

MEMORIALIZE THOSE WE HAVE LOST

There have been many friends and family members who have died over the last year due to COVID or otherwise. Consider how you might pray for and memorialize those lost while engaging and deeply impacting their loved ones.

Description:

We have a need to mourn the loss of loved ones who have died. However, over the past year many were not able to attend funeral Masses or to grieve in a normal way. Perhaps their loved ones may have died suddenly or in isolation, and maybe some feel that the Church “wasn’t there for me when I was in need.” How might our parish family seek to know who we have lost, pray for them, entrust them to God, and even memorialize those lost in a meaningful way?

Consider celebrating a special Mass, planning an event, or creating a tangible memorial that in some way celebrates the life of those who have died all while entering into the grief and the loss of their family and friends. ***Once the idea is planned, make every effort to reach out as a whole parish.***

Who do we know who has died?

- Parish staff can start by creating a list of every funeral Mass celebrated over the last year and personally reach out to the family members to come to the Memorial Mass, event, or initiative.
- Go beyond the staff. Help each committed disciple or regular attendee at Mass to personally reach out within the parish to learn who has died. Make them a part of the mission!
- At the offertory, for a given time period, encourage parishioners to place the names of any loved ones they know who have died over the last year (not just parishioners).
 - o Create simple half sheets of paper that record the names and relationships of each person they know as well as the name of the person submitting.
 - o Record the information and meaningfully pray for each person.
 - o Follow up later with a personal invite to the Mass, event, or to participate in the memorial.
- (There are many other potential ideas your parish leadership can come up with)

Think beyond the parish

How can our Church not only pray for and engage Mass-goers and registered parishioners, but also: distant relatives, neighbors, those in the local community, and even non-Catholics? See John 10:16.

Equip your people to reach out in a variety of ways such that your parish, the Body of Christ, touches the lives of many. Give parishioners the opportunity to engage people saying things like, “My Church wants to pray for you, your family, and any of your loved ones who have passed away over the last year.”

More than a name

However you choose to memorialize those who have died, find ways to make it even more personal, impactful, and special for friends and family of the deceased. Consider things like asking for photos of all who have died so that we have a more than a name as we are praying.

- Print photos and display them at the entrance before Mass or in some way at a planned event
 - o Afterward, give those photos to parishioners who will pray specifically for the deceased and their loved ones.
 - o For those with whom you can connect with easily or whose address you know, have the parishioner who has been praying write a handwritten note to the loved one and return the picture to the parish with the note—mail both to the loved one.
- Create a slideshow to be shown before the live-streamed Mass so that distant relatives and non-Catholics can join virtually. End with a scrolling list of names for those with no photo.