

SACRED HEART PARISH LAZARUS MINISTRY

Perhaps the best known and most basic aspect of the Lazarus Ministry is that of "companion" When a funeral is to be held at Sacred Heart, the funeral director provides the family of the deceased with a book, *Celebrating Life Eternal* which is used to plan the funeral mass. Shortly after the family has made arrangements with the funeral director and a date and time is set for the mass, the funeral director calls the parish office to schedule the funeral. Then the parish office will call the chair of the Lazarus Ministry or person in-charge for the month and give the details who in turn assign a member to contact the family and assist in planning the funeral liturgy. A visit is made, usually at the home of the deceased.

In visiting the family and throughout the days of wake service and funeral the Lazarus member acts as the representative of the parish community. This means attending the wake service and the funeral mass and sending a sympathy card and an additional card at the one month anniversary of the person's death. The purpose of the home visit is to assist in planning the funeral liturgy but a secondary purpose is to ascertain the faith life of the person who has died. Usually we ask the family to tell us something about the person and try to engage as many family members as possible in the discussion. This is a very crucial and vulnerable time for the family. It is very important to be more sensitive and prudent in dealing with them and probing appropriate questions. Depending on the preparedness and empathetic attitude of the companion, it is possible to facilitate a healing or therapeutic process during this meeting with the family.

Family dynamics are such that at times like these the conflicts and issues with the Church come to light. It is a good idea for the priest who will be the celebrant to have as much information as possible. During your meeting with the family you may ask questions pertaining to faith life, church involvement and community involvement of the deceased. You may also ask how the deceased person has touched their lives and what might be the qualities they would like to cherish of their loved one. Such information will help the priest to prepare a personalized homily for the service. It is important to write down all the information you can gather and present it to the officiating priest.

The book provided by the parish is designed to determine the readings and who will be assigned to read at the mass. A separate card will be provided to fill up with the selections and assignments. The musical selections are also made and checked on a card. If the family wishes to use any other selections of music, they must check it with the celebrating priest and the musician. The Companion is responsible for contacting the organist or soloist and relaying the selections (We assume, by this time the family has contacted the organist and soloist with funeral director's help). Following the family visit, the companion usually writes up the narrative of the visit and includes the information about the readings and the persons assigned to do them. All the gathered information must be handed to the priest, no later than, on the eve of the funeral day.

Sometimes a family member may wish to say a few words about the deceased. This is done immediately after Communion. By no means is this required. Only one family member or friend may speak in Church and the remarks should be kept brief. Other members or friends may speak during or after the Wake Service at the funeral home. The reading of poems or playing of music should be done at the Wake Service in the funeral home, not in the Church.

The Companion usually leaves his/her phone number so that the family as a way of making any changes or asking any further questions. The Companion attends the wake service and can introduce the priest to the significant family members, especially if the priest is not acquainted with the family. At the time of the funeral mass, the companion should arrive at the church early enough to assist the priest in setting up anything that needs to be done. Companions also contact the family on a follow up call to see how they are and to invite them to attend "Come Walk With Me", an eight week grief seminar. It is recommended that family members wait for 5-6 months following the death of their loved one before participating in the program.

DIFFERENT ASPECTS INVOLVED IN LAZARUS MINISTRY

MEMORIAL MASS: This is an important aspect of our ministry. This is a mass held on the Sunday nearest to All Souls Day. At this mass, the names of the deceased parishioners (of the current year) are read aloud and the family is invited to come to the altar and place a candle in special receptacles as a remembrance. A flower is presented to each family. It is our parish community's way of recognizing our deceased and is reportedly very significant for the families.

COME WALK WITH ME: This is an eight week seminar for bereaved persons. All of the families who have had funerals at Sacred Heart are contacted and invited to attend. We can publicize this seminar and invite anyone who is interested to attend. In each of the eight sessions a different aspect of the grieving process is examined and participants are invited to share their experiences. The program is supposed to be a self healing experience. Facilitators for this program are member of the Lazarus Ministry.

WALKING TOGETHER: This includes all of those people who have attended *Come Walk With Me* program. It is an ongoing group and far more social than concentrating on working through the grief process. This group meets once a month and usually two members of the Lazarus Ministry are present. We can have two social events for this group each year.

PREPLANNING FUNERAL LITURGIES: Members of our Lazarus Ministry are available to parishioners who wish to preplan their own funeral. Workshops explaining this process must be held from time to time to explain how this works. It is highly recommended to have an input from a funeral director to learn about the process in dealing with a funeral plan and bereaved family.

MARTHA MINISTRY: On a space available basis, the parish hall is available to families for use following the funeral liturgy and/or burial. Members of the Martha's Ministry will set up, serve the food and clean up after the reception. The family must make arrangements with the parish office and find out more details to set up and serve the meal.

RETREAT AND DAYS OF RECOLLECTION: From time to time members of our ministry will have a day of recollection to grow in our own spiritual journey. The chair person will be in-charge in finding a priest or a qualified recollection facilitator for such needs.

If you would like to be a member of Lazarus Ministry please contact, Fr. William Kaliyadan, our pastor. E-mail: williamms@hotmail.com or call 603-448-1262.