

CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

MEMORIAL DAY FIELD MASS

MAY 25, 2015

“Memorial Day: Coping with Grief” *by April Boone, MTh, BCC*

It was so strange to Patricia, a young widow, whose husband died 8 years earlier, because she prided herself thinking she was coping well with the Memorial Day parade that was passing by in her small town, when actually she was shocked to surrender to a deep wave of emotion that was triggered by James Taylor singing “*The Secret of Life*” on the car radio as she drove home. “I had to pull over on the side of the road until the song was over, weeping uncontrollably,” she confesses...

The holidays often produce a *longing in us* – for the comfort of the past, parents, picnics, parties, for security, for God. These longings are often triggered by: the warming of the season, music, scenery, loss of tradition, and the yearning for the familiar presence of a loved one who has died. Even a lovely summer Memorial Day, can bring on a wave of nostalgic loneliness.

When someone is recently bereft, or even further out on the grief journey, an unexpected storm can find one deeply touched by ordinary things – the change of season – and the *imposition* of ‘summer pleasure’ everywhere. Often a profound sadness can only be lifted by talking about it. Allowing a bereaved person to express themselves without inhibition and judgment gives momentum to the unfolding mystery that is taking place in their heart, mind and spirit. It is a great help to those who are mourning to have moments that

are simultaneously painful and curative. Crying, although culturally discouraged, is actively healing. People cope better when allowing tears to be expressed in front of someone else. As this quote reminds us: “being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

The best present to give to somebody trying to cope with loss is the gift of listening in a manner that is unrushed, that is not anxious to “fix” the sorrow. It is important to be aware of that. These are normal reactions to people trying to reconcile a “new way of being”; to integrate the memory of the past with the reality of the void of the present.

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Some tips to those who are grieving or for those who desire to be of help to the bereaved, is to keep things simple. Lighting a candle in memory of the loved one, wearing an article of the beloved’s while celebrating, or



visiting the gravesite to lay flowers can do a lot to move forward – this is authentic ‘Holiday Spirit’, a loving embrace in the midst of chaos. Perhaps we can begin to think of Memorial Day as a salute to our stories of survival and gratitude for relationships.

Real healing and learning to adjust to loss takes place in small, simple steps. Light a candle, offer a prayer and surrender to the blooming that is taking place in the summer season and in your interior life.

For more resources or information on local Bereavement Support Groups, please contact:

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MEMORIAL DAY: A TIME TO REMEMBER

On this day, we wish to honor all those who sacrificed their lives to ensure our freedom. It is a time to reflect on these brave individuals, and come to understand that their efforts have preserved for us a life style that we are not only grateful for but proud of. We salute their dedication and heroism. As we pray together on Memorial Day, we give thanks to the dedicated men and women who served our country and ask God to guide us as to educate our youth of the legacy of their heroism. Visit the gravesites of these valiant individuals and say a prayer for their souls. Their memory must live on forever.

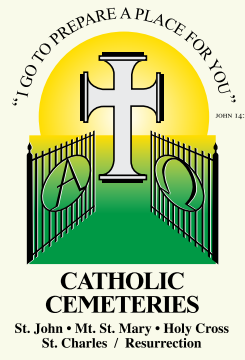


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