <i>Learning to live with sadness and loss.</i>
Coping with Cot Death	Merren Parker Read - Methuen 1986
Cot Death in New Zealand	Lorraine Webb - David Bateman Ltd. Auckland 1986
Down to Earth	Marian Barnes - Benton Guy Publishing, Auckland 1991
Give Sorrow Words	Terry Creagh, Joint Board of Christian Education of Australia and New Zealand, Melbourne 1982
Losing Someone You Love	Richard Randerson - Alfred, Isobel and Marian Reed Trust 1984
Shattered and Restored	Elsa McInnes – Anzea Publishers, NSW 1990

	<i>A book for widows with religious backgrounds</i>
The Grieving Time	Monte Holcroft – John McIndoe 1989
The Undiscovered Country	Department of Health, Wellington 1986 <i>Customs of the cultural and ethnic groups of New Zealand concerning death and dying.</i>
Widowed	Beryl Te Wiata – Century Hutchison 1987 <i>A personal account</i>
Widowed, What Now?	Valerie Austin and C Clarke-Smith – Mallinson Rendell, Wellington 1982

### **Books for Caregivers:**

Bereavement	C M Parkes – Pelican 1975 <i>Studies in grief in adult life.</i>
Bereavement Visiting	Ed. Geoffrey Dyne – Pitman 1981
Comforting the Bereaved	Warren W Wierbse & David W Wierbse – Moody Press Chicago 1985
Grief and Bereavement	Marilyn Relf, Ann Couldrick, Heather Barrie – Sobell Publication
Grief Counselling	J William Worden – Springer Publication Co, New York 1982 <i>A handbook for the mental health practitioners.</i>
Grief, Death and Dying	Therese A Rando – Research Press Co

## Suicide - The Most Misunderstood of All Deaths

Ronald Rolheiser

Canadian poet, Margaret Atwood, says that it is not enough to say certain things just once. Some things need to be said, and said, until they don't need to be said again.

Every year I write a column on suicide and each of those columns usually prompts a flood of mostly grateful letters. The gratitude comes from the fact that those columns suggest that, in most cases, suicide claims its victims in the same way as does a heart attack, a stroke, cancer, or an accident. There is no freedom not to die. Suicide victims are, like victims of sickness and accidents, not responsible for their own deaths and suicide should not be a matter of secrecy, shame, moral judgment, and second-guessing.

For this year's column, I will not reiterate those same themes, namely, that suicidal depression is usually a terminal disease and is not a free choice that connotes moral and psychological delinquency. Rather I will give a first-hand testimony from William Styron, author of *Sophie's Choice*. A victim of suicidal depression he wrote, in 1990, a book entitled, *Darkness Visible, A Memoir of Madness*, within which he chronicles his own descent into suicidal madness and his helplessness as he spirals into that hell.

Since Styron is sharing, first-hand, the experience of suicidal depression, allow me to quote him extensively:

*The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne. The prevention of many suicides will continue to be hindered until there is a general awareness of the nature of this pain. ... and for the tragic legion who are compelled to destroy themselves there should be no more reproof attached than to the victims of terminal cancer. ...*

*What I had begun to discover is that, mysteriously and in ways that are totally remote from normal experience, the gray drizzle of horror induced by depression takes on the quality of physical pain. But it is not an immediately identifiable pain, like that of a broken limb. It may be more accurate to say that despair, owing to some evil trick played upon the sick brain by the inhabiting psyche, comes to resemble the diabolical discomfort of being imprisoned in a fiercely overheated room. And because no breeze stirs this caldron, because there is no escape from the smothering confinement, it is entirely natural that the victim begins to think ceaselessly of oblivion.*

Styron then describes graphically how the depressed person becomes obsessed with thoughts of oblivion:

*many of the artifacts of my house had become potential devices for my own destruction: the attic rafters (and an outside maple or two) a means to hang myself, the garage a place to inhale carbon monoxide, the bathtub a vessel to receive the flow of my opened arteries. The kitchen knives in their drawers had but one purpose for me. Death by heart attack seemed particularly inviting, absolving me as it would of active responsibility, and I had toyed with the idea of self-induced pneumonia—a long, frigid, shirt-sleeved hike through the rainy woods.*

After reading virtually all the literature, medical and psychological, on the issue, Styron suggests the suicidal depression is, in the end, caused by chemical imbalance, despite the fact that other factors (lifestyle, childhood, moral values, memory) contribute. Modern sensitivities, he contends, make us reluctant to use old-fashioned words like madhouse, asylum, insanity, melancholia, lunatic, or madness, but

*never let it be doubted that depression, in its extreme form, is madness. The madness results from an aberrant biochemical process. It has been established with reasonable certainty (after strong resistance from many psychiatrists, and not all that long ago) that such madness is chemically induced amid the neurotransmitters of the brain, probably as a result of systemic stress, which for unknown reasons causes a depletion of the chemicals norepinephrine and serotonin, and the increase of a hormone, cortisol.*

Styron was one of the lucky ones. With his suicide already planned, he drew on some last gleam of sanity and, in that, realized that he could not commit this desecration on himself and his loved ones. He woke his sleeping wife and she drove him to a hospital. In its *safety* and given *seclusion and time* he healed. He lived on to tell this insiders story.

That insiders story has a double value: Not only should it help us to understand suicide more deeply and exorcise more of its shameful stigma, but, in helping to expose the anatomy of suicide, Styron gives us better tools to help others (and ourselves) in its prevention.

Beyond that, a proper understanding of suicide should help us all walk more humbly and compassionately in grace and community, resisting the bias of the strong and unreflective who make the unfair judgment that people who are sick want to be that way.

The human heart is exquisitely fragile. Our judgments need to be gentle, our understanding deep, and our forgiveness wide.

## *The Ministry of Bereavement Ministers*

Yours is a share  
in the work of the Lord's Spirit  
called to a ministry of consolation  
to those who have suffered the loss  
of one whom they have loved in life.

You are the messenger of God's consoling love  
embracing the words and example of Jesus  
"Blessed are they who mourn; they shall be comforted'.

Through your ministry of consolation  
you will offer a listening ear, a still small voice  
acts of kindness and gather with the family  
as they 'pray their goodbyes'.

Like Jesus, you will enable God to enter into  
the inner rooms of the broken heart, the emotions,  
the despair and the many memories.  
You bring Jesus, who wept at the death of his friends,  
and whose sorrow and brokenness was real.

Your ministry makes present  
the God of the Lonely, to give a sense  
of belonging and of being loved.

Your ministry makes present  
the God of Strength when the bereaved  
are weary, tired and unable to soar  
in their sky of life.

Your ministry makes present the God of all memories as the bereaved  
treasure the life of their loved one  
and how their love for them is etched on  
their hearts.

Your ministry will enable the bereaved  
to hold hands with you  
and entrust their loved one to the gentle embrace of God.

Your ministry will make you Simon, the cross carrier  
as you stand beside a broken spirit,  
another human in need.

You will listen, empathise, hear and even resist  
but you are called to hold out your arms  
and open your heart.

Come to your work from your personal prayer  
and from your own experience of grief.  
Come to your ministry  
as Christ the Consoler; as one who truly believes  
that in death life has changed not ended.

When your sisters and brothers  
praise and thank you for your work  
delight in the comfort you bring  
and rejoice in the work  
the Lord has accomplished through your gift.

Be faithful in the work you do  
for through it the Lord saves his people.

## *Prayer for Those in Bereavement Ministry*

Holy spirit  
giver and discerner of gifts  
messenger of our Father  
please hear this call.

Wrap yourself around me and settle.

Settle Holy Spirit along my back and in my bones  
hold me upright, help me to stand.

Settle Holy Spirit in my heart, so I may feel your message  
and feel the needs of others.

Settle Holy Spirit in those secret places where my fears and doubts live.  
Hold them gently and give me the courage to do your will  
no matter how inept I feel, how unready.

Settle Holy spirit in my eyes so they might be open to your will  
and the needs of others.

Settle Holy Spirit in my mind,  
use it as your own, for your purpose.

Settle Holy Spirit on my tongue,  
make it speak your words of consolation, not mine.

Settle Holy Spirit in my ears,  
open them to your words and the cries of others.

Settle Holy Spirit on my hands,  
lead me like a child by the hand to do the work you are calling me to.

Hold the lamp high so that I can see your path and walk with me, Holy Spirit.

These things I ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.



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