

# Grief during holidays

written by Arkansas Catholic Staff |

The Beacon of Hope grief ministry at St. Joseph Church in **Conway** is offering a group support session, "Grieving through the Holidays," from 1:30-3:30 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 26, in the Spiritan Center. The session will include speaker Father Jack Sidler, associate pastor at Christ the King Church in **Fort Smith**, who will share his personal story of losing his wife before he became a priest and how to cope during the holidays. The program will also include a video about grief and the holidays and a remembrance gift for participants. No one will be obligated to share, but everyone is encouraged to listen and to learn they are not alone in their grief. For more information or to register, call/text Aprille Spivey at (847) 532-0232, Barbara Dardenne at (501) 339-6317) or email [sjbeaconofhope@gmail.com](mailto:sjbeaconofhope@gmail.com). Those who do not pre-register are also welcome to attend.

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## Not the most wonderful time of the year: Holiday grief

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Celebrating Christmas can be challenging for some when they grieve

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# Mary remains with you in your darkest moments

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

Today, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, is also the 12th anniversary of the death of my 18-year old godson, Bart Betow.

His car hydroplaned on the interstate when driving in rainy weather. He was so young and had such a bright future ahead of him. As I gathered with his parents around his lifeless body, and as they made the courageous decision to allow his organs to be taken for donation, I gained new insight into today's feast. I saw the pain of Our Lady of Sorrows reflected in the faces of two dear friends who were now confronted with a loss greater than any of us is ever equipped to handle alone.

And it occurred to me that this was how it was for the Blessed Mother herself 2,000 years ago. So from the cross, while he himself was dying, Jesus was concerned to make sure that she did not have to bear this grief alone. And that John, his Beloved Disciple, would not have to bear this grief alone either. Jesus gave his mother to John to now be his mother and he gave John to Mary to now be her son. Mary got the short end of that deal, but through him God provided her with what she needed: companionship, accompaniment, care.

From that hour John took her into his home. The loss was real and immense. Jesus was irreplaceable. So also was my godson Bart. But for believers, that is not the end of the story.

Yesterday, the day of Bart's accident 12 years ago, was the feast of the Triumph (or Exaltation) of the Cross. Our crucifixes are intended to remind us that the Lord understands our suffering. As Jesus hung there dying, he cried out "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" He was quoting the beginning of the 22nd Psalm in order to express how in that moment he felt abandoned by God — the psalm will eventually end on a positive note with an expression of faith and vindication by God, but only after first passing through a very dark time.

And isn't it true that we may sometimes feel abandoned by God in our darkest moments too? When we are blindsided by unspeakable loss.

But we are never really abandoned. God supports us and remains at our side, enduring our losses with us, even when we are too numb to feel his presence. Still, he has always been there, as we discover eventually. It is he who enables us to begin to move forward and embrace life once again, even when the pain of our loss never really does go away.

That is why even after 2,000 years, we still have crucifixes in our churches to remind us that even when the grief remains, our losses too can be redemptive in our own lives and the lives of others. Jesus was a different person on the other side of the grave and so also are we, whatever

the loss.

Finally, I note that just as Mary never abandoned her son, remaining at the foot of the cross and filling her eyes with a sight that no mother should ever have to see, so also does she who is now our mother remain with us, never abandoning us either. She stays close to us in our darkest moments too, a sure support in our times of loss. And as we know, loss is simply part of life.

We don't like it, but Our Lady of Sorrows reminds us that at least we don't have to face it alone.

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## A Catholic you want to know: Kathy Webb Kordsmeier

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Kathy Webb Kordsmeier helps bereaved see God's mercy in their lives

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# After loss of a loved one, holidays can be a tough time

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Grief ministries help comfort the grieving during the holidays

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# Parish support helps families grieve, heal with faith

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |





Catholic families lean on grief ministries to find healing, hope

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## Support ministries supply companions through grief

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Churches throughout state help the grieving through ministries

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# All Souls Day marked by memories of the departed

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Arkansas parishes remember loved ones during All Souls Day

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# Kat Friend designs jewelry line for Mount St. Mary's

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Late mother, faith inspire art teacher's new jewelry line

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## When grief takes over, church offers beacon of hope

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Ministry at Conway church assures that no one needs to grieve alone