



Bereavement Ministry

(also known as Ministry of Consolation)

Getting Started

If your parish is in its initial stage of its bereavement ministry, the following resources will assist parishes as they begin a Bereavement Ministry in their parish as follows:

- 1) **Organizing Parish Events:** Before you begin a bereavement ministry in your parish, you may want to consider planning one or all of the following:
 - a) Liturgies of remembrance and prayer service to commemorate the deceased members.
 - Masses on the Commemoration of All Souls in November or another date to remember in a special way the loved ones who died in the past 12 months.
 - Candle lighting ceremony to honor the departed loved ones during Mass.
 - Reception after Mass for the bereaved families.
 - b) Memorial Mass last Saturday of the Month.
 - c) Grief Education Event and invite a guest speaker.
- 2) **Beginning Your Program - Bereavement Ministry (Ministry of Consolation):** The documents and forms listed below are available at our office.
 - a) Phases of Bereavement Ministry: Phases include: Funeral Planning, Attending Funeral Rites, Meal programs for funeral, Follow-up, Grief Support groups, Liturgies of Remembrance.
 - b) Sample Parish # 1: Includes sample Bereavement Team Protocol and Profile of the Deceased.
 - c) Sample Parish # 2: Includes sample Organization of Bereavement Team and Contact Form.
- 3) **Volunteer Screening Program:** Include in your volunteer recruiting and screening process a role for a bereavement ministry. Below are descriptions of position that you can adopt in your parish:
 - a) [Volunteer Ministry Position Description – Bereavement Team Member.](#)
 - b) [Volunteer Ministry Position Description – Bereavement Team Coordinator.](#)
 - c) [Parish Guidelines for Volunteers.](#)
- 4) **Guidelines for Beginning a New Support Group:** The documents and forms listed below are available at our office.
 - a) Sample Support Group Meeting Outline
 - b) Bereavement Support Group Ground Rules
 - c) Bereavement Support Group Creed
 - d) Bereavement Group Members Information Form
 - e) Ministry with the Bereaved a Parish Model
- 5) **Bereavement Ministry Training:** The Office of Formation for Discipleship offers training for new ministers. Please see our website for upcoming [formation opportunities](#).
- 6) **Training Bereavement Ministers by Franciscan Communications:** This training program includes two DVD's: Responding to Grief and Funeral Planning which can be offered to new and seasoned bereavement ministers.

- 7) [**GriefWork: A National Servite Ministry of Compassion - Ministry of Consolation and Compassion Training Participant Manual:**](#) A Ministry of the Servants of Mary, topics include: Introduction – Order of Christian Funerals; Communication and Listening; An Overview of Grief and Mourning; Facilitation Skills and Support Groups; Beginning Your Program; Healing and Meditation; Self-Care for the Minister.
- 8) [**The Ministry of Consolers**](#) by **Terence P. Curley:** This book is a helpful resource for the training and formation of new and seasoned bereavement ministers.
- 9) [**The Bereavement Ministry Program: A Comprehensive Guide for Churches**](#) by **David Aaker and Jan Nelson:** This guide includes information to begin and nurture a church-based program to support bereaved individuals and families. This resource can also be found in our [Resource Library](#).
- 10) [**Bereavement Ministry: Giving Voice to Our Grief and Suffering:**](#) Published by Ave Maria Press on December 5, 2012. This webinar will help participants give voice to those who suffer and the caregivers.
- 11) [**Praying Through Grief: Healing Prayer Services for Those Who Mourn**](#) by **Mauryeen O'Brien, O.P.:** This book includes prayer services and rituals that may be used on a variety of occasions which combines prayer, meditation, scripture, and song.
- 12) [**Grieving During the Holidays**](#) from **Creighton University's Online Ministries:** This article written by Sr. Marie Micheletto, RSM includes suggestions to support bereaved individuals and families at Christmas or other holidays.
- 13) [**Celebrating Christmas after the loss of a loved one**](#) from **Creighton University's Online Ministries:** This article includes various prayers to help the bereaved individuals and families at Christmas.
- 14) [**Celebrations of Installation and Recognition**](#) by **Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:** This book includes

Celebration of recognition/commissioning for various ministries including one for the Bereavement Ministry. This book can be found in our [Reference Library](#).

Growing

For parishes who have established a Parish Bereavement Ministry, the following resources will assist Parishes enhance your Bereavement Ministry including resources for Parish Bereavement Support Groups:

- 1) **Parish-based bereavement support programs:** Parish based bereavement group sessions provide a safe place where the bereaved can share their experiences with others and be supported by other parishioners who have also experienced the death of a loved one and who have received bereavement training. These parish-based bereavement groups are peer ministry not therapy support groups. Please find below a few bereavement support group resources for your consideration:
 - a) [**Seasons of Hope - Creating and Sustaining Catholic Bereavement Groups:**](#) This program consists of four six-week seasons which is Christ-centered and scripture-based. Each session explores mourning through scripture, prayer, reflection, activities, and faith sharing. For more information watch [Bringing Hope to the Bereaved in Your Parish: Insights from the Seasons of Hope Approach](#) by AveMaria Press.
 - b) [**Grieving with Great HOPE:**](#) This is a Catholic faith-based program that consists of a five week grief support workshop DVD series that offers a prayerful, practical and personal approach for anyone who is mourning the loss of a loved one.

- c) [New Day Bereavement Program](#): This program consists of ten weekly sessions which assist people to work through their grieving process. Each session begins with prayer and reflections combined with writing and sharing activities.
 - d) [Harvesting Our Tears](#): This program consists of an eight-week bereavement process which draws on the richness of the scripture, prayer, sacrament, theology, imagery, ritual, wisdom and tradition of the Catholic faith community.
 - e) [Bereavement Ministry: A Leader's Resource Manual](#): This program consists of 8 weekly sessions which focuses on various grief topics. Each session includes opening remarks, session presentation and a closing prayer.
 - f) [GriefShare - From Mourning to Joy](#): This program consists of 13 weekly sessions which is Christ-Centered and Biblically based. It consists of three forms of communication 1) Video presentation, 2) Group Discussion and 3) Workbook exercises. The Leaders Kit consists of complete training material for church lay leaders, promotional tools, and video seminar teachings.
- 2) [Growing Through Grief: The Role of Support Groups](#) by Dr. Alan Wolfelt: This article includes excerpts from his book [The Understanding Your Grief Support Group Guide: Starting and Leading a Bereavement Support Group](#). In this article Dr. Wolfelt defines the meaning of growth.
 - 3) [Responding to Problems in the Support Group Setting](#) by Dr. Alan Wolfelt: This article includes excerpts from Dr. Alan Wolfelt's book [The Understanding Your Grief Support Group Guide: Starting and Leading a Bereavement Support Group](#). This article provides helpful suggestions for dealing with challenging participants.
 - 4) [Healing Through Pastoral Care](#): Sponsored by Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Published on May 19, 2017. Presenter:

Melissa M. Kelley, STM associate professor of pastoral counseling and contextual education. This presentation looks at pastoral care as a ministry of healing and offers helpful tips for the Pastoral Caregivers.

- 5) [Theological Reflection: Key to Connecting Faith and Life](#): Offered in Partnership with the University of Dayton, Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation.

Going Deeper

This section includes additional resources to assist parishes and provide deeper formation opportunities for those involved in bereavement ministry in the parish community.

- 1) [Bereavement Ministry: A Christian Perspective](#): Offered in Partnership with the University of Dayton, Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation.
- 2) [Boundless Compassion](#) by Joyce Rupp: This book includes theories, processes and prayers that will inspire Ministers of Care to be a more compassionate presence. Please watch a short video [here](#).
- 3) [Loss, Change, and Resilience in Communities of Faith \(November 6, 2015\)](#): Sponsored by the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Presenter: Melissa Kelley is STM associate professor of pastoral care and counseling and co-director of Contextual Education. This presentation reviews various types of loss and change that effect individuals and the community of faith. It also looks at responding to loss and change with resilience.

Contact Details

If you have questions about these resources, formation and training opportunities, or other things related to Bereavement Ministry, please contact Saulina (Sally) Amaral, Diocesan Coordinator, Ministries of Care and Ministry with Maturing Adults at 416.934.3400, ext. 518 or samaral@archtoronto.org.