

WAYS TO COMPANION THOSE WHO MOURN

1. PRAY. PRAY. PRAY. Offer prayers at a parish prayer meeting, rosary, or Mass. Have the deceased included in a "Book of Remembrance."
2. Set up a time monthly to make phone calls to all those who have had a love one pass away in the parish during that month of the year. A quick phone call or even a voice mail left for them with words of love and encouragement can mean a lot to the bereaved. And the voicemail can be listened to over and over again when they may be having a difficult time.
3. Attend the Funeral. Do not worry if you were not close to the deceased, or have been out of touch with the family for many years. Attend anyway. A funeral is a communal event; you will not be intruding. It is important that a representative from the parish be present and to show the care and support of the parish family.
4. Cook. Have a point person arrange meal sign-up via a website such as www.takethemameal.com or Sign Up Genius. Consider making a meal and freezing it in your own freezer for when the other meals stop coming. A small family will appreciate smaller meals so they don't feel they are wasting food.
5. Send a card or a handwritten note. If possible, include a personal story about the person who died. Even the smallest anecdote is welcome. These are treasured by the family and read over and over. If you are not able to share a personal story, don't worry. A simple, "I am so very sorry for your loss" or "My heart is breaking for you" will help. When you write your letter, consider going ahead and addressing another envelope to send 3, 6, or 9 months out. The envelope will help you remember to pray for the family, and your next letter will come when most people have stopped sending cards.
6. Send flowers to the home or church; however, you may want to consider sending flowers to the home a month or two after the death so that they will not overwhelm the family. Seeing the house full of flowers, that would eventually die, may be hard for them.
7. Come by to show your support. When you drop by, be prepared to express your condolences and then to be on your way, but be flexible. If the bereaved family asks you to stay, be open to that, too. Men, don't be shy about coming by. Oftentimes men appreciate another man stopping by just for them.
8. Consider the physical needs of the home. Working in the yard could make a family feel too exposed or vulnerable so soon after a death. Enlisting the youth group to help with some "service projects" of working in the yard by mulching, pulling weeds, or raking leaves could be other outside jobs a grieving family might not feel able to tackle. (Be sure to check with Safe Environment and risk management policies before engaging youth in certain service projects.)
9. Drop a gift in the mail. Small purposeful gifts can say a lot to a person who is bereaved. A gift card to a grocery store or movie theater can serve for them as an excuse to get out of the house.
10. Mention the deceased person's name when you see the family. It's hard. Do it anyway. The family will cry. Do it anyway.
11. Write the person's birthday and death day on the parish calendar. Send a note or an email on those days.
12. Be open to the family memorializing the loved one by planting a tree, erecting a cross, making a stepping stone, or installing a bench at the parish.

Adapted from: <http://aninchofgray.blogspot.com/>



Accompanying
THOSE WHO MOURN
Bereavement Ministry Training