

Valley Catholic
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Catholic Cemeteries
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Consolation for Those Who Grieve

*“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens
and I will give you rest.”*

Our culture does not like to look at death. We avoid it by being too busy and too preoccupied with the *distractions* of living. We all know what those are! We gloss over the reality of the many forms of our own losses and often avoid facing the certainty of death. When interacting with those who are bereaved, we might not know what to say to them. When we experience the death of a loved one, we may wonder about the normality of our unfamiliar emotions and behaviors. We may think we won't survive the loss of a spouse, family member or close friend. The good news is that there are more and more resources available to us when death actually “grabs us by the collar.” When we no longer evade the actuality of death, we see that we are united to the Pascal mysteries in the deepest possible way.

The research by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and her 1969 publication, “On Death and Dying,” challenged our avoidance and opened the possibility of essential conversations in the physical, emotional and spiritual lives of people. It is the mission of Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese to make resources available that will address ways in which our spiritual beliefs can sustain us in a time of loss.

In the next three months, we are offering workshops that address **consolation of grief**. Reverend Christopher Bennett will offer three sessions of “Consolation of Grief During and After the Holidays.” Whether it is one month or ten years, someone important in your life is no longer by your side. Come learn ways to deal with the grief that this loss causes you. The location and times are found in this issue of the Valley Catholic.

Christian consolation is rooted in hope. Hope directs us toward the possibility and likelihood that all shall be well. It holds the vision that God is with us during times when we feel abandoned and lost. It allows us to face the reality of dying and the grief that follows. This hope comes from faith in the saving power of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Consolation is a word that embodies the importance of comfort and support for those in grief. Some of those comforts take the form of listening, expressing care, bringing food or taking care of practical matters. “To comfort is human; to console is divine” is what tradition tells us. In other words, “We cannot do it by ourselves.” We rely on our faith in God, spiritual traditions and rituals, as well as the community to find meaning and solace in our suffering.

St. Ignatius of Loyola says that any increase of faith, hope, and charity may be called a consolation.” (Rule 3 of the *Discernment of Spirits*) “...[T]he state of consolation is that in which the soul enjoys a spiritual sense or impression of close union and intimate converse with God.” Through our reliance on God's presence and our efforts to be a holy grace to one

another, we, the community of believers, can continue to build strong supports of consolation for the people we serve. Catholic Cemeteries aims to do just that through our services and programs.

Please join us for one of the workshops posted in this issue of the Valley Catholic. If you have any questions about the workshops, please call Calvary Cemeteries at 408-258-2940 x208 or email Frances at carrasco@dosj.org.

Suzanne has recently joined the Outreach Team for the Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of San Jose. She can be reached at 408-258-2940 x207 or young@dosj.org