



Bereavement In Our Catholic Schools: A Pastoral Guideline

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" ~John 11:25



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Introduction

As members of a Catholic School community, we are always called to be people of faith, hope and charity (*cf. 1 Corinthians 13:13*). We express this through our witness of faith in times of joy and sorrow, but most importantly and especially in the way we support one another in times of crisis. When there is a death in the community, it is important that the community responds in an appropriate pastoral manner. The pastoral response may vary depending on whether it is the death of a student, a staff member, any other member of the school community, or a member of the broader community.

Prayer services and liturgical celebrations are important sources of support and ought to be well prepared. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind the person who has died and select appropriate scripture passages and hymns. Prayers are offered not only for the deceased, but also for the members of his or her family and friends who are grieving, and for the entire school community. Also, any other appropriate school rituals that provide healthy theological perspectives on life, death and the afterlife are encouraged.

Moreover, it is important for the Catholic school community to continue to provide emotional support throughout the grieving process for the bereaved and any grieving members of the community in order to assist with the healing process. In conjunction with this resource, please refer to and include the Mental Health Crisis Response Guidelines.

In the Toronto Catholic District School Board all are welcome in our various communities. This includes several different religions and faith traditions. In these situations, please feel free to change, adapt, or alter these resources to accommodate the particular circumstances. If interfaith assistance or support is needed, please free to reach out to the Nurturing Our Catholic Community Team

tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/mhs/Pages/Mental-Health-Policy.aspx

Initial Protocol

In any and all situations, initial contact should be **one or more of the following**:

- School Principal (administrator/designate)
- Communications Department (416-222-8282 ext. 2327)
- Your Area School Superintendent

Who in turn will contact the following accordingly:

- Catholic Teachers' Centre
- Religion Resource Personnel and/or Chaplain
- Mental Health Response Team (includes Social Work and Psychology Services and Guidance Teachers)
- Parish Priest
- Any other support personnel

What to do the “Day Of” a crisis and beyond

In consultation with the school administration, NCC team and Mental Health Response Team, establish the protocol for the day which **may** include:

- communication with family of deceased
- staff meeting before class or before opening exercises (depending on when the news was received)
- classroom visits by selected personnel
- general or specific announcements
- professional support throughout the day (spiritual, psychological, etc.)
- media liaison (from Communications Dept)
- letter home to parents/guardians
- refreshments/community support
- at the end of day, debrief with staff and appropriate support personnel

Ideas on how to respond in remembrance:

**These are offered as suggestions--you will be aware of the needs of your community.*

- Once appropriate announcements have been made in the appropriate setting such as a classroom announcement, prayer and reflections over the PA referencing the persons or person we are praying for can be considered. (Please see p.10 for suggestions.)
- An Assembly for the entire student body or by division *may be organized* when deemed appropriate. This could include a short prayer and ritual.

Note: Each person expresses grief differently, which may be difficult for some people. *Therefore, gathering the entire school may be problematic as some people may be upset by the grief expressions of others. If this is the case, a prayer service or memorial service could be celebrated by the entire school at a later date. Voluntary participation of students should be considered for school masses intended for the memory of the person who died.*

- A box for prayer intentions or expressions of support can be provided for different students/teachers/parents (*contents may be edited for anything too disturbing or inappropriate if passing the box on to the family of the deceased*).
- A book of remembrance to write messages or sign names may be temporarily displayed for messages/signing etc.
- Acknowledgement of the one who has died on the classroom prayer table may be comforting – a picture or the person’s name; these are intended as temporary actions of approximately one week.
- A school mass or liturgy of the word can be planned in memory of the person who died. (See **Eucharistic preparation guide** available on our [website](#) or consult your Religion/Family Life resource teacher).
- A memorial table can be set up in the chapel or in a central location. This could include – a framed photograph, a bible, and a candle, a flower or plant (this idea is appropriate for a student or teacher who was part of the school community). An appropriate length of time for these memorials would be approximately one week.
- Later on, there may requests for a more permanent memorial to be organized. It is important to note that permanent memorials are discouraged, as this creates inequity and cannot be sustained over a period of time.

Do’s and Don’ts

What to say to a student will depend on his/her age and experience as well as the situation. Always be as truthful as possible with age-appropriate language. **Where the family has requested that details not be given, this must be respected.** Being as honest and open as possible will however encourage the student to share their feelings and fears. It is often more supportive and valuable **to listen to**, rather than **talk to** the students.

Many students have access to social media and may have seen/heard information that is disturbing and inaccurate. Often, there are misconceptions that surface. **Care must be taken to ensure that students receive the correct information at the proper time, and it is shared in a respectful and sensitive manner.** A good response is, “We do not have all the facts/details as yet.”

*For death by suicide, please refer to Mental Health Crisis Response Guideline Appendix A for special considerations:

[tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/mhs/Pages/Mental-Health-Policy.aspx](https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/mhs/Pages/Mental-Health-Policy.aspx)

https://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Documents/S03_Revised%20TCD%20CRISIS%20RESPONSE%20GUIDELINES_Sept%202017_Board.pdf

The following are some suggestions of what to say and what not to say to students:

“DO” What to Say to Students about Death:

(Note: it is suggested that language appropriate to the grade levels being addressed is used. Given the circumstances, please use discretion.)

- The person died of an accident, illness or natural causes.
- We believe his/her spirit/soul is safe and at peace with God (cf. Wisdom 3.1).
- The love we feel for them will continue to live on in our hearts.
- Even in the midst of grieving, it is possible to experience different feelings and emotions. We may feel like having fun, smiling and laughing about other things. This is perfectly fine and varies with each individual.
- We can remember times we shared with them, and feel happy, loving and peaceful. Perhaps, we may choose to share these feelings with others.

“DON’T” – What Not to Say to Students about Death and God:

- The person was so good that God needed him/her as an angel (instills fear of God taking me if I’m good)
- The person didn’t have a quality of life and so it’s better not to live (doesn’t help student make sense out of or accept suffering as having any value)
- The person will come back to be around you (student may think the spirit is like a ghost)
- The person is sleeping in heaven (instills fear of going to sleep and of parents sleeping)
- The person chose to be with God because they were ready to die (may cause resentment and feeling of abandonment)
- God decided the person was going to die (fosters a negative image of God. This idea may cause the student to blame God or be angry with God, and therefore, not able to find any comfort in God’s love)

Note: Don’t give more details about the cause of death than are necessary (some facts can trigger visual images that will traumatize the student). Provide them with the necessary information at the proper time.

**Consult the Religious Education Department or Catholic Teachers’ Centre with any questions about the theological language pertaining to death and the afterlife.*

**Consult your local Mental Health Response Team for additional clinical considerations*

Special Considerations for the Elementary Panel

People sometimes underestimate the impact of death upon young children. While it is true that their understanding of death develops over a period of time, it is clear that young children can be profoundly affected by the death of a family member, classmate, staff member or support staff. The impact is more intense when they do not have opportunities to talk or to grieve openly, and do not feel that those close to them recognize their feelings - even though they themselves may not yet have the words to express them.

Reactions to bereavement can include **withdrawal, open distress, tears, panic, aggression, anxiety, fear or other signs of stress**. Bereaved children may act out this stress in unexpected ways, such as nervous giggling, bravery, aggression, or total denial - all these are normal grief reactions. Due to so much emotional energy that goes into dealing with loss, they may also become extremely tired, to the point of exhaustion. For some children, there may be additional complications; if the death has been referred to as 'falling asleep' or 'being taken', sometimes it is the case that children become afraid of going to bed or to sleep. Words like 'loss' or 'lost' can also put fear into a young child's mind.

How the School can help moving forward:

Staff should always look to the administration for guidance (consult p. 4, Initial Protocol).

It is essential that **all staff** know about the bereavement, so that they can respond sensitively. When the report of a death first comes to school, it may be appropriate for a staff member (as directed by administration), to talk to the class, to create opportunities for them to ask questions and discuss how they can help their bereaved classmates. On the child's return to school, even close friends may need encouragement to voice difficult feelings, (for example to say, "I'm sorry your brother died."). The feeling that few people, if any, acknowledged their loss could add further pain to the bereaved child.

Most children will welcome the opportunity to talk privately to an adult about their loss. So, if the child cannot verbalize his or her feelings, it is helpful for a trusted staff member to follow up with the child and show sympathy (without saying, "I know how you feel"). This is necessary because sometimes the family may be so overwhelmed by the loss that little individual acknowledgement is given to the child's feelings at home. (Please be reminded that a referral, if appropriate, can always be made to the Mental Health Response Team for additional support.)

Some children may need a retreat or a flexible timetable when grief overtakes them. It helps if the school acknowledges a student's need to express their grief, and provides a safe environment and a trusted adult to be with them. Once the bereaved student returns to the school routine, it is helpful to share concerns with parents so that they know how he or she is coping in school. Most families appreciate some sort of direct communication from the school, especially if the person who has died was a former student, parent or staff member. Books, stories, music and art can be very helpful in moments of grief, both with the class and with the bereaved student. There are many excellent books written on bereavement for different ages

of children, both in the fact and fiction sections, now available from shops, libraries or the web, and many school libraries have a selection of such recommended publications. **We have included a bibliography of books and DVD's to help you when making your choices of books etc. that will be used (see pp. 24-28).** Sensitivity is needed so that deep grief is not triggered.

The grief caused by the death will be long-lasting, and schools need to recognize that anniversaries and celebrations will be difficult - especially the first birthday and Christmas or other religious festivals. It will help if key dates and times are noted and passed on to the next class teacher or next school, along with other records and information. As children mature, the death is felt and questioned at new levels, emotionally and intellectually, often causing renewed grief and distress.

Classmates, especially close friends of the bereaved student, or of the student who has died, will experience varying grief reactions. Many younger teachers themselves as well may not have experienced bereavement, especially of this kind; therefore, some classroom teachers will probably need the support of colleagues at this time. They might need to be reassured that their ideas for giving comfort to the student are wise and beneficial. If the deceased child was a student at your school, it is acceptable (if possible) to send a staff representative to the child's funeral, Memorial, or Thanksgiving service – if the family is in agreement. Special arrangements may need to be made if classes of students wish to attend. (Students wishing to attend should attend only under parental permission and supervision.) Also, in these circumstances, the child's books and work should be kept carefully and returned to the family by a teacher at a suitable time.

Special Considerations for the Secondary Panel

Much of the above applies equally to older students; however, while being older may make it easier to comprehend the permanence of death, additional burdens affect the adolescent. As stated before, school staff need to accept that there are many different ways of grieving; students may develop their own support structures and choose not to share these with an adult.

Different factors, circumstances, and individual personalities may make it difficult for teenagers to acknowledge deep feelings while at school. Much will depend on the quality of the relationship which the student has with his or her teachers, or chaplaincy leaders, administrators or other support staff. A school should always acknowledge the pain of loss and death. Friends may need encouragement to talk openly about the death; some students find it especially challenging to express their sympathy in words. Among teenagers, sometimes,

problems can arise due to what they perceive as unfair attention given to a bereaved member of their school community. As a result, resentment can build up and bullying can often replace concern and support. Schools should avail themselves of all the resources available to deal with any issues that may arise moving forward (e.g. Catholic Teachers' Centre, Psychology and Social Work Services, Guidance and Counselling, and teachers).

How the school can help support significantly impacted students (in addition to the suggestions in the Elementary section)

Staff should always look to the administration for guidance (consult p. 4, Initial Protocol).

Communication is vital. It is helpful to have the Chaplaincy Leader in conjunction with the school social worker and school psychologist available as key members of staff to take direct responsibility for talking to the student (and to his or her friends), to be available when needed, to make crisis contingency arrangements, and to pass on information to relevant people.

School routines, music and drama, sport and homework may actually offer a feeling of security and normalcy to a grieving teenager, especially when the family home is in turmoil. However, grief often brings additional problems of both exhaustion and lack of concentration that may affect their work for some time to come.

Communication with the family is still important, though it may be less direct or frequent when students are older. It is necessary to remember the bereavement on occasions such as Parent-Teacher Interviews, when a student's progress is discussed. When the bereavement is recent, writing tests, exams, or assignments may need to be rescheduled or deferred for the student until he or she is better able to cope. Long-term awareness and communication are necessary as the student progresses through the school year, and beyond.

In conclusion, while all the issues raised earlier will apply, a death within the school community raises whole-school issues that need careful thought and consideration. Schools should develop a plan for their community early in the year and it should include phone trees with the central Board office, and the school staff, with key contact people, Morning Prayer etc. (see p.4, Initial Protocols, and prayer resources on p. 10f)

Pastoral care should be a high priority in our schools. Our concern should not only be for the academic and intellectual development of students, but also for their spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being and development. **The school that has considered these issues and has put a plan in place for loss within their community will be better prepared and able to support their students if tragedy occurs.**

Prayer Resources

OUTLINE FOR PRAYER SERVICE (Elementary, Secondary, Adult)

Suggested Preparation: Place a candle, a photo and/or a few personal mementos of the deceased on a prayer table. Before the wake, invite volunteers to write a brief memory of the deceased.

1. Welcome and Call to prayer _____

2. Comments/Information on the deceased (*optional*) _____

3. Opening Hymn _____

4. The Sign of the Cross and Opening Prayer (*Leader*) _____

5. First Reading (*optional*) – (*see options on page...*) Reader

Scripture Passage chosen: _____

6. Responsorial Psalm (*may be sung*) _____

7. Gospel Reading _____

8. Homily/Reflection _____

9. General Intercessions Reader[s]: _____

10. The Lord's Prayer – (*All*)

11. Closing Prayer and Sign of the Cross (*Leader*) _____

12. Blessing (*if led by a priest or deacon*)

A. Elementary Panel

Prayer for a Student

Call to Prayer

Leader: *Today, we gather to remember _____, to pray for him/her, his/her family and for ourselves. Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest (Matt 11:28)". While our hearts are extremely saddened by this loss, we turn to God who is our hope and our help in times of trouble. Together, let us begin our prayer,*

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Opening Song (Optional: see song suggestions, p.28)

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Loving God, we believe that those who die still live in Your presence; their lives change but do not end. We pray in hope for _____ today. In company with Christ, who died and now lives, may he/she rejoice in your kingdom. Comfort us now with your loving presence, and renew and strengthen our faith in you. We pray through Christ our Lord.*

All: Amen.

Gospel Reading

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mark 10:13-16)

Glory to You, O Lord.

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was upset and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

(See p. 20f for more suggested readings)

Prayers of the Faithful *(see p. 13 for alternate Prayers of the Faithful)*

The response is: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

1. In gratitude for the life of _____, for the gift that he/she was to all who knew him/her, we pray to the Lord.
R. / Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For the family of _____, that they would know the consolation and comfort of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.
R. / Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For all of us here, and all the students and staff at _____ School, that even in this time of grief, we would know the hope and peace of God, we pray to the Lord.
R. / Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For those who are sick, and for those who care for them, we pray to the Lord.
R. / Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For all those who have died, and all those who mourn their loss, we pray to the Lord.
R. / Lord, hear our prayer.

Our Father...

Closing Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, you gathered children into your arms and blessed them: we place our trust in you. We now commend _____ to that same embrace of love, in the hope that he/she will rejoice and be happy in your presence. May the Angels and Saints lead him/her to the place of light and peace where one day we all will be brought together again in joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Closing Song: (Optional, see song suggestions p. 28)

Prayer adapted from:

A Little Lifetime Foundation
<http://www.alittlelifetime.com/prayer-service-mainmenu-29>
Prayer for the Dead
<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=805>

B. Secondary Panel

Prayer for a Student--Option 1

Invite everyone to the gym or a space provided for the service.

Welcome and Call to prayer:

Good morning/afternoon and welcome! In sadness, we gather together as a school community and as a family to mourn and pray for our dear friend and classmate _____ who died. Some of us took the train, rode the bus, were in the same class, went on school trips and played sports together with her (him). But, most importantly, she (he) was one of us and a dear friend to a lot of us here. Thinking of _____'s family and wishing them peace and comfort, let us now turn to our loving God who gathered children into his arms and blessed them, to console all of us and grant _____ a peaceful rest.

(brief comments/information on the deceased at the discretion of the administration - optional)

Opening Song (optional, see p. 28 for song suggestions)

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Compassionate God, in our grief we call upon your mercy and love, and humbly entrust _____ into your precious arms. Welcome her (him) into your presence where there is no sadness, pain or sorrow, but the fullness of peace and joy. We pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

First Reading (optional, see p. 20f for suggestions)

Responsorial Psalm (may be sung) (optional)

Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd

Gospel:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (John 14:1-6)

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know

the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**The Gospel of the Lord
Homily/Reflection**

All: Praise to you, O Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prayers of the Faithful:

Leader: That we may always remember that death is not as an end but a door to life in glory. Lord, in your mercy...

R/ Hear our prayer

Leader: As Baptism celebrated _____'s entry into the Christian community, so today we celebrate his/her entry into the kingdom of heaven. Lord, in your mercy...

R/ Hear our prayer

Leader: That the family of _____, knowing and loving him/her so well in life, be comforted by the hope of being with him/her forever in the kingdom of God. Lord, in your mercy...

R/ Hear our prayer

Leader: May all families be strengthened by their faith in God, and receive courage and hope in the face of difficulties. Lord, in your mercy...

R/ Hear our prayer

Leader: May all who have died be gathered into God's kingdom, especially may _____ know the mercy and love of God. Lord, in your mercy...

R/ Hear our prayer

The Lord's Prayer:

_____ *May the Angels lead you into paradise; May the martyrs come to welcome you and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem. Using the words that Jesus taught us, let us now pray together: Our Father...*

Closing Prayer:

Loving God, in you we live, in you we move, and in you we have our being.

We thank you for the life you gave to our friend _____ and for the gifts she (he) shared with us.

We commend her (him) into your arms with hope and love and ask you to look upon us in our sadness, especially her (his) family.

Comfort us and continue to strengthen the bonds of our school and our community.

May the angels, our guardians, lead her (him) to heaven where your saints will welcome her (him).

We pray through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Closing Song: (Optional, see song suggestions p. 28)

Prayer for a Student -- Option 2

Invite everyone to the gym or a space provided for the service.

Welcome and Call to prayer:

Good morning/afternoon and welcome! In sadness, we gather together as a school community and as a family to mourn and pray for our dear friend and classmate _____ who died. Some of us took the train, rode the bus, were in the same class, went on school trips and played sports together with her (him). But, most importantly, she (he) was one of us and a dear friend to a lot of us here. Thinking of _____'s family and wishing them peace and comfort, let us now turn to our loving God who gathered children into his arms and blessed them, to console all of us and grant _____ a peaceful rest.

(brief comments/information on the deceased at the discretion of the administration - optional)

Opening Song (optional, see p. 28 for song suggestions)

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Lord of all gentleness, surround us with your care and comfort us in our sorrow, for we grieve at the loss of _____ [deceased name]. His/her absence creates within our lives an emptiness that hurts, and the darkness of grief clouds our vision and hides your light. Come to us, hold us, heal us, strengthen our weak spirits with sure faith in the resurrection, and surround [name your school _____] and the family of _____ [deceased] with your love, that we may not be overwhelmed by this loss, but have confidence in your goodness.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen

First Reading (see other options on p. 20f for suggestions)

A reading from the book of Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1: 4-8)

Now the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a child"; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.'

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God**
Homily/Reflection (*Optional*)

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Lord, we have loved _____ in this life and will greatly miss him/her. Out of that love we pray that you take him/her to yourself, forgive his/her sins and give him/her eternal joy with you. Lord, hear us

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: As we grieve we know that at this very time others are grieving great losses too. Teach us to be sensitive to the sufferings and pains of others. Help us to take strength from the community of our brothers and sisters in the faith. Lord, hear us

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: We pray for those we may not know, that were touched by _____ in his/her life. May we all be united one day in the joy of heaven. Lord, hear us

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: We pray for any of us with unresolved hurts, unfinished conversations and situations needing healing. Lead us all to the harmony and peace of God's children. Lord, hear us

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: We pray for all people. Give us all the grace in our own neighbourhoods to be the light of truth, justice and love. Lord, hear us

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Leader: Let us now offer our own private prayers for _____ and his/her family
[Brief pause, then continue with the following]

. . . let us pray together in the words that Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father...

All: Glory be to the Father...

Leader: Let us pray (pause):

Lord God, you are compassion and love; our loved one _____ has been called home to you. Welcome him/her into the love of heaven; continue to console us and make us truly grateful for all he/she was to us in life. Fill our grieving hearts with your love and care. We pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May almighty God console, comfort and bless us:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

C. Prayer for an Adult

Call to Prayer (*feel free to create your own*)

Opening Song: (*optional, see p. 28 for suggestions*)

Opening Prayer

God, we come for comfort in our grief. The absence of _____ creates within our lives an emptiness that hurts. The darkness of grief clouds our vision and hides your light. Come to us. Hold us, heal us and strengthen our weak spirits with sure faith in the Resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Reading (*see options on p. 28*)

Prayers of the Faithful: Litany

Leader: Jesus promised to be with those who call upon his name. Trusting in his promise we say:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Sure and certain hope of your faithful dead:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Faithful friend in times of sorrow and doubt:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Voice that speaks peace to troubled hearts:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Beacon of light in moments of darkness:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Merciful Redeemer and fountain of forgiveness:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Enduring strength of all who mourn:

All: Be with us, Lord.

Leader: Gentle rest for your pilgrim people.

All: Be with us, Lord.

With trust and confidence in God's merciful love, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

Closing Prayer

Compassionate God, whose wisdom is beyond our understanding, surround us and the family of _____ with your love, that we may not be overwhelmed by our loss, but have the confidence in your goodness. Look upon us, the staff and students of _____ School, and comfort us in our sorrow. Help us to continue to be sensitive to one another, and also to take strength from one another. May your love and peace bless us and console us and keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge of your compassion. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

May almighty God bless us, In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Closing Song: (Optional)

These prayers can be used as options for the prayer services above, or as stand-alone prayers.

Option 1

Most merciful God, whose wisdom is beyond our understanding, surround the family of _____ with your love, that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness, and strength to meet the days to come. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Option 2

Lord of all gentleness, surround us with your care and comfort us in our sorrow, for we grieve the loss of _____. As you washed him/her in the waters of baptism and welcomed him/her into the life of heaven, so call us one day to be united with him/her, and share forever the joy of your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested Scripture Readings

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah (1.4-8)

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child.” But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A Reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah (25.6-10)

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the first letter of St. John (1 John 3.1-2)

See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy (2 Timothy 4.7-8)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians (4.4-9)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (10.34-38)

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4.13-18)

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1.3-5)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (14.7-9)

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God.**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (14.1-6)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The Gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (6.37-40)

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

The Gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John (11.25-27)

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

The Gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (5.1-12)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (11.28-30)

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ.**

Bereavement Resource Books and DVDs

Books

I Am My Grandpa's Enkelin. Wangerin Jr., Walter. ISBN9781557254689. The original tale is told by a granddaughter (Enkelin, in German), looking back in loving memory at all that her German American grandpa taught her. A useful book to talk with children in preparation for, or after, they have experienced grief from the death of a grandparent.

If Nathan Were Here. Bahr, Mary. ISBN 0802852351. Named a "Best Children's Book 2000" by the Association of Theological Booksellers, this gentle picture book explores the grief of a young boy whose best friend has died.

The Next Place. Hanson, Warren. ISBN 0931674328. A classic, "The Next Place" brings gentle verse revealing a safe and welcome destination free from earthly hurts and filled with wonder and peace. A comforting message of hope and a gift of compassion for the bereaved.

Badger's Parting Gifts. Varley, Susan. ISBN 0688115187. All the woodland creatures love old Badger and when he dies, they are overwhelmed by their loss. They then begin to remember and through their memories, the animals find the strength to face the future with hope.

Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss. Schwiebert, Pat; DeKlyen, Chuck. ISBN 0961519762. In this modern-day fable, a woman who has suffered a terrible loss cooks up a special batch of "tear soup", blending the unique ingredients of her life into the grief process. Along the way she dispenses a recipe of sound advice for people who are in mourning.

The Gift of a Memory: A Keepsake to Commemorate the Loss of a Loved One. Richmond, Marianne. ISBN 097414651X. A one-of-a-kind keepsake, The Gift of a Memory commemorates the loss of a special life. Through a heartfelt poem and beautiful illustrations, the book recounts the emotional journey of loss and offers a wish for comfort and for hope in life again.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages. Buscaglia, Leo. ISBN 9780943432892. This story is a warm, wonderfully wise and strikingly simple tale about a leaf named Freddie. How Freddie and his companion leaves change with the passing seasons, finally falling to the ground with winter's snow, is an inspiring allegory illustrating the delicate balance between life and death.

Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs. DePaola, Tomie. ISBN 0698118367. Four-year-old Tommy loves visiting the home of his grandmother, Nana Downstairs, and his great-grandmother, Nana Upstairs. But one day Tommy's mother tells him Nana Upstairs won't be there anymore, and Tommy must struggle with saying goodbye to someone he loves.

Talking about Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child. Grollman, Earl. ISBN 0807023612. This is a classic guide for parents helping their children through the death of a loved one. With a helpful list of do's and don'ts, an illustrated read-along dialogue, and a guide to explaining death. This redesigned and updated edition explains what children at different developmental stages can and can't understand about death; reveals why it's crucial to be honest about death; helps you understand the way children express emotions like denial, grief, crying, anger, and guilt; and discusses children's reactions to different kinds of death, from the death of a parent to the death of a pet.

The Tenth Good Thing about Barney. Viorst, Judith. ISBN 0689712030. In simple phrases narrated by a child whose cat, Barney, has just died, the author succinctly and honestly handles both the emotions stemming from the loss of a beloved pet and the questions about the finality of death which naturally arise in such a situation.

A Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends. Fitzgerald, Helen. ISBN 0684868040. In this wise, compassionate, pragmatic book, the author turns her attention to the special needs and concerns of adolescents face during the grieving process.

Lifetimes. Mellonie, Bryan. ISBN 0553344021. A pet, a friend, or a relative dies and it must be explained to a child. This sensitive book is a useful tool in explaining to children that death is a part of life and that, eventually, all living things reach the end of their own special story.

When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving & Healing (Revised and Updated). Gootman, Marilyn. ISBN 1575421704. This revised edition of Gootman's helpful guide includes new resources and a new section on losing a friend through violence. Recommended for parents and teachers of teens who have experienced a painful loss.

I Wish I Could Hold Your Hand...: A Child's Guide to Grief and Loss. Palmer, Pat; Burke, Dianne O'Quinn. ISBN 0915166828. A best friend has moved away, Dad no longer lives with the family, or a favourite pet has died. This warm, comforting book gently helps grieving children identify their feelings and learn to accept and deal with them.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death (Dinos Die #1). Brown, Marc Talon; Little Brown & Company; Krasney, Laurene; Kelly, Chuck. ISBN 061371802X. For use in schools and libraries only. Explains in simple language the feelings people may have regarding death of a loved one and the ways to honour the memory of someone who has died.

Someone I Love Died. Tangvald, Christine Harder. ISBN 143470291X. Once a child grasps the concept of death, it becomes one of their greatest fears in life. "Someone I Love Died" provides a positive approach for children to deal with the death of a friend or loved one in a comforting, non-threatening way and points them to Jesus Christ, the ultimate source of comfort and security.

Someday Heaven (Revised). Libby, Larry. ISBN 0310701058. Explaining the mysteries of Heaven to a child can be a difficult task. But "Someday Heaven" gives simple, comforting answers to difficult questions that children age 4 to 8 often have concerning heaven. 'Excellent for Homeschool Use'

What Does Dead Mean? A Book For Young Children to Help Explain Death and Dying. Jay, Caroline. Thomas, Jenni. ISBN 1849053553. This is a beautifully illustrated book that guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying.

When Mom or Dad Dies: A Book for Comfort for Kids (Elf-Help Books for Kids). Grippo, Daniel. ISBN 9780870294150. When Mom or Dad dies, children grieve deeply, but we can show our care and love for them by encouraging them to share their feelings of sorrow and loss.

When Your Grandparent Dies: A Child's Guide to Good Grief (Elf-Help Books for Kids). Ryan, Victoria. ISBN 0870293648. Explaining what happens from a child's eye view, the elves depict the difficult days before, after, and beyond a grandparent's death. They explore the meaning of death and heaven, as well as how to stay close in spirit with a grandparent who has died. Includes questions for discussion.

When Someone You Love Has Cancer: A Guide to Help Kids Cope (Elf-Help Books for Kids). Lewis, Alaric. ISBN 9780870293955. This book touches on topics such as cancer, bereavement, religious aspects, Christianity, grief in children, adjustment (psychology), communication in families and more.

Daily Prayer for Times of Grief. Hamilton, Lisa B. ISBN 1612611281. Drawing on her own experience of losing her young husband to cancer, in this poignant offering, Lisa B. Hamilton accommodates the practice of fixed-hour prayer for those who mourn.

I Feel Sad. Gross, Cathy; McKeever, Sharron; Debly, Mary Ann Takacs. ISBN 9782895078300. This compassionate, user-friendly resource offers information and helpful suggestions for guiding primary and junior students through a range of losses, from death of someone important to changing schools, from bullying to parents' divorce, from the loss of a pet to not being chosen for a team.

Praying Our Goodbyes: A Spiritual Companion Through Life's Losses and Sorrows (Revised). Rupp, Joyce. A compassionate, spiritual work about soothing the sting of any kind of loss--a job change, the end of a friendship or of youth, or the death of a loved one. This thoughtful work focuses on the "spirituality of change". Sister Joyce Rupp offers topics for reflection and discussion, as well as specific prayers, to heal the hurts of everyday life and death.

DVDs

Journey Through the Shadows: Hope for healing after someone you love has died by suicide. [50 mins.] Suicide deeply affects the lives of those who are left behind by the one who has died.

Helping Children Grieve. [55 mins.] This profound new resource offers helpful information to adults (parents, caregivers, professionals) on how to help children of all ages grieve with hope and heart. You will meet two experts: Khris Ford and Paula D'Arcy, whose personal experiences with death give them intimate knowledge and compassion.

Helping Parents Grieve: Finding New Life After the Death of a Child. [60 mins.] Khris Ford and Paula D'Arcy have built this new resource creating tremendous support for helping parents and family members grieving the death of a child.

When A Loved One Dies: Walking Through Grief As A Teenager. Grief is always difficult, but never more than when you are a teenager. This is a compassionate and practical primer for teens and adults who live and/or work with youth.

A Cry for Help: How to Help A Friend Who Is Depressed or Suicidal. [20 mins.] In the wake of a suicide, family members and friends wonder what they could have done to help, how they could have prevented this tragedy. Made for a teen audience, A Cry for Help educates young people to recognize the signs of depression and suicide in their peers. Featuring Sue Eastgard, President of The American Association of Suicidology, and groups of teens, this video talks about how to

intervene and get help when a friend is contemplating suicide. A Cry for Help prepares young people to listen and care in one of the most challenging situations they might ever face: stopping a friend from taking his or her own life.

A Place Prepared: Helping Children Understand Death and Heaven. This resource helps adults answer children's questions about death, funerals, and heaven as it lovingly prepares them for the inevitable losses they will experience. The viewer hears from professionals and children, ages 3-14.

Caring for a Loved One with Alzheimer's: An Emotional Journey. This dynamic video offers insight, hope, and understanding for anyone who cares for a loved one.

Catholic Book Stores

Pauline Books and Media

www.pauline.org

3022 Dufferin St., Toronto ON M6B 3T5

(416) 781-9131

Broughton's

322 Consumers Rd., North York, On M2J 1P8

(416) 690-4777

Joseph's Inspirational Bookstore

josephsinspirational.ca

2721 Markham Rd. #39, Toronto, ON M1X 1M4

(416) 291-1772

Song suggestions

Be Not Afraid by Bob Dufford, SJ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snmwD6d9Xo4>

O Lord, I Know You Are Near

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW6Jrntk9Wg>

On Eagles' Wings by Michael Joncas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvpjxfWrjzY>

Amazing Grace (traditional)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoP-PBERwfw>