



THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.

1. The Reality of Death

Many times in life we are faced with difficult and, sometimes, very traumatic events. One of the most difficult things we have to cope with as we journey towards eternity is the reality of death and the loss of a close friend or family member.

As Christians, we believe in the reality of Jesus' victory over death. However, that does not take away the reality of dealing with the trauma of death in our daily living.

When the reality of death touches our lives, and we lose a parent, sibling or spouse, the grief that envelopes our hearts can be extremely intense. Feeling loss is a natural part of living, but when we have to face up to the reality of losing a loved one, we can still be overcome by shock and confusion.

For many people, this can lead to prolonged periods of sadness or sometimes even depression. As time passes, however, sadness always diminishes in intensity. However, we must make a clear distinction between sadness and grief. Even if the intensity of sadness diminishes with time, grieving is an important process for every individual in overcoming sadness and emotions, helping you to embrace the time you had with your loved one.

We all react differently when faced with the reality of death, and every person has his/her own personal coping mechanisms for grief. Most of us can recover from the loss of loved ones on our own through the passage of time if we have social support and healthy habits. It may take months or a year (or sometimes even longer!) to come to terms with a loss. Please note that there is no such thing as a "normal" time period for a person to grieve.

If your relationship with the deceased was at times difficult and hurtful, this adds another dimension to the grieving process. It may take some time and thought before you are able to look back on the relationship and adjust to the loss.

2. Moving on with Life

Mourning the loss of a close friend, loved one, or relative takes time, but it can also be the catalyst for a renewed sense of meaning that offers purpose and direction to life. Grieving individuals may find it useful to use some of the following strategies to help come to terms with loss:

- Talk about the death of your loved one with friends and colleagues in order to understand what happened and remember your friend or family member. Denying death is an easy way to isolate yourself, and will frustrate your support system in the process.
- Accept your feelings. People experience all kinds of emotions after the death of someone close. Sadness, anger, frustration and even exhaustion are all normal.
- Take care of yourself and your family. Eating well, exercising and getting plenty of rest helps us to get through each day, assisting you in moving forward.
- Reach out and help others dealing with the loss. Helping others has the added benefit of making you feel better as well. Sharing stories of the deceased can help everyone cope.
- Remember and celebrate the lives of your loved ones. Possibilities include donating to a favourite charity of the deceased, framing photos of fun times, passing on a family name

to a baby or planting a garden in memory. What you choose is up to you, as long as it allows you honour that unique relationship in a way that feels right to you.

3. The Funeral Service

Planning a funeral is never an easy thing to do as saying farewell to a loved one is difficult. People grieve in different ways and very often family tension adds to the stress during an already emotionally burdensome period. This practical and spiritual guide is designed to alleviate some of these burdens and offer steps to help you plan your loved one's funeral service.

First, before making any plans, ask family members if your loved one left specific directions for their funeral. If so, this will greatly ease the load of making decisions and guessing what your loved one would have wanted. *Please respect the wishes of the deceased* and do not ignore or override them. If no provisions were made, then speak to the other members of the family and arrange to speak to the priest.

My thoughts and prayers go with you!

Fr. Martin Pender

SIMPLE CHECKLIST

Please check the following items:

- Date and time for funeral confirmed by priest
- Forms filled in and copy of the departed person's ID given to priest
- Contact with undertaker
- Cremation or burial of coffin
- Service with or without Mass
- Organist booked (or other musicians if applicable)
- Flowers arranged
- Readings for service chosen and prepared
- Chosen readers for the service 1. Biblical Readings and 2. Prayers of the Faithful
- Chosen people to bring up offertory gifts (if applicable)
- Pallbearers have been organised
- Person to give a **very short** eulogy (max 3 minutes)
- Person to convey the family's thanks