

DEALING WITH GRIEF

How do we live as Holy Families when we are grieving?

They say that death is the great equalizer. It hits us all eventually. That doesn't mean that it is easy, or that we ought to be happy about it. But how do we process all that we feel when a loved one dies? How do we make sense of the pain we feel? Each individual has a unique way of dealing with sorrow. There is no right or wrong way to process loss, but we can always rely on the comfort and love of God.

Probably one of the most pressing questions in our hearts at the death of a loved one is, "Are they with Jesus?" Here is where we can begin the conversation: To be assured that our loved one is with Jesus takes a load of anxiety off of our shoulders. We can count on this when we know our loved one was a person of faith who trusted the promises of God. Also, we have words from scripture that give us comfort. St. Paul wrote to the Romans:

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)

Having the assurance that our loved one is in Christ's holy presence and no longer in a state of suffering or pain is one thing. It is another thing entirely to think of ourselves without them. Grief is feeling sad that we no longer have our loved one with us. It is hard for us to imagine not seeing that person again on earth even when a death is expected — and if a loved one dies suddenly and unexpectedly, it is even harder to comprehend.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Being open about death is a good thing. We cannot deny that it is a reality for all living creatures. Praying together, talking about our loved ones and remembering them is a powerful way to move through the stages of grief. Be patient — with your child and with yourselves. It's likely that if your child is suffering loss, then you are, too. Talking

about our feelings is healing for our souls. Participating in end-of-life rituals such as calling hours and funerals is helpful for people of all ages. Don't neglect opportunities for comfort and peace.

Jesus spoke to his disciples before his ascension into heaven, saying, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b ESV). There is not a time or place when those who are God's children are left alone or separated from Christ — not even in death. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Above all else, look to God's holy presence as you walk through these difficult experiences, and remember together the promises of Easter.



Topical conversation starters to help parents stay on the same page with each other and their families.

Things to Pray and Talk About:

- a) *Why does death bring such uncertainty and sorrow for us, even though we are people who believe?*
- b) *Whom have you lost in your family and circle of friends? Discuss how that felt and how long your heart hurt because of the loss.*
- c) *Who can you go to in order to talk about your grief if it gets to be too much to handle? What do you need right now?*
- d) *How might you encourage one another and be there for each other as you share a common sorrow?*

Asking for God's Blessing:

Loving God, you have called us into a life of faith and gifted us with your love and mercy. We give you thanks for the days we have together, and for the experiences, friendships, and loving family relationships we share with others. When a loved one dies, comfort us in our sorrow and remind us of your unfailing love in Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.