Dealing With Loss of a Pet

How do we live as "Holy Families" when we lose a pet?

Loss is always difficult. When we lose a family member, friend or another person, it is difficult regardless of the circumstances, their age or even our age. Loss is hard when it is expected and when it is not. While losing a person we know or love is difficult, losing a pet can also be very difficult, especially for children. Teaching children about loss is one of the hardest and yet most significant tasks parents must tackle in their ministry to their children.

Some of the most painful moments come when our children are hurt or sad. There are few things as painful as seeing your own children in pain, especially when you do not feel equipped to fix the problem. It is natural to want our children not to experience pain, yet pain and loss are a reality of life. We have an obligation to help our children deal with pain and loss as we prepare them for adulthood.

The loss of a pet can feel as significant as losing a person, especially to children. Pets are not people, but they are often family. Many of us can be very thankful that as children we grew up with pets; pets teach responsibility, care and love, amongst other things. All creation matters to God, and all creatures have been created by God to display his glory, grace and love, even those animals, insects and other creatures we are not too fond of! Helping children understand our unique place in God's creation as human beings made in the image of God is important. Helping our children value all of creation is also very important as we have been given the task of care-takers of the creation.

What do we do, as parents, when we face the loss of a pet in our family? First, we thank God for all creation, especially the pet that we have lost. Teaching our children to start with thankfulness is essential. Second, we allow ourselves and our children to grieve. Grief is normal and takes on many stages and forms. It is different for every person in every situation. Model and allow grief. Third, we ask God to be with us in our time of grief. God always walks with us, especially in our pain and we can trust God with the future. No one can say for certain what happens to our pets when they die, but like our own salvation, we trust in God's love and grace.

All creation matters to God, and all creatures have been created by God to display his glory, grace and love.

Loss is never easy. We thank God for family, friends, and for all of creation. We can trust God in the midst of our grief and walk with our children in the midst of theirs, reminding them that Jesus walks with them always.

Living as Holy Families

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

Things to Pray and Talk About:

a) *What is your favorite creature? What is or was your favorite pet?*

b) *Why do you think God gives us pets?*

c) *How can we learn about God and love from our pets? What are our responsibilities to our pets?*

d) *How does your faith in God impact how you think about the loss of a pet?*

Asking for God's Blessing:

God, we thank you for all that you have created. We thank you for our pets. We thank you for the opportunity to care for them and for making them part of our family. May we worship and praise you in all that we do. We thank you for joy and beauty and we thank you even for pain and loss. Help us to love all of creation just as you do. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Holy Families! Initiative © Sola Publishing, 2017 (www. solapublishing.com).
Permission granted to copy for congregational and home use.