

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

August 2024 – Issue 157

'Mourning'

You may think that it is a sad topic to write about especially in Northern Summer. You may not even like the idea of speaking about it at all as it is too painful and difficult. You may think that it does not affect you at this time. Yet truly, at one time or other, 'mourning' and 'grief' will touch us all in some lesser or greater degree. It is always a difficult thing to speak about and it is also even more difficult to try to help someone who is grieving or mourning someone that they love, someone they may have known all their lives or for a very long time. This is especially difficult when the person hardly knows how to express their own pain and when the person who died is a child. Yet we are called to do so by one of the Beatitudes.. 'Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted'. Equally one of the Spiritual works of mercy is to 'comfort the sorrowful'.

Many people find this very difficult indeed. Some would rather cross the road than speak to a bereaved person basically, because they may not know what to say or for fear of saying the wrong thing. It is often easier if a person has experienced that kind of sorrow themselves. Some resort to lovely cards or notes which can bring some comfort to a person, but often do not. Actually they sometimes make the person more isolated and untouched. There is obviously room for these and they can be a blessing. Prayer for the person or prayer offerings as 'Masses offered' are often appreciated at this time.

Mourning and grieving is a natural process and cannot be escaped. Love does not just suddenly vanish or the presence of someone simply disappear from our consciousness. It may take years to deal with the many emotions of loss. This applies of the person was close to us or indeed gave us some difficulties. Some of the most complicated grieving has to be undergone when there has been sorrow of pain in the relationship. There may be a 'push -pull'



toward thinking about them which can bring up painful emotions that have been long buried in our heart. This can be so intense that it cannot be sorted out without help from someone with greater knowledge of the relationship or even a professional group such as the 'Samaritans' or 'Cruse' which today can be accessed without too much difficulty by phone or online. Recognising that help is needed is of course vital and not always clear to the person.

No two people grieve in the same way and mourning is the way we express that grief. In some cultures, it is okay to yell and scream to let out some of the pain while in others it is considered almost shameful to even cry. Somewhere in the middle of this is our personal way of expressing pain and great sorrow. The key is in the word 'personal', it is indeed okay to cry for both men and women and thankfully more 'acceptable' than in years past. It is 'okay' to feel lost and a little frightened. It is okay to feel angry which can come in different forms. Anger may be that we have been left alone, or about the manner of death or timing. One person I know, felt angry that their spouse had died before their 50th anniversary and that they could have waited, not unusual. Anger can also bring up feelings of guilt that question whether the person had done enough or been reconciled with the person. All these are an expression of a great loss of the person's essence.

We can take solace from the fact that Mary started to express that grief at the foot of the Cross. Indeed, the grieving process often starts if there is long illness, physical or mental, involved with the accompanying gradual loss of the person. One-line sums this up in the 'Stabat Mater'. *At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last.* We can also reflect on the fact that Jesus wept not only over Jerusalem but over the death of Lazarus His dear friend, but as much as that because of the deep grief of his sisters Mary and Martha. He

"Bury my body wherever you will; let not care of it cause you any concern. One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be." St. Monica

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felt compassion for them. (John 11:35) While the person may have deep faith, and know that we are destined for eternal life, at the point of grief, this may not only be a struggle to comprehend but there may be a loss of belief in this. From their perspective the person has just gone. Some will struggle more with faith than others and so patience is required to try to comfort the person and great discernment.

There are five stages of grief but they do not always go in any special order... Denial and Shock, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. (C. Murray Parkes) It can take about five years for the final acceptance of loss though this varies and from person to person, and the circumstances as well and the relationship involved. A note of caution here... Acceptance does not mean denying that the person existed or that the person is somehow eradicated from our minds. 'Moving on' is often used to describe this process but equally can be misleading as if we are required to completely forget the existence of the person which is not only unhealthy but would cause even more trouble interiorly. Being able to freely speak of the person, all their attribute, joys and sorrows is perhaps the best way to describe acceptance.

So how do we deal with grief within ourselves and others. For a Christian a great help is prayer, though this may not always be possible at first. Time spent before the Blessed Sacrament is then a blessing. 'Speaking to that person' too is helpful. Secondly by sharing with trusted friends and relations. Thirdly, by being gentle with ourselves and not rushing into things and activities to blot out the pain. We can look after our physical well-being too, as grief can sometimes trigger physical ill health. We can sometimes slowly change some of the things that we did and find other outlets. Music can play a great part for some or some other art form. We can also learn from this experience and be a help to others or learn something about ourselves. Many people emerge from grief stronger.

What about consoling others going through loss? It's vital that we do not shun those who are grieving. If we cannot find the words a gentle shake of the hand or touch can heal almost as well as words. The genuine smile too can say many things. So then...

A cup of tea with someone who is now on their own is all that is needed. A small gift like flowers, at some point, too, may bring some relief or a little card months after the death of the person can say clearly that they are remembered.

However just listening to the person is a great gift to them. There is no need for advice, just an open heart and time... offering to pray with that person can also be helpful. (or for their loved one).

Dying is as natural as living. We will all have to go through this process and that of loss. It is well worth the time to reflect on this and how to help others. One day it could be us needing that help. [Halina Holman©](#)

Pope John Paul II

"There is no evil to be faced that Christ does not face with us. There is no enemy that Christ has not already conquered. There is no cross to bear that Christ has not already borne for us, and does not now bear with us. The distinctive mark of the Christian, today more than ever, must be love for the poor, the weak, the suffering. Oct '95

In Our Hearts

**We thought of you today,
But that is nothing new.
We thought about you yesterday
And days before that too.
We think of you in silence.
We often speak your name,
Now all we have are memories
And your picture in a frame.
Your memory is our keepsake,
With which we never part,
God has you in His keeping,
We have you in our hearts.... Unknown**



Feast Days in August

- 1st St. Alphonsus Liguori 2nd St. Peter Julian Eymard
- 4th **Eighteenth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 5th Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major
- 6th **The Transfiguration of the Lord**
- 8th St. Dominic
- 9th **St. Teresa Benedicta, Patron of Europe**
- 10th **St. Lawrence, Deacon**
- 11th **Nineteenth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 12th St. Jane Frances de Chantal 14th **St. Maximilian Kolbe**
- 15th **The Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary Holy, D. O.**
- 18th **Twentieth Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 20th St. Bernard
- 22nd **The Queenship of Mary**
- 23rd St. Rose of Lima
- 25th **St. Bartholomew, Apostle**
- 25th **Twenty-first Sunday in Ord. Time**
- 26th Blessed Dominic Barberi
- 27th St. Monica, mother of... 28th St. Augustine of Hippo
- 29th The Passion of John the Baptist
- 30th **Ss. Margaret Clitherow, Anne Line & Margaret Ward**
- 31st St. Aidan & the Saints of Lindisfarne (Holy Island)