



# Jesus weeps with us

How we deal  
with the death of  
loved ones

**A**ll Souls' Day falls in early November. It commemorates all the faithful departed. With the holidays coming up, the thoughts of those who have lost friends, relatives or family members often turn toward the deceased. If anyone can understand what grieving people are going through, it is the members of the Holy Family. Jesus wept when his friends died. He suffered on the cross. The Blessed Mother grieved for her son at the time of his death and afterward. But, there is hope in Jesus' resurrection. And that promise, along with the love of Christ, keeps the faithful going. Here are some stories of those who have dealt with grief and suffering and death and how Christ helped them cope.

“Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.” **It’s not because grieving or losing someone is a blessed event, obviously; it’s because they will be comforted by our Lord. The Lord hears the sound of our cries.**

**Kathy Schneider, parishioner at St. Isidore in Bloomingtondale:**

My husband died of sudden cardiac death (almost three years ago). He was playing racquetball. He was a former two-time state champ. He played an elite level of racquetball. He was a healthy individual. He was checked out every few years for heart disease, and he didn’t have heart disease. While playing racquetball, his heart just stopped. He was there, and then he was gone.

**Desirée Marciani, associate director for the diocesan Center for Family Ministry:**

The grieving process is really the paschal mystery. It’s the dying and rising. When you are in the state of grief, that is what is happening. Folks who are grieving are often all over the place spiritually. Some of them get angry at God. Some of them don’t get angry at God, but get angry at a lot of different things. The thing that some of them don’t realize is they are so close to our Lord because they are entering into that paschal mystery. They are his beloved wounded. I feel that, when we’re with them, we’re on holy, holy ground because it’s sacred because of what they are entering into. He loves them. “Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.” It’s not because grieving or losing someone is a blessed

event, obviously; it’s because they will be comforted by our Lord. The Lord hears the sound of our cries.

**Kathy Schneider:**

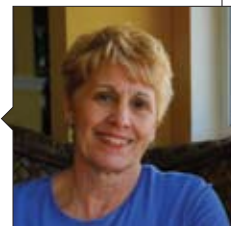
(After my husband died), I spent a lot more time in prayer. When life throws you one of those worst-case scenarios, you really feel devastated and that there is nothing else left. Fortunately, my faith was there for me. I turned to that faith to hold me up. I prayed every day for God to walk and talk with me and my two daughters, who were in college when my husband passed away. I felt very close to the Lord during all of those times. And I felt that I couldn’t turn to anyone else because my husband was the other half of me. He was my support. All of my life was planned out to be sharing with him. I just needed someone else, and the Lord was there.

**Susan Moehle, member of the Stephen Ministry at Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Naperville:**

I have walked with people through their journey experiencing their grief. The Stephen Ministry is confidential. It’s one-on-one. I’m considered the care-giver. The (grieving) person I meet with on a regular basis is referred to as the care-receiver. And Christ is the cure-giver. What we do is we are there to listen. We offer emotional and

spiritual support ... We don’t judge. We don’t tell them how they should be feeling or put a time limit on their grieving ... It gives them a chance to be with someone on a regular basis and just be able to talk.

**Patricia Deacettis, parishioner at St. Andrew the Apostle in Romeoville:**



Five years ago, my husband (George) had four massive strokes (over several years). He ended up paralyzed from the neck down. I took care of him at home. He couldn’t eat. He was like a newborn baby. In the last two years, he lost the ability to speak, too. Hospice was called in the last year ... I feel like I’m very strong in my faith. I felt that was a job. That was something that God gave me to do, and I didn’t want to fail in taking care of George. I never resented George. (But) there were many mornings I used to get up and think I can’t do this another day. Then I remembered reading an article where a woman was taking care of her husband, and she said that there were times she thought she could never do another day. But then, she thought that maybe if she put Jesus in that bed instead of her husband and [said], “I’m taking care of Jesus,” that would make it easier.

**Kathy Schneider:**

There is something that is said quite often about grief: God only gives us as much as we can handle. And yet I know many grieving people who would disagree with that statement.

**Diocesan Catholic cemeteries located throughout the diocese:**

- **Bourbonnais:** All Saints Cemetery and Mausoleum: 815.933.2342; Maternity BVM Cemetery: 815.933.2342
- **Crest Hill:** Holy Cross Cem-

etry and St. Mary Nativity Cemetery: 815.838.0395.

- **Downer’s Grove:** St. Bernard Cemetery: 630.668.3313
- **Elmhurst:** St. Mary Cemetery: 630.668.3313
- **Joliet:** Mt. Olivet Cemetery and Garden Mausoleum; S.S. Cyril and Methodius Cemetery; St. John the Baptist Cemetery; and St. Patrick Cemetery;

815.838.0395

- **Kankakee:** Mt. Calvary Cemetery and Mausoleum and St. Rose Cemetery: 815.933.2342
- **Lockport:** Calvary Cemetery and Lockport South/St. Dennis Cemetery: 815.838.0395
- **Naperville:** Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery: 630.668.3313

• **Oswego:** Risen Lord Cemetery: 630.554.7590

- **Romeoville:** Resurrection Cemetery and Mausoleum: 815.838.0395 or 815.886.0750
- **Wheaton:** Assumption Cemetery and Mausoleum: 630.668.3313
- **Winfield:** St. John the Baptist Cemetery: 630.668.3313

There are days when God gives you more than you can handle, but God never gives us more than he can handle, and that's why we turn to God.

**Patricia Deacetis:**

During the time I took care of George, I also had breast cancer. I said to Jesus, "What are you doing? Don't you know I'm taking care of this man?" Through prayer, I got stronger. And I said, "This is just a bump in the road, and I'm going to continue and do what I have to do." (Jesus) sent me my sister. Her hubby had passed away. She came out here from Arizona, and she helped me with him the last three years. God always take care of us, and he always finds a way of sending help. And I always felt that was my help: that he sent my sister to me. My faith life became stronger through all this. I became less selfish as a person. It brought me closer to Jesus ... I'm more patient and more loving and giving. It's been a blessing.

**Deacon Tom Marciani, a Joliet Area Community Hospice chaplain who visits the sick and dying:**



One of the patients I visited told me her whole life's journey. Abused as a child. Never felt loved by her parents. As an adult, she wanted to be loved by her husband, and she was married for a while, and she became pregnant. And he never told her that he didn't want any children. They never discussed this. He didn't want the baby. She was so afraid of losing him that she had an abortion. And then she carried the guilt of killing her child. But her emotional state was such that the fear of losing him was far greater than taking the child's life ... Eventually the marriage ended in divorce. Afterwards, wanting to be loved again, she would be very promiscuous with her body – just wanting to be loved. Finally, when she found her own self-esteem and she learned how to love herself, she started

searching for forgiveness. She was Catholic, but she was ashamed to talk to a priest, so she went to other faiths that would openly accept her and show her the love she was looking for. But, as she faced death, she wanted to hear forgiveness from a priest. I was the first person she told her story to. The story of her life. After she talked to me, I said to her, "Would you like to see a priest?" And she said, "I would." And then I arranged to have a priest come in and give her the sacrament of the sick and hear her confession ... She felt all along that God never loved her. I affirmed with her that God loved her all along.

**Wanda Ragland, diocesan cemetery ministry:**

I view death as a passing to a better place. Do I want it? No. I can relate to people's denial, but I also know it's going to happen, and I know there's a promise (resurrection of the body), and I know that everyone needs to prepare for it.

**Eric Holloway, diocesan cemetery ministry:**

I know no greater comfort that we can give to a grieving person than to proclaim our hope in the resurrection of the dead. The pain, suffering and loss of a loved one can become a blessed moment when the (Holy) Spirit works wonders in the hearts of those who believe. From our faith comes our sure and certain hope in the face of death.



**Richard Tappella, diocesan director of Catholic cemeteries:**

The Catholic Church provides sacred burial grounds for the Catholic faithful to consider at the time of their death or to plan before the time arises. I think it's important as Catholics to continue our faith process even at the time our death occurs. Our



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cemeteries tell a story. They are stories about thousands of people who have lived numerous lives, and it's a family. It's a family of the Catholic faithful.

**Liz Jesse, member of the bereavement ministry at Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Naperville:**

The funeral liturgy ties itself in so many ways into the baptism. All the symbols: from the candles to the pall (representing the white garment one receives at baptism) to the sprinkling of the water. Those remind us so much that we do have a promise of everlasting life through our baptism.

**Father Gregor Gorsic, pastor at St. Andrew the Apostle in Romeoville:**

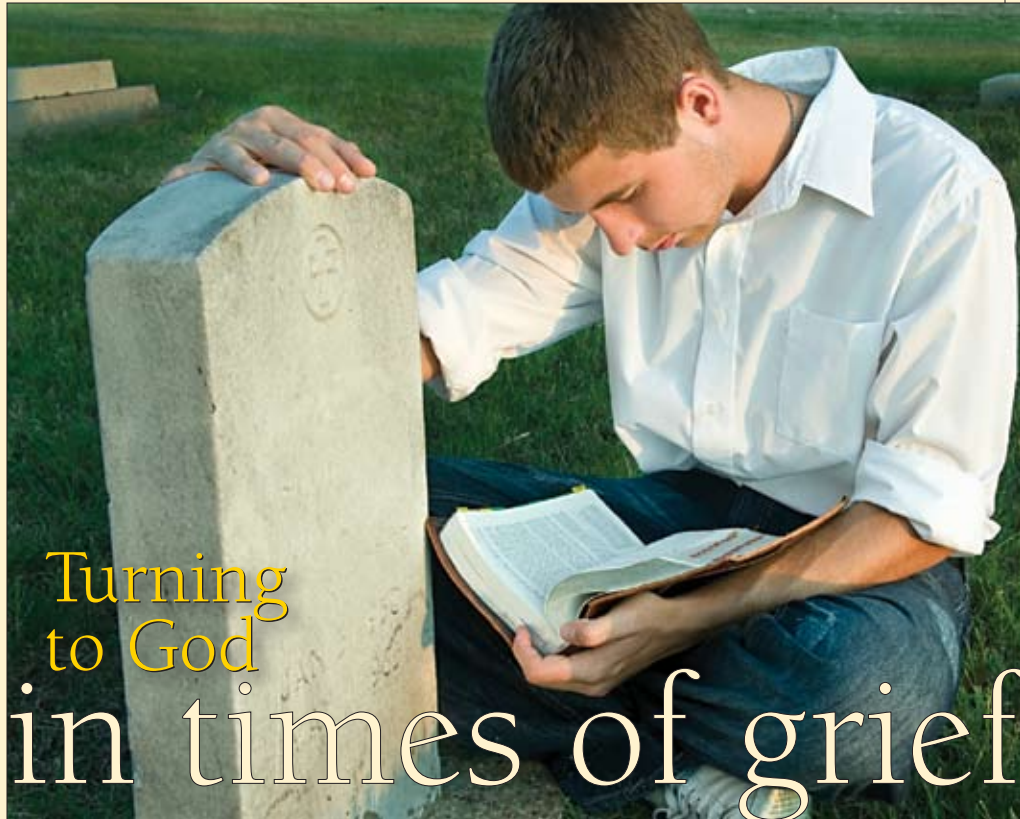
Since hope is the key, I will quote Bishop (Peter) Sartain – and maybe he's quoting someone else – but I use this: "Hope expects from God what God promises, and, in Jesus, we have received the greatest promise of new life." There is nothing more stable, nothing more certain with regard to that, than the mystery of the presence of Jesus and his life.

**Elodia Alvarado, miembro de la parroquia San. Alexis en Bensenville, perdió a su hijo y a su esposo en este año y habló de su fe y la fe que necesitamos tener cuando otros mueren:**

Dios nos hace fuerte. El día que Dios nos llame, vamos, contentos. Fuertes. Mi esposo me decía de vez en cuando, "Nos vamos a la casa cuando Dios quiere." ☩

**For those who are suffering from grief, local parishes often have bereavement ministries or a Stephen Ministry to help people cope. Please call your local parish or check your local parish bulletin for more information.**

**A** phone call came into my office on the afternoon of June 21, 2007. Joseph Lyne, funeral director from Lombard, Ill., indicated that the Funeral Directors Association of DuPage County (within the Diocese of Joliet) had decided to donate their services for the burial of a little boy, who, for the last two years, had gone unidentified.



Turning  
to God  
in times of grief

I immediately responded that the Diocese of Joliet would arrange for a donated burial site for the little boy at Assumption Catholic Cemetery in Wheaton. Mr. Lyne informed me that the actual date of burial would be Oct. 15, 2007, which coincided with the anniversary date of the discovery of the child.

As my conversation with Mr. Lyne continued, my vague recollection of the local story began to come back.

The boy's case was adopted by the law enforcement officials of the DuPage County Sheriff's Office. They named him "DuPage Johnny Doe."

The boy was believed to be between 3 and 5 years old when he died. His decomposed body was found inside a blue laundry bag. It was discovered by a man walking his dog in rural Naperville Township.

Despite an exhaustive investigation, investigators haven't been able to identify the child or determine how he died. Community members stepped up to help, with the DuPage County Funeral Directors Association donating their services, including the casket and burial vault. The small granite marker and even the clothes in which he was dressed were donated, as well as the grave space in the "Little Innocents" section of Assumption Catholic Cemetery.

Once the media picked up on the story, the cemetery office was flooded with phone calls by concerned people in the community requesting the opportunity to attend the graveside services.

And so on Oct. 15, 2007, at 2 p.m., more than 150 people from the local community came to witness the burial of little "Johnny Doe". A book of remembrance was secured

by the cemetery to allow those gathered to register their names. Maybe some day it could be turned over to a family member to offer solace to someone who may be related to this child of God.

As the hearse carrying the small white casket drove closer to the grave site, everyone in attendance stood in silent reverence to this small child, who lived such a short earthly life. But he has been welcomed into the loving arms of Our Lord for all eternity.

Four pallbearers carried the casket from the hearse to the grave site, while a bagpiper played "Amazing Grace". Detectives Joe DelGuidice and John Gradus, who remain assigned to the case, placed a wreath of white-and-blue flowers at the site. Many brought colorful bouquets and cuddly stuffed animals to lay at the grave site.

Deacon Ron Yircus, who led the prayers of committal, said that "Johnny" was not left without a legacy.

"He did so much in his short life," Deacon Yircus said. "Look how many people have gathered here today. He's moved so many people in so many different ways without ever saying a single word – just by being God's creation."

In the course of our usual work day in our cemetery offices, we take many phone calls. But I don't believe I'll ever forget that call that afternoon to arrange for a simple burial of a little boy who is "Known only to God", but has touched so many lives. ☩

**Richard Tapella is the diocesan director of Catholic Cemeteries for the Diocese of Joliet. He can be reached at [rtapella@dioceseofjoliet.org](mailto:rtapella@dioceseofjoliet.org).**

The following is an excerpt of an article that ran in the January 2008 edition of *Catholic Cemetery* magazine.