

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Observing Grief

Offering Bereavement Support

We all have the potential to be bereavement companions for each other. Challenges in companionship & consoling one another through grief in time of bereavement are:

1. Our own fear of death and the resulting avoidance of uncomfortable realities.
2. Lack of understanding of how to respond – ‘what to say and do’.
3. To ‘be with’ the pain and suffering of grief, that can’t be fixed or taken away.
4. How to support and assist grief recovery during bereavement.
5. How to ‘live’ the reality of death, grief & bereavement.
6. Reconnecting with community
7. Drawing upon religious and spiritual resources of our faith tradition and parish communities

Coming together in community increases our resiliency in transforming despair into hope, fear into courage, abandonment into belonging and providing places of solace and stability. Learning to LIVE with ‘changed relationships’. Bereavement is not detaching or disbanding our relationship with those who have died; rather, it is deepening our continuing bond with them. Although we relinquish their physical presence, at the same time we welcome a new spiritual relationship. *‘Life is not taken away, life is changed’.* (Revelation 22: 19).

Bereavement support is a COMMUNITY event where we all have role to play in navigating the cultural complexity, anxiety and uncertainty around death, loss, grief and bereavement.

Objectives:

- Research the needs of ‘bereaved’ and those whom support them
- Advocate community engagement in Bereavement Support.
- Strengthen community action that creates SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS for the bereaved.
- Formation of community members in Bereavement Support.
- Develop awareness, acceptance and ways to action the ‘New Science of Bereavement’.
- Build community capacity, competency and CONFIDENCE in companionship the bereaved.
- Develop RESILIENT communities through normalising death, grief, mourning and bereavement.
- Provide variety and choice in easily accessible resources/referral/consultation in Bereavement Support
- Explore the *‘meaning finding & meaning making’* networks (religious/spiritual/secular) that mediate and express bereavement:
- Information & narrative sharing (telling the stories of our lives)
- Faith sharing
- Formal instruction; what we know, want to know and need to know
- Conscious raising of what we already do and can do
- Experience of doing it

St Pope John Paul, shortly before he died, was reflecting on those who had gone before him, and he made what I consider a very consoling observation. He pointed out that in faith and prayer we actually re-establish our ties with those who have died. He assured us that those who have gone before us watch us, they follow us, and they assist us. . . .It is the bond that comes from our baptism, which is grounded in the very life of the Trinity. In this bond, as the Holy Father reminded us, we still hold hands

“we do not want you to be uninformed, Brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.... Therefore encourage one another with these words.”
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18)



Patricia Therese Benedict Thomas
Bereavement Consultant
Ministry of Care, Compassion and Choices
Outreach Bereavement support

Available to facilitate grief and bereavement faith sharing conversations, gatherings, workshops and remembrance masses & services

Catholic Bereavement Consultancy – equips communities in their ministry of companionship & consolation. It has a pastoral, parochial and ecclesial context providing resources, formation and educational opportunities to prepare individuals and communities in caring for one another in grief during bereavement.

“Death does not end our story. Death does not end our relationships”