



Reflection in a Time of Grief and Loss

The following reflections were written to help members of the Notre Dame community gather in groups to talk, think and pray about loss in a time of tragedy. Please feel free to use only the parts that are helpful to you.

Opening Prayer

One person may read this aloud, or you may all read it aloud together.

Holy Spirit,
Come and shine the rays of your healing light into the depths of my being.
Expose the darkness of my wounds, my brokenness and my buried emotions – my anger, anxiety and sorrow.
Give me the courage to acknowledge them and hand them over to your loving care.
Gentle Spirit, I thirst for your healing as an arid desert thirsts for rain.
Take the little deaths I have suffered and transform them into new life.
Take my pain and transform it into the power to serve you and to proclaim your goodness to others.
Amen.

~ Nancy Bevenga
(from Lead, Kindly Light, the Notre Dame Book of Prayers)

Reading

Choose one of the two readings below, and invite one person to read it aloud.

Wisdom 3:1-9

Reader: A reading from the Book of Wisdom.

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt-offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.



(or)

Romans 8:31-32, 35, 27-39

Reader: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

You may choose to invite each person to read this in silence, or to have one or more people read it aloud to the group.

When we think about tragedy and loss, as much as we might want to say, very little can actually speak to the sadness we feel on an individual level. As Christians, however, we believe that God loves us personally and deeply. We believe that God grieves with us, mourning our loss as only his complete love can. We believe that God will never fail to hold us until his comfort can seep in through the darkness of our pain.

For we know that our God does not remain distant, but loved us so thoroughly that he gave us his only son. Christ took on all the weakness and pain of humanity. He too, wept at the loss of his friend Lazarus. He gave himself on the cross that we might rejoice with our loved ones at the heavenly banquet where every tear will be wiped away. The love of Christ has triumphed over every evil, even the evil of death.

Even as we can perhaps see that hope for the future, we also know that Christ does not stop there. While we have to wait here in our sorrow, Christ accompanies us, holds us in his loving arms, brings us strength and consolation. We shouldn't forget that we too are the Body of Christ, and as a community, we can be Christ's hands to wipe away tears and his arms to hold one another in loving embrace. When our hearts break, when we cannot make sense of what has happened, in times of grief and loss, it is important to come together before our loving God. As a community of faith – whether that be hundreds of students or two close friends – we can hold one another up in faith and hope.



Personal Reflection

Use as many or as few of these questions as you like or need to help prompt conversation

1. What are you feeling right now? What have your emotions been?
2. Has someone you loved ever died? What has been an experience of loss or grief in your life?
3. In this time of sorrow, what are some resources that you can share with one another? These might be campus resources, songs that bring you consolation, a reading or a poem that expresses what you're feeling, a prayer or anything else that might be helpful.

Litany for Those Who Mourn

A litany is an ancient form of Christian prayer. Traditionally, one person leads the litany and the rest of the group responds with the words in italics. This prayer helps us remember the souls of any of our friends and relatives who have left this life in the faith of Christ, and to pray together as a community in a time of grief.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

God, our loving creator,

Be with us.

God, the son who came to save us

From the brokenness of death,

Be with us.

God, the Holy Spirit who is present

In our midst,

Be with us.

When grief surrounds us,

Be with us.

When sorrow overwhelms,

Be with us.

When we are weary and in need of strength,

Be with us.

When we feel lost and sick at heart,

Be with us.

When we don't know what to say or how to pray,

Be with us.

When we do not have any answers,

Be with us.

When we are in need of comfort and consolation,

Be with us.

Holy Mary, mother who mourned,

Pray for us.

St. Joseph, protector of the universal Church,

Pray for us.

All you holy saints of God,

Pray for us.

(The leader then continues)

Loving God,

Please be with us in our sorrow, and hold us close to your loving heart. Grant us your peace that surpasses all understanding, and allow us to rest in your care. Help us to be your hands and arms, sharing hope and consolation with those around us. We ask these things through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

You may wish to conclude with a sign of peace.

As you depart, continue to think of ways you can support one another, or anyone else you notice having a hard time. How can you be the hands and arms of Christ in this difficult time?

If you need any other assistance or further resources we encourage you to contact the University of Notre Dame Office of Campus Ministry

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