



COME Unto ME

§

*A remembrance of one dear...
words of comfort, consolation and hope.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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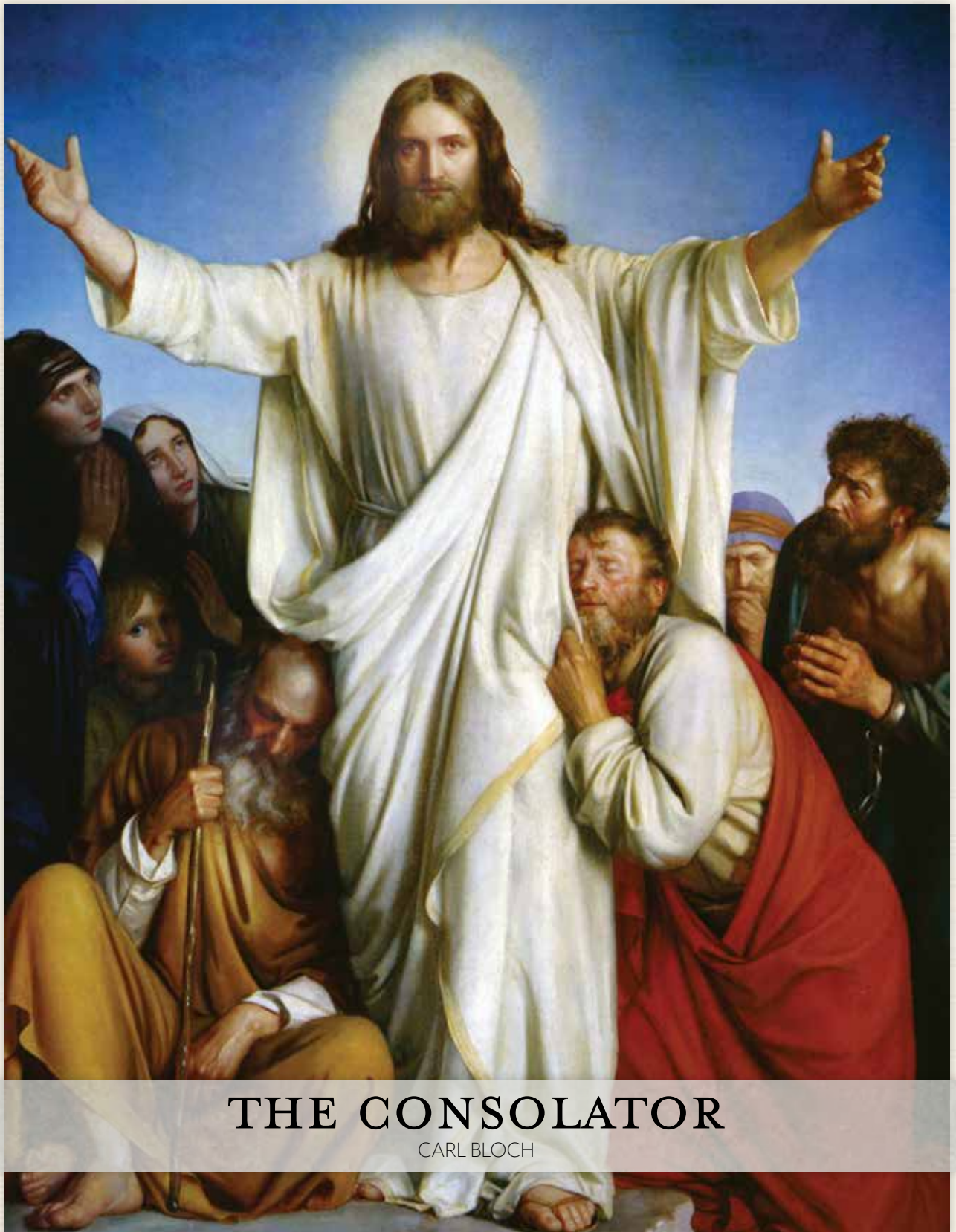


*You know you have loved someone when you have glimpsed in them
that which is too beautiful to die.*

- GABRIEL MARCEL

Dedication

To those bent down in sorrow, to those who care for them and to those who have seen in a loved one “that which is too beautiful to die.”



THE CONSOLATOR

CARL BLOCH

Foreword

WHY DO WE GRIEVE?

We grieve because we love. Jesus loved His friend Lazarus. You loved the one you just lost and you continue to do so. When we love strongly and forthrightly we desire the presence of the dear one we have lost. Death tries to deny us this presence. So we grieve. What we feel is deeper than our tears, more penetrating even than the kindness and sympathy of our family and friends. But, as Christians, we will not be denied the presence of our loved ones for there is life after this earthly one.

We all deal with death differently and we all grieve differently. Though we share many characteristics of our bereavement, some of which we discuss in this volume, don't let anyone prescribe to you how you should grieve. You determine how to walk with your sorrow. If you are a Christian then you know that Jesus walks with you, protecting and guiding you, comforting and redeeming you in the process.

In the beginning, right now, all we can do is cry out to our Savior for solace, cling to Him as we put one foot in front of the other. Our grief has its own time and its own message. If we can heed its lessons and see how they fit into the great story of Christ's enduring love for us, then we can go forward at our own pace on this our solemn, but noble journey. Our spiritual vision will grow under the Master's instruction as we love and suffer, and as we pray and bare our souls to special people in our lives. And His peace, unlike any other, will slowly fill the void and allow our broken bones to rejoice. But remember, the sorrow piercing your heart at this very moment is in fact a genuine, God-given expression of your deep and abiding love. And we grieve because we love.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

for

Service at the Funeral Home

FUNERAL HOME

Service at the Church

CHURCH

OFFICIATING

DATE

HOUR

Service at the Cemetery

CEMETERY

DATE

SECTION

LOT

THE FAMILY AND PHOTO

Spouse

Children

Grandchildren

Parents

FATHER OF DECEASED

MOTHER OF DECEASED

Special Relatives

Tribute Photo

PLACE PICTURE HERE

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

There are many kinds of service in which your loved one may have engaged: anything from military service to special community volunteer work; from membership in service oriented organizations to work as a fire fighter, police officer or any of a number of other civil service occupations. Here we offer a place to record such loving service.

Membership in Community Service Oriented Organizations

ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN

Civil Service

TYPE _____ DATES OF SERVICE _____

SPECIAL



WHAT IS A VETERAN?

The term “veteran” refers to an individual who has served in any of the U.S. armed forces. The veteran serves for the good of our country and in the defense of our nation. While others enjoy the freedoms of America, the veteran helps provide those freedoms. While others enjoy the comfort of their family, the veteran separates from his or her family to stand watch at home or in foreign lands. Yet God rewards the veteran in ways that some others may not understand. Pride, Duty, Honor - these are the hallmarks of a veteran’s character. Pride in measuring up to the demands of service, dutifully carrying out assignments given, even if they place one in harm’s way, and the honor of representing the freedom for whom so many have given so much. This is a veteran. And surely God smiles upon these, our special heroes.

MILITARY SERVICE

BRANCH _____ DATES OF SERVICE _____ HIGHEST RANK _____

SPECIAL MEMORIES OF MILITARY LIFE _____

“The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.”

-G.K. Chesterton

WHAT IS A FIRST RESPONDER?



A First Responder refers to an individual who serves or who has served in any capacity a federal, state, county or municipal law enforcement agency, fire department or medical services entity that regularly responds to emergencies within the community. First Responders are often the unsung heroes of many of our citizens who have been involved in a medical or other kind of emergency. These are the men and women seen going into fires, running towards the fallen and often into harm's way, administering emergency first aid, calming escalating emotions and giving their all to preserve peace and treat the sick, to promote health and mitigate potential violence. A police officer, a sheriff's deputy, an emergency medical technician or paramedic, a state or county trooper, a fire officer, all military personnel engaged in these activities as well as a number of other helping professionals serve our communities and our citizenry in unique and selfless ways. This service may either be on a volunteer basis or as an occupation, as a reserve or one on active duty. There may be no greater helpers to suffering individuals on a day to day basis in our communities and across the planet than our First Responders. It takes something very special, a caring heart transformed by God's touch, exacting training and the will to act in critical situations to carry out the duties of a First Responder.

SERVICE RECORD

TYPE OF UNIT ENGAGED IN FIRST RESPONDER ACTIVITIES _____

DESCRIPTION OF FIRST RESPONDER ACTIVITIES _____

RECOGNITIONS _____

A THANK YOU TO FIRST RESPONDER ORGANIZATIONS _____



The Reasons of the Heart

“The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.”

BLAISE PASCAL

In life, we learn to live with mystery, to trust the heart’s reasons. And so it is with our grief. Jesus often spoke to us in parables. Grief’s hard questions may also best be answered in a poetic medium where symbols help describe the process. Let us see how our grief may be like a bridge and a key, a remembrance and a statement. In that process we search the hidden places of our hearts to reflect upon the healing mysteries we may find there.

GRIEF IS... A BRIDGE AND A KEY.

Grief causes us to reflect upon where we've been and where we're going. Faith tells us that Christ is walking with us every step of the way and in the bridging from a treasured, earthly life now gone to our own, is a spiritual stillness where the colorful palettes of sorrow and beauty meet like old friends crossing a stream. Grief gives us questions: *Why did this happen? How will my life change now? Where will my sorrow take me?* We search for meaning and direction and along the way, we realize that there are thresholds to be crossed to a life without our loved one. It is a hard thing we are encountering and we don't know if we can do it. But faith is not certainty. Faith is taking a step to the door and the willingness to turn a key. God's presence is our key. Yearning to see purpose in life and death is a key. Crossing a threshold is not locking away our departed loved ones. Their presences remain in our hearts, over each bridge, through each doorway. What we cross into is the possibility, under God's care, of beginning a new life. What we unlock is the promise of a measure of the joy our loved one would surely want for us.



GRIEF IS... A REMEMBRANCE AND A STATEMENT

We carry our love with us wherever we go. It lives on in our hearts and minds. We look back on our history and retrieve those heartfelt gems of affection, sacrifice and unity that helped to define our relationships. We take out scrapbooks, read old letters and treasure our keepsakes. Memories of the goodness of our deceased loved one become a working part of who we are.

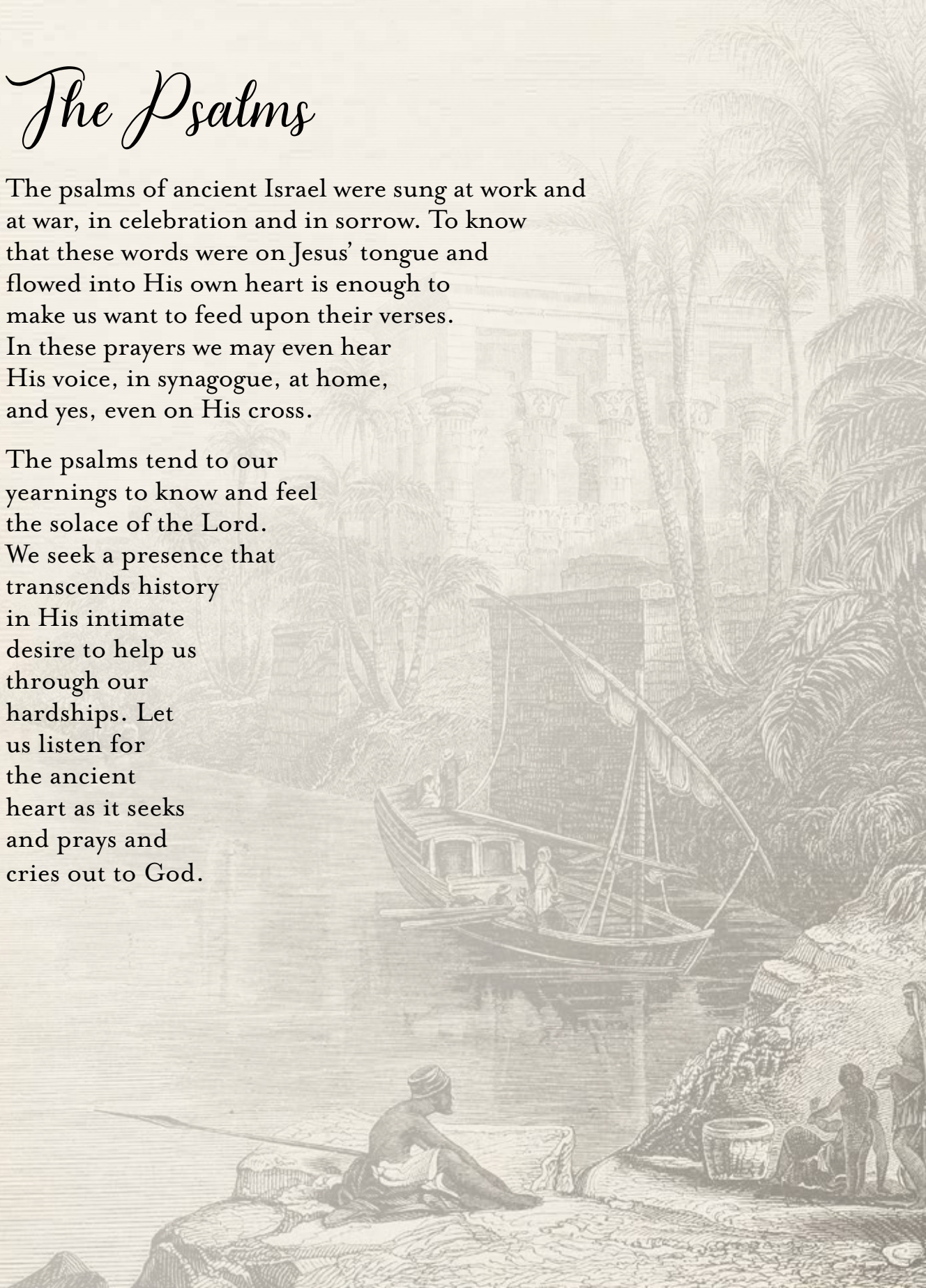
We come to see just how sacred remembering can be. And all the while our grief is saying something. As we come to speak to others about our feelings, we relate to how they have responded to their losses. The picture becomes bigger and we begin to find the solace God is offering. And then one day we are astonished to find ourselves in the role of comforter. In that sacred moment when we reach out to help another in pain, we make a statement about our humanity. In that sacred moment, we make a statement about how broken hearts can speak the same language. And in remembrance of our loved one, we make a statement about the mercy and kindness of Jesus.

We have crossed a bridge and put a key in a door. We've not forgotten to remember and we have, moving forward, made a statement about the nature of suffering and of the love and compassion that accompany it. God has brought us to this moment. With His aid, we are, in living our loss with dignity and generosity, coming to know the sound of a healing heart. And we hear His whisper... "Come Unto Me."

The Psalms

The psalms of ancient Israel were sung at work and at war, in celebration and in sorrow. To know that these words were on Jesus' tongue and flowed into His own heart is enough to make us want to feed upon their verses. In these prayers we may even hear His voice, in synagogue, at home, and yes, even on His cross.

The psalms tend to our yearnings to know and feel the solace of the Lord. We seek a presence that transcends history in His intimate desire to help us through our hardships. Let us listen for the ancient heart as it seeks and prays and cries out to God.



IN THIS OUR EXILE

FROM PSALM 137

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?

MEDITATION

Few Psalms lay open the loneliness and yearning of the human heart as this one of the Jewish people's Babylonian exile. They long for home and experience the sad depravity that exile is. This Psalm has been put to music as much as any, for there is something universal in its heartsick cry for home. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Jewish artisans of Eastern Europe would paint the scene of the Babylonian exile on the walls of their synagogues, depicting lyres and harps hung sadly in the branches of the willows and poplar trees by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Jerusalem in the background, never forgotten.

AS WE LIVE...

Grieving is like living in a foreign land. Our hearts are exiled, silent and songless. Branches of the trees hold the instruments that bring us life yet all we hear is the wind through the strings, a hollow, empty sound. As the Jews remembered Jerusalem, we remember Jesus. However lonely our ordeal, He is there, just behind our suffering, with us as we go about our daily life. We are wounded, but we trudge our way home with His comfort, consolation and hope, knowing soon we will sing again.

TODAY I PRAY

Lord, be with me in this my exile. Bring me, as I suffer the grief of my loved one's leaving, a touch of Your home, a touch of heavenly warmth so that even in the midst of my great sorrow, I will feel Your breath in the leaves of the trees and hear each song of love You have placed in my heart.

OUR KEEPER

FROM PSALM 121...

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth... The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand... The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.

MEDITATION

We are not alone. Our Creator is with us and has the power and the desire to protect that which He has created. Our darkness is ever present and our journey toward the light has stalled, as if life is losing its promise. And then we hear the words that Jesus heard, simple enough for a child. They penetrate the dark and call out to us.

AS WE LIVE...

To relate to God as our keeper is to begin to know His love in a deeper way. Does our going out represent leaving His protection for some perceived human comfort? And perhaps our coming in is our return to His loving care, like the prodigal son? What does it take of us to learn that He does not sleep? Even in our suffering, He is always there... none of us are alone!

TODAY I PRAY...

Oh, my Creator, dispel my darkness! Be my keeper and make me like a child who knows Your love. I know You are awake and beckon me. I know I am not alone; keep my eyes lifted to the hills.



A CLEAN HEART

FROM PSALM 51...

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

MEDITATION

We know that God answers prayers and that He wants us to know the truth of His love. The hardest things we ever have to endure, He will use to make us more whole, more complete than ever before. He cleanses us, over and over. We plead with Him every single day: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

AS WE LIVE...

With the death of a loved one, we often find a truth in our inward being about the power of love. We learn that God can penetrate our innermost being and use our brokenness as a way to His comfort and strength and as a way to give our love to others.

TODAY I PRAY...

Lord, in my brokenness and loneliness, You are my Truth and my relief. In my tribulation, hear the desire to come close to You. Please make me new again and let me see Your face in the people I love and to whom I reach out.



THROUGH THE VALLEY

FROM PSALM 23

The LORD is my shepherd: there is nothing I lack. In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul. He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.

MEDITATION

Perhaps this psalm is often used in funerals because the imagery is so powerful and so comforting. How much more can we be protected than as lambs lovingly watched over by our Shepherd? Wherever He leads us, even in our distress, our grief, fear of our own death, He is with us.

AS WE LIVE

Grief and loss are like shadows that tempt us to darkness. But in the practice of our faith, in our prayer, in our relationship to the Word of God and in our love for those around us, we experience the goodness and mercy, the still waters, that the Lord offers us every day.

TODAY I PRAY

Lord, even as I walk through the shadows of death, You are leading me to Your love. Though I roam this valley of sorrow, I know You are watching over me. Bless our family Lord, for we hurt and we need You close by. As for me, Lord, take me into Your loving arms. Enter my heart Lord...fill my cup.



Moments of His Life

The counsel of Christ Jesus is timeless; it applies to us now as it did when He lived and walked the roads of Bethany and Bethsaida and Capernaum, as it did when He lived and suffered on earth. The message embodied in His life is a message of hope. We seldom appreciate the depth of Our Lord's sacrifice until when we are bowed down with sorrow and sadness. It is then we begin to recognize our need for the kind of strength this Man of sorrows, this incarnate Son of God, can provide.

Here we see in certain of the moments of Our Lord's earthly existence that He lived, loved, suffered and endured as we do and that His courage and His comfort can come to our aid in our own great sorrow. The life of Jesus of Nazareth is historic and well-documented. But the love that animated that earthly life transcends history and can come to life in our own human existence. His life and His love are ours for the asking.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

"Blessed are they that mourn..."

MATTHEW 5:4



BEHOLD THE MAN

PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE



THE HOLY FAMILY

POMPEO BATONI

The Holy Family

In Bethlehem, a drafty stable became the center of the universe when Mary gave birth to the King of Kings. Poor shepherds hastened to the stable and adored the God-Child. Providence also decreed that Wise Men, scholars-priests of the Gentile world, should come to find the Christ Child. They presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh but they were warned by God of the tyrant Herod's evil plans against the Child and disappeared as mysteriously as they had come.

Meanwhile, Herod implemented his unspeakable plan. By massacring all male children two years old and under in Bethlehem and its surrounding area, Herod thought he would eliminate the Child who was a threat to his throne. The cruel command was carried out and those dear children shed their blood as martyrs for the cause of Jesus.

Accordingly, an angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary and Jesus and flee. Always obedient, Joseph guided the Holy Family into Egypt.

HOW DO WE LIVE ON WITH THE DEATH OF A CHILD?

- The death of a child is as heartbreaking an event as we can imagine. Seeking to know why can become an engrossing quest. Yet as a noted philosopher once said, "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived." And so it is with the depth of sorrow after such a loss.
- In the deepest part of ourselves we know that answers are elusive and that we must live the mystery of life, even in its darkest moments.
- We might also open our hearts to the support and solace that can sometimes come from unexpected places, from right next door or from far away. In our affliction we trust in God's mercy and comfort as we look to the Holy Family for help and for strength.



BAPTISM OF CHRIST

BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO

A Cry in the Wilderness

Throughout their history the Jews clung to their great hope, the promise of the Savior. This promise was their support in the midst of all their many trials and tribulations. Again and again their prophets had foretold it and they knew the poetry of the prophecies by heart, telling of the herald who would come before the king, preparing His way. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

John the Baptist was well known to many. His life as a hermit was in itself a fascination to people. But now he had emerged from his solitude to preach the coming of Christ, in fulfillment of his role as herald. The news of his preaching had reached Galilee, and a group set out to hear him, including Jesus, the carpenter. At the Jordan, unassuming as ever, Jesus stepped forward to be baptized. John did not know at first who He was, so perfect was Jesus’ humility. Yet, even before God revealed it to him, John knew this Man before him should be the One baptizing. This was the One for whom John was herald. Our Lord, however, meek and submissive, overcame his protests and insisted on being baptized. And when Jesus stepped from the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

HOW CAN THE BAPTISM OF JESUS HELP US NOW?

- As we emulate the great humility of Jesus, may we ever draw strength from the grace that flows forth from His life.
- As we reflect specifically upon His baptism, let us continue to remember His humility, and learn to imitate his example.



MARRIAGE AT CANA

CARL BLOCH

A Miracle and the Public Life

After His baptism, Jesus went into the desert, fasting and praying for forty days, preparing for his public life. In characteristic deception, Satan tried to tempt Our Lord from the self-sacrificial saving action of His death upon the cross. Jesus answered those futile temptations with what amounted to a declaration of war, and sent the Devil scurrying off in defeat.

One by one and two by two, the disciples of Jesus now sought Him out, calling Him “Rabbi,” indicating that they had accepted Him as their Master. All was now ready for Our Lord to go forth and teach. He would work miracles that His people might believe in Him. The scene of His first public miracle was a wedding feast at Cana, in which His Mother, knowing the time had come for Her Son’s public ministry to begin, requested He change water into wine to accommodate the joyous feast. Renowned English poet, A.E. Housman, famously described the miracle by saying, “The water looked upon its Creator...and blushed.”

IS THERE A MIRACLE FOR ME?

- The great American writer, Willa Cather, once said, “Where there is great love, there are always miracles.” Be it in warding off the temptation to despair or in the joy of friends and family gathered together, as in a wedding feast, we come to see God’s hand in our lives and to feel his handprint in our hearts.
- As we gaze upon Jesus in our mind’s eye and recognize His loving presence in the midst of our grief, we encounter our very own miracle, the miracle of His continuing love and abiding strength.



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

CARL BLOCH

They that Mourn

After working many miracles in and around Capernaum, Jesus and the disciples sought peace and quiet on the lake at Bethsaida. But the crowds followed and there, on the hillside rising from the lake, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. In it, He gave the Apostles and the assembled people the great principles of His teaching: love of God and love of neighbor.

Among those Jesus singles out in His great lesson to all of humanity is a group that embraces our hearts in a special way. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” In our own grieving we come to know just how accessible God’s love is. The compassionate words in the sermon of Jesus on the hill above the lake might be the most comforting ever spoken. Let us extract from those words the warmth and the many graces Our Savior spilled out from that lovely hillside.

HOW DO WE MOURN?

- We mourn in a thousand ways in our responses over time to the death of a loved one. Expressing our sorrow, our fear, our loneliness, our sense of the unresolved, even our relief, is important to our ongoing spiritual health.
- For the Christian, prayer is an integral part of our mourning. And as we pray, we begin to feel the words of the Sermon on the Mount come to life: “Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.”



THE STORM ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

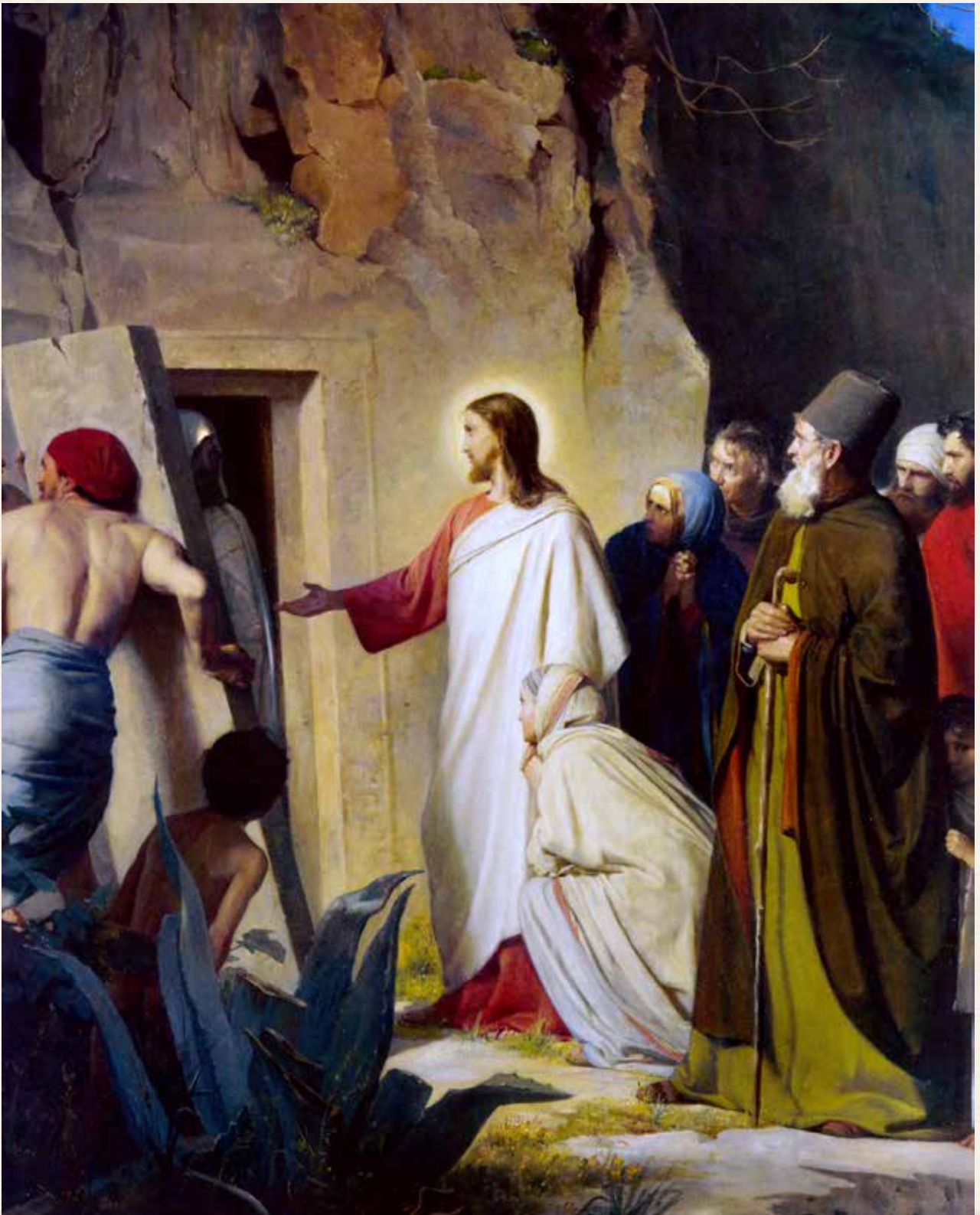
Calming the Storm

Exhausted by the labors of His demanding ministry, Jesus finally got a few hours on the lake with His disciples. The fishermen amongst them readied a boat to launch. Out on the lake Jesus lay asleep in the boat when a freak wind hit the craft, threatening to capsize it. The Master slumbered, untroubled. The disciples panicked, however, and wakened Him frantically. Jesus immediately quelled the storm and then chided His followers for their lack of faith, reminded them that they needed, above all else, a strong and firm faith in their Master.

Of course, the Lord continues to calm the storms brewing in Satan's designs. The temptation to despair can be very real, as real as an angry sea. It is good to remember that, even though He reproached them for their doubt and their panic, Jesus still awakened to respond to the fears of His followers.

WHAT CAN GOD DO TO HELP ME?

- At times, in life, we feel like a small, flimsy vessel being buffeted by the waves of sorrow and trouble. Overcome by the hurt and the loneliness when a loved one is taken from us, we want only to sink beneath life's waves. But the most dangerous storm is the storm within us. If we put our trust in God, He will bring His calm to our sorrow laden hearts.
- We go to Our Savior in prayer and rely upon His constant care to calm the storms of grief that weigh upon us.



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

CARL BLOCH

He Wept

Jesus cherished the friendship with Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. He often visited them at their home in Bethany. Once Lazarus had become gravely ill, the sisters sent Jesus a message. As He arrived, Martha came running to meet Him and told Jesus that Lazarus would not have died had He been there; but also that her brother could be raised to life again if Jesus so willed. Then Mary, too, threw herself at His feet, pouring out her grief.

Profoundly touched, Our Lord's response provides us perhaps the most poignant words of the New Testament: "Jesus wept." In that action He tells us our own sorrow is no lack of faith in His providence but rather, the proof of our humanity as we cherish the presence of loved ones.

At the tomb, Jesus prayed and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" All about the sepulcher were entranced and Lazarus walked out of the tomb. Though this miracle sows faith in our hearts, Jesus did not remove our earthly pain and death. He taught that suffering can lead us to Him, if we believe. Even death—the climax of suffering—is not the end, but the beginning of a new life in His kingdom.

HOW DO WE EXPRESS OUR SORROW?

- When we grieve deeply it's hard not to express it. Perhaps we withdraw, perhaps we become quiet, perhaps we shed tears from the depths of emotion. We express our sorrow in many different ways.
- At the news of His dear friend's death comes an affirmation of our shedding tears. Jesus wept. Fully God but fully human: in all our heartbreak and the depths of our sorrow, Jesus joins us as we weep and as we hurt.



LET THE CHILDREN COME UNTO ME

CARL CHRISTIAN VOGEL VON VOGELSTEIN

For of Such is the Kingdom

It is the love and tenderness of Our Lord that is of comfort to us in all of life's trials. This same love and tenderness consoles us like nothing else can as we grieve. And this very same love and tenderness we see highlighted in the touching scene of Jesus with the children that took place on His last journey to Jerusalem.

As a number of women pushed through the crowds to have Jesus bless their children, He admonished His disciples for attempting to hinder them and He gathered the children around Him embracing them as they came.

Jesus spoke forthrightly to us of the necessity of becoming like a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is the openness of the child that can make us willing to put our complete trust in the most loving of parents, our Creator.

HOW DO WE APPROACH THE LORD?

- We must bring our sadness and grief to Christ as children wholly dependent upon His love and consolation.
- “Suffer little children to come unto me... for of such is the Kingdom of God.” Let us learn to study the openness of children, how that openness can lead us to the Lord and how His love and protection are with us in our sorrow.



CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE

HEINRICH HOFMANN

Thy Will Be Done

After His last supper, Jesus and His disciples went to an olive grove in Gethsemane, where He withdrew to pray alone. Horrified in His human nature at the picture of His coming sufferings, sorrow and frustration flooded His soul. Jesus cried out to His heavenly Father for the cup of His suffering to be taken away. But at once He qualified His prayer with “Thy will be done.”

We know of Christ’s humanity in His agony. Our own sorrow encourages us to reach out, as Christ Himself did, to the Father. In our dejection we recall Christ’s own agony and submission to the Father, for it is in our personal surrender to the Lord that our tears will gradually be wiped away. That doesn’t mean our heartache vanishes. It means, rather, we come to see the meaning of redemptive suffering. We are present with Jesus in the garden; we touch His pain; and we feel His comfort and love, as never before.

WHAT DOES OUR SUFFERING MEAN?

- In the famed children’s story *The Velveteen Rabbit*, a little child’s stuffed bunny becomes more and more real with its wear and tear. Our suffering does the same; it makes us more real as we walk through it. It also makes us more available to others as they struggle with the pain and the challenges of life and death.
- As Christians we understand that our suffering can be redemptive. And of course the great model of that redemptive suffering is Jesus on His cross giving his human life so that our souls might live.



CHRIST MEETS HIS MOTHER WHILE CARRYING HIS CROSS

ORAZIO GENTILESCHI

The Mist of Agony

“Crucify Him!” the mob screamed, as Pilate presented Jesus to them. Later, carrying His cross to Calvary, a group of women wept when they saw Jesus pass by. He turned to them and told them to grieve for themselves and their children, referring to the destruction that would descend upon Jerusalem. Even now, Christ turned His thoughts to the grief of others.

When Calvary had been reached, Jesus’ bloodstained garments were ripped away and He was nailed to the cross. His only words were, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Aside from His physical agony, He had to witness the utter misery of His mother as her heart was pierced. In the loss of a child, know that Jesus’ love will embrace you as you bear your grief—for His Mother suffered the same. With the loss of any loved one, it is God’s love that saves us from despair.

On all sides, a somber curtain of agony misted His eyes... Jesus was dying.

WHERE DO WE TAKE OUR PAIN?

- Our greatest pain is not our own but in witnessing the pain of our loved ones. We comfort them, as we take our own pain to the cross. No one can know sorrow as Jesus knew it and no one can understand our grief as He does.
- As Jesus told the disciple John: “Behold your mother,” so is this a time to rely upon those who love us, to draw close to family and those “like family” whose presence and comfort are gifts we will cherish forever.



CHRIST ON THE CROSS

CARL BLOCH

Jesus Dies on the Cross

As Jesus hung on the cross, the soldiers cast lots for His garments, unwittingly fulfilling the prophesy of the twenty-second Psalm. The two brigands crucified on either side of Christ, mingled their mockery with that of the others.

Suddenly, however, one of them, realizing the heinousness of it all, turned to Christ, and contritely asked Him to remember him when He shall come as King. Returning kindness for insult, Jesus gently replied, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

About noon, the heavens cast a curtain of gloom. Shortly before three o'clock, Jesus' human nature rose in final distress and He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No words could better portray the extremity of His suffering.

How consoling for us to know that even Christ, in His human nature, could be tempted to despair! In His agony, He cried out, but then through the mists of pain He fought off this temptation and commended His soul to His Father. Under suffering's siege we too must commend ourselves to God.

Quoting the Psalms, He uttered His last words, teeming with love of His Father until the end. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" Then, with a final cry, His humanity reached the limit of endurance, and Jesus Christ, on the altar of the cross, bowed His head and died.

WHAT IS GOD'S GREATEST GIFT?

- The cross of Christ is considered an altar and because He is the lamb sacrificed for our salvation. Upon that alter Jesus has given us the greatest gift ever... Himself.
- The suffering and death of Jesus gives meaning to our grief in that we know He is with us in our sorrow and we know that through Him, our loved one may be given a new life; infinitely better than the one of this Earth.



THE HOLY WOMEN AT THE TOMB

WILLIAM-ADOLPHE BOUGUEREAU

An Empty Tomb

The day after Jesus died upon His cross was the Sabbath and all was quiet. The following morning a group of women, led by Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb to attend to Jesus' body. Upon seeing the stone of the tomb rolled back Mary Magdalene learned from an angel that Jesus had risen from the dead. Astonished and confused, she fled to tell Peter and John, who then hurried to the sepulcher. Peter entered first and saw the death shroud folded and laid aside. Then John came in and looked around the empty tomb; in the words of Scripture, "He saw and believed." Just as He said He would, Christ had risen from the dead.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the final triumph of His life on earth. His conquest of sin is victory over suffering and death, our own suffering now and the death of our loved one.

HOW DOES THE RESURRECTION AFFECT MY GRIEVING?

- The Resurrection of Jesus is, in itself, the greatest of all stories of hope. In Jesus' rising from the dead, we can know of a new life awaiting the faithful, a life greater than our earthly abode and greater, too, than our deepest sorrow.
- In and through the person of Jesus, we, too, conquer suffering and death, and are able to turn life's trials into triumph because the risen Christ inhabits our hearts.
- In this knowledge we are comforted and the hardest edges of our grief are worn smooth in the risen Christ's love and the love of those around us.

All Grief Is Special

The Subtle Waves of Hope...

Just as every life is individual, so is every death. Each one of us is the author of our own grief and we bring our own experiences and beliefs to bear on the grave challenges before us. Who has passed away and how did they pass? These are important determinants of the manner in which we experience our grief.

Living our grief will teach us lessons, some painful, some tinged with a joy we never would have thought possible. Each day is a new day and each day subtle waves of hope are to be found, even in the midst of ravaging sorrow. Courage comes in many forms and our grief will surely ask us to dig deep. This is the inevitable work of our grieving. Each day we will be asked and each day, with God's unending aid, we will answer the call in our own way.

Just as our great sorrow is uniquely our own, so is the "living through" process, that same individual strength that has seen us through other of life's great trials. In this section it is our hope to tap into that very strength as we also reflect on some of our common and shared experiences of grief.




ONE HEART

When a Spouse Dies...

Because spouses become “as one”, only the widowed can know the particular loneliness of the loss of a spouse, a loneliness as tangible as one’s own flesh. From the tragic death of a young husband or wife to the merciful demise of a long time spouse who has suffered much with declining health or the toll of years, the one left has a heart tearing apart and desperately looks for a place of consolation and hope.

There may be no greater sacrifice than saying this very goodbye and the pain is palpable. There may be no courage greater than that of the new widow resisting the temptation to withdraw from life. Just to pick up the phone, answer the door or reply to an e-mail can take heroic effort. Living through the grief is a very conscious endeavor that takes ingenuity, discipline and focus. Finding a new way of life, even with God’s help, does not just happen. The process is crafted in longstanding faith and daily prayer and the invaluable help of those who understand and care.

Many widows and widowers find essential help from their church members, from a priest, a rabbi or a minister and from support groups specializing in the unique grief of husband or wife. Many eventually find strength in service to others going through what they have endured or are still enduring. God in His infinite mercy can help you live even with a heart torn asunder. Just as you were forever changed by your loved one who has died so can you share the lessons of that great bond and, by so doing, let others know that not only does love never fail...it also never ends.



*“Though lovers be lost, love
shall not, and death shall have
no dominion.”*

- DYLAN THOMAS



A WELL OF MEMORIES

When a Parent Dies...

A parent's death comes with a history: a chronicle of emotional nourishment, lessons well learned and perhaps a measure of the unfinished business of the heart. Perhaps we lived far away and had little contact or were the dutiful caregivers weakened by the rigors of that unsung job. We may struggle with guilt or forgiveness or both.

It is especially difficult when a living parent struggles to come to grips with being alone. There may be fiduciary responsibilities or other practical family issues that collide with the grieving process. Seas of emotion may rise up from the depths for a long time to come.

Relationships with parents don't end; they merely change. And in the changing they become more uniquely our own. We remember family stories and we may discover our own siblings in a new light. We open ourselves to forgiving and being forgiven. We seek the wisdom of others of faith with whom we may trust our saddened hearts. It is a time for gentleness and healing. And the hand of a loving God is ever near and ready.

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

- FROM A HEADSTONE IN IRELAND

A BLESSED CREATURE

When a Child Dies...

What loss is greater than the loss of a child? It “diminishes” us as in no other way, for a child’s life is meant to stretch into the future, progressing in growth and maturity, a testament to God’s marvelous and unfolding handiwork. The efforts of finite minds cannot but fall short of understanding. A tragic accident, a fatal disease, the heartbreak of miscarriage or infant death: just how are we to face life on seemingly unbearable terms?

The Lord draws near. We trudge through this sorrow in slow motion, sometimes moment by moment. Rituals enacted for other deaths in the family, such as the funeral service and graveside visits are even more painful now, but no less necessary. Some families find solace in the establishment of memorials that pertain to the life of young people. Gestures of this kind are anything but empty. They can resonate for years to come in positive ways as God’s love embraces our broken hearts and as He works through those around us. There is a growing awareness of the efficacy of support groups for those who have lost a child. In time, because a child’s spirit has become so deeply infused in ours, we are able to help someone else whose grief is overwhelming. And in that moment of charity a blessed little creature comes to life in a new and unique way.

*“More precious was the light in your eyes
than all the roses in the world.”*

- EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

OUR LIVING HISTORY...

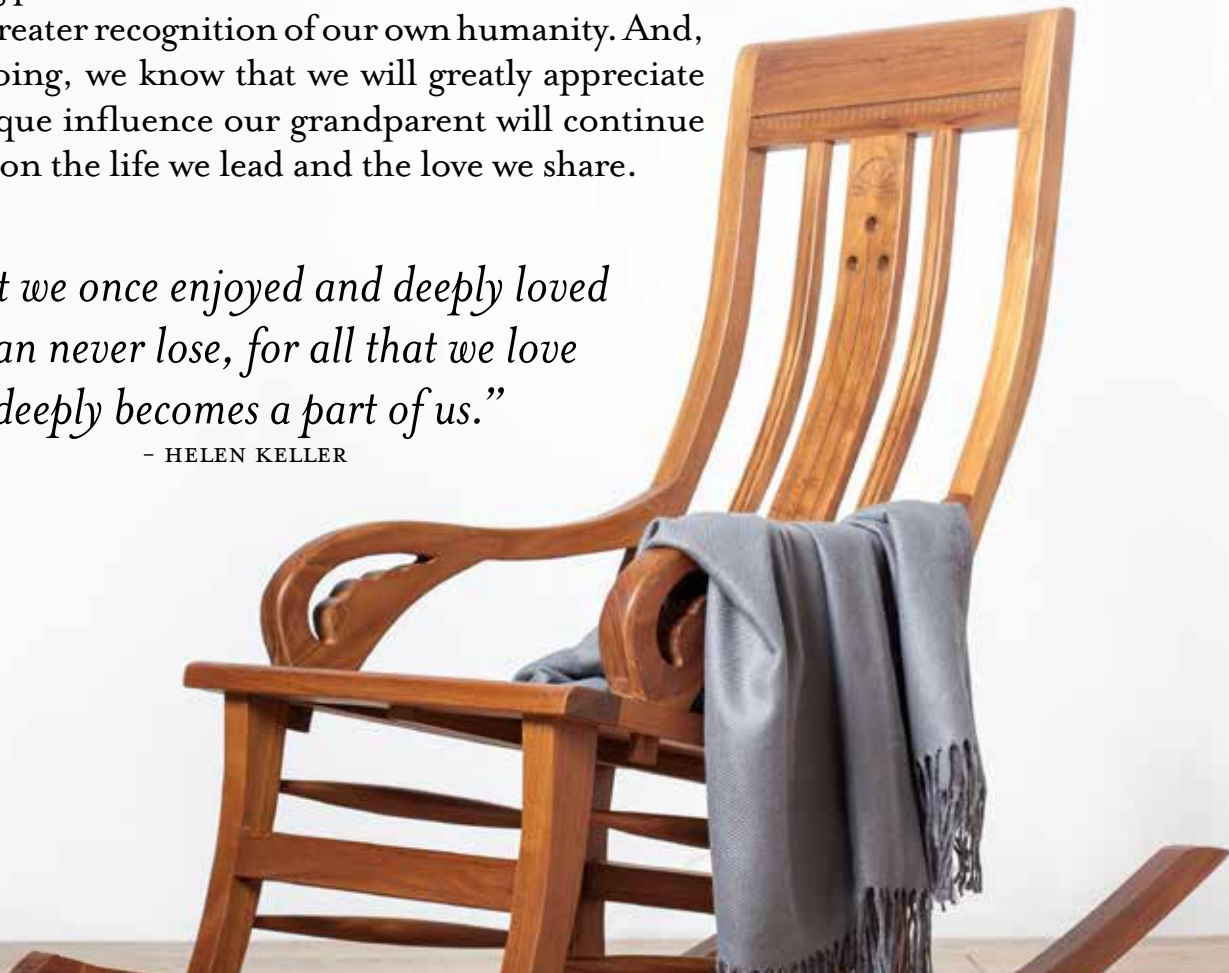
On the death of a grandparent

The death of a grandparent can bring added dimensions to our grief. Aside from the very special closeness that may have developed over a number of years, a depth of frustration can emerge as a result of our culture's view of the elderly. The last years, months or weeks of an older person's life can present puzzling and sometimes complex medical decisions for families. These difficult situations can certainly affect the way in which we grieve.

Even in the best of circumstances when a grandparent passes away an era ends; a precious part of our living history is gone. The wisdom imparted, the stories told, the way they made us laugh, their expressions of faith, along with questions only they had the answers to are all now stilled. In the quiet we reflect upon this cherished person our God put before us, as we also reflect upon their sacred place in the life of our family. These reflections are, in and of themselves, a part of the grieving process and, if undertaken in earnest, can lead us to a greater recognition of our own humanity. And, in so doing, we know that we will greatly appreciate the unique influence our grandparent will continue to have on the life we lead and the love we share.

*“What we once enjoyed and deeply loved
we can never lose, for all that we love
deeply becomes a part of us.”*

- HELEN KELLER



LIKE THE SHELTER OF A TREE

On the death of a close friend or special relative...

Somewhere along the line we found a person who would be there for us when support or comfort or help of some kind was needed, like the shelter of a tree in the summer sun or when sudden showers fall. Close friends or special relatives give of themselves because generosity is part of the defining characteristic of the uniquely compatible relationship.

These special relatives and very close friendships make for hard good-byes. This person may have been a special link to childhood memories or a surprise companion of our later years. The relationship may have been there for decades or have just begun its development. It was sustained in love, however, and it is that shared love that makes their passing so hard to take.

Perhaps these deep and abiding relationships teach us something of God's love for us. We might be able like never before to reach out to others and become a beacon for the lonely, for we know that God's never ending love showed up in a person we became close to, one whose spirit helped animate us along our way and whose memory will be forever cherished.

*“If there ever comes a day where
we can't be together, keep me
in your heart. I'll stay there forever.”*

-A.A. MILNE, WINNIE THE POOH



Time and Circumstance

How a Loved One Passed...

We know that our grief is uniquely personal. And yet, our individual expressions of it can be similarly tempered by time and circumstance in the same way that we experience God's love for us in a variety of very personal ways. When we take into account the time and the circumstance (good and bad) of our loved one's passing, we may better grasp the depth of our grief and thereby know just how wide Christ's arms are spread to welcome us to Him.





A LONG WALK... A SENSE OF DIGNITY

The lingering death of a loved one can be practically unbearable. But somehow, we do bear it; giving what aid we can and learning the hard way that death can be the height of mercy. And although medical progress has extended our life spans considerably, when once an elder might have died of “natural causes,” most likely at home, today the hospital has become a common locale of one’s passing. Last days may well be spent in a drug clouded haze of medical machinery in a coldly institutional atmosphere. Therefore the time and the circumstance make it so much more important to bring to a loved one’s passing a sense of human dignity, a realization that even the process of dying has redeeming qualities that can live on in those who remain.

Talking to someone can be essential: a psychologist or other counselor; a member of the clergy to help with problems that manifest their spiritual nature or perhaps a caring friend in whom we have great confidence. A long illness may also be financially overpowering for a family. An understanding financial advisor may be necessary when the medical bills are growing.

We recall the special moments with our loved one: a forgiving nod or a kindly glance and we look beyond what may be an unnatural departure to give thanks for a long life. We learn to cherish the long walk, our vigil kept, in the same way we walk with Jesus, His death on the cross letting us know that suffering truly can have meaning and will continue to be part of the foundation of goodness in our lives.



A SUDDEN BLOW... A GREAT WEIGHT

Though death is many times expected, it still comes as a shock. Perhaps it was a youngster in the prime of life or a loved one suddenly struck down by some heart wrenching event. A family can be left wounded as deeply as can be. The completely disquieting effect is a part of the grieving process that may not be present when death occurs another way. So much remains shrouded in mystery. Sometimes the confounding circumstances bring an added dose of heartache. Whether the death is controversial, a result of violence or despair or reflective of other unusual circumstances, the after effects can be extremely intense and emotionally unsettling. And we carry this weight in our grief. The violence in our schoolyards; the stinging tears over a suicide or drug related death; the devastation Nature herself sometimes unleashes; the tragedies of disease and war; the pure, deep sadness associated with stillbirth, miscarriage, SIDS or other infant death; all of these special circumstances and more can bring with them burdens beyond grief itself.

As Christians, we believe in the loving mercy of God. We search our hearts for some manner of expressing the living with such a void. Our Lord has a way of giving slices of relief in the hidden intricacies of our daily lives. Painfully, slowly and prayerfully we continue on. We seek help from professionals or clergy who have dealt with these matters before. Support groups have also been of great help to many in such difficult times.

There is no way around heartbreak. We know we must live this mystery, but we must also find a way to return to peace and even the joy we deserve as a member of the human family. God is with us. We are gentle with ourselves, for it is a time of great care.



A FAR AWAY CALL

When one we care about is at death's door, we instinctively go to them. We try to be present for them and for the rest of our family and friends. And yet, there are times when situations prevent our being there. Perhaps we live across the country or overseas and cannot get to the bedside in time; perhaps the death is as a result of a sudden tragedy and we are unable to be with family and friends for the funeral; perhaps special circumstances call for the need to refrain from being there. The distance, for any reason, seems unbearable. One feels disembodied, separated from that which is essential. Indeed, not being present goes against our instincts and may wreak havoc with us emotionally.

We turn to the cross and to those we love. We cope with prayer and in the memorializing of our loved one. We remember our connection in our thoughts, in journals, in stories told to friends, and especially in acts of kindness to others. We might even communicate with those who were present at the funeral or bedside and share with them the same kinds of things we would have shared had we been able to have been there. With God's help, we break the distance down as much as we can. We cherish the memory of our loved one because our God has made it so that love and memory have no physical bounds; they travel the world and touch hearts with their far away call. God's love is a not so distant light that may just help those lost find their way home.



WHEN A CHILD GRIEVES

Taking time for the common sense, loving answers to questions that arise from children who are grieving is a labor of love well worth our efforts. The best thing we can do for our children now is to give them our time and our presence.

Because children are so tactile, they may display physical symptoms such as a lack of appetite, indigestion or headaches after a great loss. Treating the physical symptoms is only part of our concern. We want to let our children know that they can talk about how they feel and that we are there for them. A grieving child may also have nightmares, become overtly aggressive at school or at play or even regress to behaviors typically associated with a younger age. It is also common for children to blame themselves for a death in the family. We might consult a professional counselor or clergy member who can help us navigate these delicate waters. Because they are so resilient, we may not at first grasp the depth of a child's grief. Again, our time and our supportive presence are called for. We may pass on a personal item of our loved one to a child, in response to those tactile sensibilities. We remember our deceased in story, in prayer, and a hundred other ways...and we let the kids be a part of those remembrances.

As we tend to our precious children in their grief, we may become acutely aware of how their ability to live in the present and their knack for finding joy can teach us important lessons about the acceptance of our loved one's death. We are there to care for the children in their fear and their sorrow. They are there for us, too, in their courage, resilience and vitality.



COMPLICATED GRIEF: WHEN SORROW LINGERS

For some, the pain of loss can linger on and on and become debilitating. This is what happens with what some professionals call *Complicated Grief* or *Prolonged Grief Syndrome*. It is not a matter of indulgence for those suffering it; they want to be able to live with their loss as much as anyone and they can and will do it as long as they can find a way to tap into the hidden strength God plants in us all.

Symptoms of *Complicated Grief* may include being overly distracted, psychologically numb or even clinically depressed, sometimes feeling stings of bitterness and a lack of trust in others. An overall inability to make life adjustments to the death of the loved one is particularly troubling to many. Sometimes even day to day functional impairment may be experienced.

Treatment is available for this type of grief and it would behoove the one experiencing it to seek it out. This is a time when caring friends or family members should abstain from judgment and encourage help, perhaps in the form of psychological treatment from an experienced clinician, a grief counselor, a member of the clergy or even a funeral director who might point one in the right direction. We don't forget the comforts of scripture and the consolations of our faith. We remember to pray. We remember to talk about what we're feeling, to be of help to others and to be willing to seek help from others. And just as all grief is individual, so too is all healing with God's grace. The life of Jesus Christ tells us that, even in the face of lingering sorrow, hope will reign eternal.

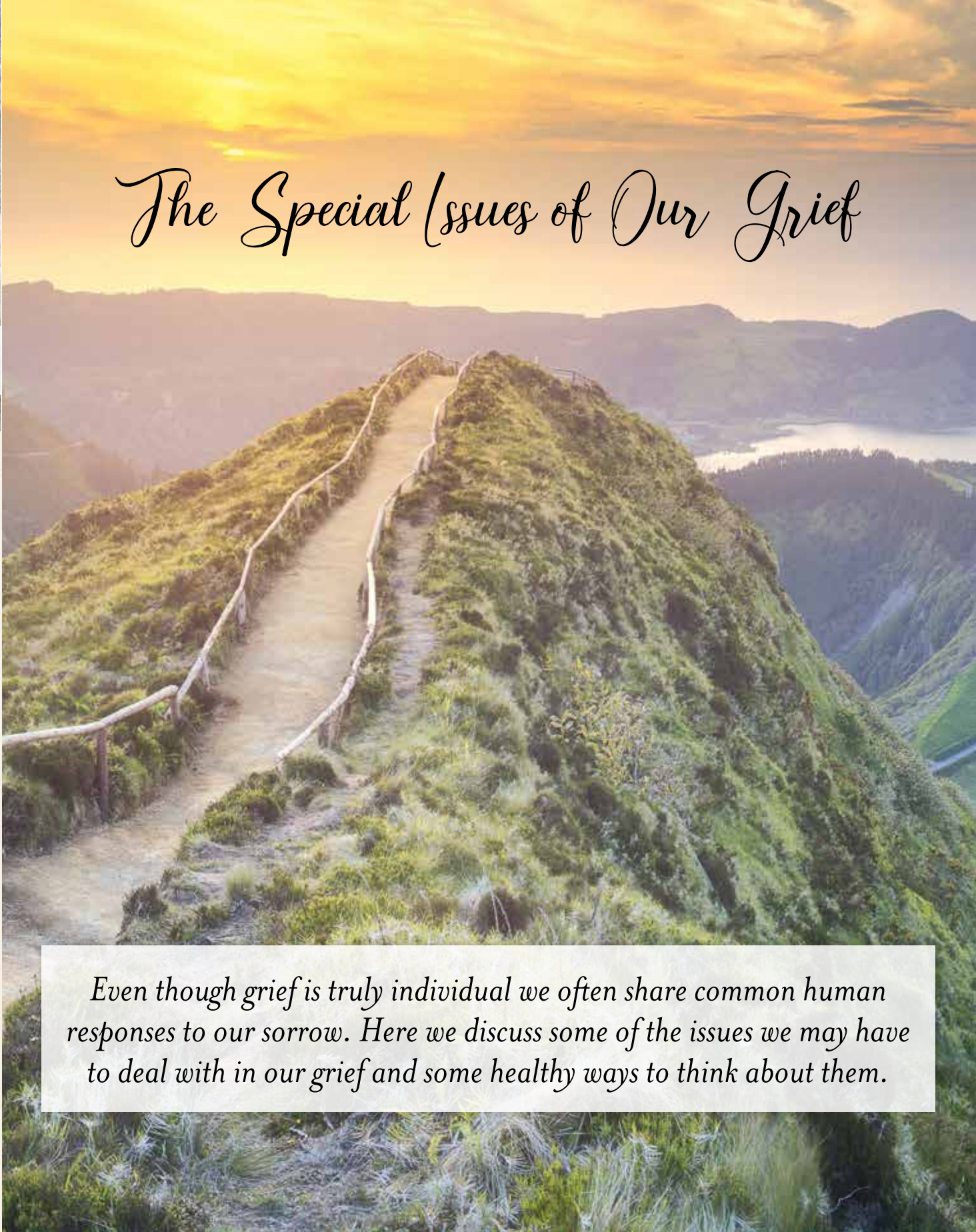


CARETAKERS...TREASURES OF THE FAMILY

We are so very thankful when our loved ones receive caring attention in the last stages of their earthly existence. Humble heroes whose service has been invaluable are too often taken for granted. Caretakers may feel an especially deep sting following the death of one whom they have attended. They are keenly aware of the struggles and difficulties of last days, or months or years. They also understand on a deep level the mercy that can be attendant to a death, the warranted relief family members may feel in knowing that their loved one no longer suffers.

The professional will have been compensated all along but special duty still calls for special thanks. The death of any close relative can take a heavy toll on a family caretaker in sometimes unpredictable ways. Ironically, it may be a family caretaker who will need our presence and our help in time to come. The presence of loving caretakers, be they related or not, may be one of the greatest blessings God bestows upon a family.

To accompany a person on their last journey is a privilege. It may also be a burden borne of love. These special people, these caretakers, can become family treasures because of their dedication, kindness and loyalty. And we are forever beholden to them for the very special role they have played in that unique and intimate part of life that encompasses death.



The Special Issues of Our Grief

Even though grief is truly individual we often share common human responses to our sorrow. Here we discuss some of the issues we may have to deal with in our grief and some healthy ways to think about them.



FEAR AND SELF-PITY

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

LUKE 12:32

We express our fear in questions. *What am I to do now, how will I live and what will be different?* We may fear family members will drift apart. And we fear the great unknown. Some say the antidote to fear is knowledge, but sometimes knowledge, as Shakespeare said, "...maketh a bloody entrance." Knowledge accompanied by faith and the light of hope, however, is a much better defense against the stinging fear that can grip us in our grief.

Self-pity may not be the demon some make it out to be; only when we become frozen in it is it counterproductive to our healing. Our culture will find a thousand ways to deny the incisive wound of death and to squelch our emotions. But Jesus Himself wept over the death of His friend, Lazarus. And later on He would ask His Father to take the cup from Him as He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane. Perhaps in these incidents Jesus is giving us permission to be human.

Along with our hard won knowledge and our sorrow for ourselves and those we love, we have faith that God is with us and that life will go on, that love once shared with our dear deceased will still bear fruit and stay with us even as we walk through our pain. In the end, Jesus is our shepherd; and we are His lambs.



GUILT AND BETRAYAL

*Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them
about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.*

PROVERBS 3:3

Guilt is another much maligned emotion in modern, secular times. And yet, healthy guilt can actually move us to take corrective action when needed. After a death in the family, however; we may even feel guilty for being alive, for being the one left. This is when guilt has turned to shame. As strange as it sounds, we may feel as if our loved one has betrayed us in dying so soon or perhaps even in the way it happened. We may feel forsaken. On the other hand we may feel that we are the betrayers and sink into an abyss of shame, deriding ourselves for having let our loved one down. Feeling a sense of betrayal is a lingering, tattered vessel, an odious kind of quality that festers and can ravage our hearts.

It is imperative that we not place an unjust burden upon our own shoulders. We all let each other down at times and many of us focus on those times while ignoring the particular joys we may have wrought or the genuine charity for which we may have been responsible. Humility moves us to accept and amend our shortcomings as well as to recognize our good qualities and cultivate them. The only way to alleviate a guilt that is unnatural is with God's grace and mercy, the grace and the mercy He writes so lovingly of upon the tablet of our hearts.



LONELINESS AND DESPAIR

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair...

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8,9

The quiet pain of loneliness is one of the greatest crosses we bear as human beings. And we seldom even talk about the hopeless state of being we refer to as despair, as if it were somehow inhuman to feel despondent and confused. Feelings of loneliness and despair can lead us to face the great issues of humanity: the will to live, the path to faith and trust, the notion of purpose in one's life.

Victor Frankl, in his powerful story of life in a German concentration camp, spoke of working in the frozen fields early mornings and waiting for a distant farmhouse light to come on. That simple light outside the camp walls became his great symbol of hope, his sign of something greater than evil and pain and brokenness. It was a light, as Paul said: "to shine out of darkness." That particular light and the layers of meaning it brought forth, became a great example of the resiliency of the human spirit. The light shone in his heart. So, too, in our own quiet ways, do we call forth the light we know lives within us. In the beams of this light, in God's precious love that we share with those around us, loneliness and despair have little chance.

A photograph of a spiral-bound notebook and a pen. The notebook is on the left, and the pen is on the right. The title "A Letter from the Heart..." is written in a cursive font across the top of the page.

A Letter from the Heart...

As Paul says in Corinthians: “Love never fails.” So how do we come to cope with thoughts and feelings that sometimes give us comfort and sometimes keep us from getting on with our lives? Love doesn’t need resolution so much as promise and to realize that promise we may need to apologize for perceived wrongdoings in the past and, just as necessary, forgive such past transgressions in our loved one. Many in the helping professions have come to regard simply writing a letter to our deceased loved one as a way to invite the promise of peace.

Perhaps we seek the guidance of a clergyperson or a counselor. We let someone we trust know what we are doing and we ask them if they would mind our reading the letter to them. We think about what we need and want to say; we pray about it and then we sit down to write. It is best to finish in one sitting. It may be as straightforward as writing, “I’m sorry for...” or “I forgive you for...” or simply, “This is how I feel...” succinctly and honestly. We may say goodbye in this letter... which means the end of this particular conversation but certainly not the end of our relationship! We are not talking about closure, but rather the promise of a continuing relationship with our loved one and a new life, complete and with great love.

A letter is a suggestion only and may not be for everyone. But for some, a journal by the bed becomes a prayerful, ongoing companion on their road. And we come to find that we grieve as we live, with dignity and the promise of goodness in our lives.

*“Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
knits up the o’er wrought heart and bids it break.”*

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, MACBETH



Hope At Hand

The poet Emily Dickenson said, "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in your soul." We have hope that something positive will emerge from the rubble of present difficulty, faith that goodness will indeed reign. And if we believe in it, hope is ever at hand. Like the poet's "thing with feathers," it is ready to offer its solace and comfort in the worst of our suffering... its cautious but welcome flight toward tomorrow.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

In a more mobile society, it is harder to rely upon the united front of protection and sharing that used to come about naturally within the family. As a culture we tend to suppress our grief upon the death of a loved one and retreat to our own corners. Our frenetic pace may not be conducive to the slow unfolding of personal grief in a healthy manner. This cultural dynamic has led to the search for safe and sound ways to express our grief. We've learned how important our families can be and, for some, this has meant a reconnecting to family. We have also learned how precious are the special relationships we have developed outside of our families, in close friends, kindly neighbors, trusted clergy. We see in our own communities helping professionals who can respond to the psychological needs of the bereaved. And though we've adapted to the culture, we cannot minimize the need to walk through our deepest heartache with genuine feeling and integrity. We focus on the fact that memorializing the dead and responding to our own sorrow over their passing is a part of what we naturally do as humans. And finding the best way to do that need not be a solitary endeavor. Help is available.

IN THE FAMILY

If we are to proceed through the natural movements of our grief, it may help to reach out to those who care about us, often those found in our families. There are times when only a family member has a genuine sense for the depth and complexity of our emotions. The presence of one with whom we have a shared history and a measure of understanding can be invaluable. We may be surprised when a distant family member reaches out. Suddenly we hear from someone with whom we had little in common and now we find ourselves in a new friendship formed in the very



shadow of death. Some families cohere in a fiercely close bond and some, though perhaps emotionally remote, still communicate heartfelt regards. Whatever the form of familial relationships, somewhere in the mix is usually help in hard times.

OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

There are times, even in the closest of families, when it is more appropriate to seek guidance from outside. Fortunately, today, many funeral homes, as well as social and private agencies, conduct bereavement groups. Here one may share with others who are grieving, but without the added complexity of familial relationships that can sometimes render the weight even heavier. Special friends of our own faith tradition or the clergypersons associated with it can also be essential sounding boards, especially as we come to recognize just how spiritual a process our grieving is. We may also find through outside groups how we can marshal our own compassion to be of aid to others and thereby tap into our own wells of inspiration and generosity of spirit.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Outside the family and our own circle of friends and neighbors, we can find today many helping organizations that reach out to those grieving. Either in our own local communities through organizations like Hospice or church affiliated groups, or online sources like GriefNet, Kindermourn, WidowNet or the Grief Recovery Institute, as well as many other local and internet resources, we know that having caring people by our side can be of great benefit. Hospitals, churches and even civic organizations are all a part of the helping community that may be there to serve us in our time of need. And like with any good neighbor, when we need help, all we have to do ask.

Whatever the sources, it is important to be willing to reach out and at least try sharing with others our feelings, the weight we take on as a result of our loss. And in that reaching out, the heart begins to know something more than it knew. It knows there is a road ahead. It begins to find a new way. It begins to know a new rhythm and ever so slowly... it begins to heal.



Thank you for taking the time to embrace this memorial volume honoring your loved one. It is our sincere desire that you feel the immortal words of the Sermon on the Mount when Christ said, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” We hope, too, that your volume might also provide a measure of solace for other family members and your close friends. We express our gratitude to those in your community who have made your volume available and we hope that you might take the time to thank them. It is beautiful to see how communities come together in difficult times and how community members show their care and concern. May your *Come Unto Me* volume provide the comfort, consolation and hope so needed when we have bid farewell to a dear loved one. Rest assured of our prayers in your time of need and may God be with you, now and always, as the constant companion of your sorrow and your joy.