

MOVING
BEYOND
GOODBYE

A Parish Grief Ministry Kit



A Parish Grief Resource

Planning Tips and Timelines

BEFORE AND AFTER THE FUNERAL

The initial visit with the family is an important time to not only make plans for the funeral services but also to provide comfort and consolation. The booklet *Your Guide to Planning a Catholic Funeral* covers the various details related to the funeral rite as well as to pastoral care for the bereaved.

Once the funeral is over, survivors are hit with the reality of their loss. Making contact within the first week assures them of the continuing care they can expect to receive from the parish. Send *The Shepherd Guides* funeral card immediately after the funeral as an expression of comfort and consolation. Follow this with the pastoral letter (see template) to

offer additional support. It is important to provide additional information about grief support ministries in the parish but not to push this too heavily. At this point, families need space to breathe and to consider how they move forward while their grief is at its most intense.

ONE-MONTH MILESTONE

By this time, some of the initial shock of a death has worn off and family members might be entering a stage of deep sadness. Make contact with a phone call and, if possible, offer an in-person visit from someone involved with grief ministry who understands the family's particular circumstance (a widow, for example, or a parent who has experienced the death of a child).

THREE-MONTH MILESTONE

An entire season has passed since the death and, at this point, families can feel particularly isolated when friends or colleagues forget to offer assistance or consolation. This is a good time to extend an invitation to a parish support group or upcoming prayer service to memorialize those who have died. The latter



might entail a phone call to offer continued support and extend a listening ear.

SIX-MONTH MILESTONE

While the stages of grief continue to unfold, it may be that survivors are ready to engage more fully with the parish community. Extend an invitation not only to events or ministries connected with bereavement but also those that offer a way to connect with others in the parish.

MARKING SPECIAL FEAST DAYS

The Shepherd Guides cards provide consoling and hopeful psalm verses for feasts that may

be particularly tender for those in mourning. Here is a suggested timeline for mailing these cards:

December 15 – Christmas card

Palm Sunday – Easter card

October 25 – All Saints card

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Grief, of course, does not follow any particular timetable. Even so, the one-year anniversary of a loved one's death is an important milestone. Send *The Shepherd Guides* one-year anniversary card to coincide with this date as a way to assure families of ongoing prayer and support from the parish.



Visit twentythirdpublications.com for more grief ministry resources.

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