

Bethany Bereavement Support Group

To my daughter.....

When we bought two (copy) books for your homework so that you had the opportunity to use the one "like all the others" I made up my mind to write a long, long letter to you in the one you didn't need.

This is a letter I want you to have by you through life and when you read it then it will be a bit of mummy with you. So often life is lonely and it is in little ways we can comfort ourselves. As a little girl and even now at the great age of 10 years and four months you sucked your finger at moments of stress, boredom and loneliness.

You are a happy truthful and obedient girl C and it may be that those of lesser qualities may often hurt and perplex you. Always try to forgive them Darling, to be truthful is so very important – in Shakespeare's Hamlet there is a famous quotation; it goes like this I think "This above all, to thine ownself be true; and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

It means that if you always live your life in the way you know deep down to be right then

you'll never hurt anyone.

When we look back it is the happy times that stand out and you and I have had many, we had our two lovely sea trips to South Africa and back, we've had wonderful outings from here and always you've been a delightful companion one day you'll have a little girl of your own I hope and know the happiness, heartaches and love I've known with you, not one minute of it all do I want to forget, 'cept that perhaps at times I've been cross and I've always been busy either running a house or else working as I've had to do the last year, that many times I've wished to be fresher and more eager to play with you. We none of us know what the future holds for us and if at times you feel lonely and that the way is uphill or hard just smile, Treasure, and remember that the very next day may be lovely. One day when you are grown up you'll find that has its troubles too, but I know that it is easier for grown ups to cope 'cos over the years they gain wisdom.

I want to talk a little about money for it is a fearfully bothersome thing. One day when you are twenty one you will inherit money, now when one has never had any money of ones own the temptation is to suddenly buy everything – don't Darling unless it is a great want. Much better to have a little "put away" in case an even greater want comes along.

If a woman has money of her own when she marries then I think she is wisest to keep it and not let her husband take it over for once it is gone there is no reclaiming it and one never knows what circumstances might arise in which that little bit of money of your own would be very useful.

I wonder if you'll be a career girl or not, I wish I'd been able to provide for your future education but that was not to be and life is what we make it so I guess you'll get where you want to be. I pray somebody will make life happy for you – love the world my C and the world will love you.

There so many things to say and so little time to say them, life is like that so much unsaid, so much undone at the end of each day, All I want to do is think of the lovely times we've had, I hope you will be able to remember them too – That lovely warm day we went to Carisbrooke Castle and saw the donkey in the well house, remember the rosy apples in the cottage gardens.

There will be little things which will be yours now to help you remember me – Grandpa and Auntie Pat may think it wiser to keep them for you for a few years. The broach was left me by Great-Great Aunt Fanny; she was your Granny's mother's sister.

The silver brush and comb set were one of my 21st presents.

The silver candlesticks and cigarette case Daddy gave me.

I expect most of the things will have to be sold Darling for there just isn't room to keep them and they are costly to move about, I hope you keep a few of the books, two lovely ones are "Celtic Myth and Legend" also "Classic Myth and Legend"

I've always meant you to be christened into the Church of England Darling, perhaps you'll tell Canon Hill and he will arrange it, Auntie Pat is to be one Godmother, it was all arranged when you were a baby Then Mummy was ill for so long that by the time she was well you'd grown out of the christening frock and ever after that there seemed to be enough



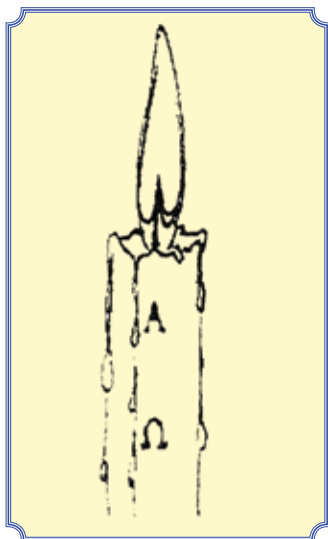
money to buy you a pretty frock for a christening but that doesn't really matter and I want you know the comfort of religion as I have done.

There is never a right time for a mother to say goodbye

As an only child at the age of 24, I lost both my parents within 22 weeks of each other. 14 years earlier it was feared my mother would die and this fear was kept from my 10 year old self a fact I deeply resented.

22 weeks after my father died I lost my beloved mother to cancer so I was alone when she died having begged the doctor to sedate her as she was so distressed. As a nurse I was acutely aware of her rapidly deteriorating condition. She died less than three hours later leaving me with just her wedding ring and her door key.

I returned to her flat where, having realised that the same procedures for father's funeral could be followed for mummies, I wondered if she had made a will. This led me to search among her papers and letters where I found my old school copy with its green cover, containing this letter written 14 years previously. As I finished reading it I reflected on our last conversations when she said "If I've got cancer I'm not going to believe in God anymore" I replied "Mummy if you've got cancer you've got to believe in God even more"



Refresher Courses for Bethany Members

Monkstown and Esker graduates attend "pilot" Courses.

Following requests for a Refresher Course for those who had been trained over past few years, the GEC this year provided a "pilot" Refresher Evening in Monkstown in March, and a Refresher afternoon with Facilitation Training in Esker, Co. Galway in June. Those who had graduated since 2009 were invited to attend. Twenty three members came to Monkstown and forty three attended in Esker.

The purpose was two-fold:

- To provide a forum where we could learn how the members had got on in their parishes since they finished training, and what help and support they needed in the future.
- To teach a "refresher" training module.

After the Bethany Prayer and a reminder of what's expected of us in our role as Bethany members, the participants broke into small groups, each made up of a mixture of 2009/10/11 graduates.

They addressed two questions:

- What has been useful from the Training Course?
 - What could be changed or added to the Course in future?
- They then reconvened in a large group to give feedback.

Examples of what was found useful in Training Course:

- Active listening exercises.
- Silence is ok.
- "When asking a question, who are you asking it for?"
- Personal journey and meditations.

- Final Day process.

Examples of what could be added to Training Course:

- More practical demonstrations on how to run an open group-meeting.
- How to cope when a client offloads deep personal story that affects the Bethany listener.
- Provide realistic expectations about attendance of clients at parish open meetings and what to do when nobody turns up.
- How to deal with an unenthusiastic P.P.
- How to deal, as a newly qualified member, with "set-in-their-ways" members who are not open to change or not practicing according to current best practice.

In Esker, the second half of the afternoon was spent on learning and practicing facilitation skills in small groups. In Monkstown, they learnt and practiced Active Listening and how to identify feelings behind words when working with the bereaved. This also was done in small groups.

Both sessions ended with feedback on how the "pilot" had worked – did they feel more confident as they went back to work in their parishes? In both cases, the feedback was extremely positive. In fact it was recommended that all Bethany Members be strongly encouraged to take part in a Refresher Course once every two years.

The Training Committee of the GEC have been asked to look into how to provide this training for those who trained in Clonliffe, Knocklyon and Belfast.

News Flashes.....

Urgent Notice.....

An urgent message to all groups from the FSA.
Every group must send in their 2011 bank balance statement whether they are applying for a grant or not.



The Orlagh Retreat Weekend for Bereaved Parishioners

18th - 20th November 2011

Booking details:

Anne Butler 087 2050514

Parish Report and Register

If you have not yet returned the Parish Report and Register of members form please do so now.

12 week Training Course (in facilitating Grief)

Starting: Thursday 22nd September 2011
Interviews for places: 15th and 17th September

In Monkstown Parish Centre

Contact Person: Liz Ronaldson
087 2392465 or ronaldson6@eircom.net

Training Weekends

2 training weekends in Esker
16th to 18th September and 4th to 6th November.

Apply to: Sr Mary Glennon
c/o 'Ruah', Cappanraheen, Craughwell, Co. Galway.
091-876646, 087 3204569.

Autumn Course in Belfast

No dates as yet

Contact: Claire Dowds
c/o Family Ministry Office, Good Shephard Centre,
Ormeau Rd.,
Belfast. BT7 3GS
028 90492777

Open Day

Monkstown Parish Centre

Saturday 17th September from 10.00am
Newsletters / CDs / Books / Leaflets
will be available

DAY OF REFLECTION – 18th APRIL 2011

SETTING: CLONLIFFE COLLEGE
SPEAKER: FRANCES HOGAN
ATTENDANCE: 80

All in attendance felt that they had a deeply spiritual day, which was both prayerful and reflective. It was a little disappointing that while the attendance was excellent it was only representative of 20 parishes out of a total of 108. The theme of the day was – ‘The Eucharist’ and also on – ‘The possibility of coming to a deeper relationship with God’. Frances began by



reading that section of John’s Gospel Chapter 6, which recounted the multiplication of the 5 loaves and the 2 fish. The number 5 represents the word of God, whilst the number 2 and the fish symbol are seen to represent Christ. Thus linking the Old with the New Testament. This miracle was a free gift of His kindness to those present. It reminds us that if we need anything we must just ask Him for it. Frances mentioned several times that the Gospels verbalise the intervention of God in human history.

She went on to point out the many difficulties in our world of constant chatter and noise and therefore, making it very difficult to find the time and a space for contemplation.

Whilst acknowledging that we can experience God in the solitude of the sea, our mountains and our parks, we however need to spend time with him in adoration before the Eucharist. Therefore, we should allocate a certain amount of time in our daily lives, in order to allow for the deepening of our relation with the Lord –”The food of the Spirit is the Eucharist and only It fulfils the need for Spiritual sustenance, which is inherent in all of us”. Here again we can see that she is linking the old and the new testament through the comparison of the - Manna in the desert which sustained the Israelites throughout their journey. Later on she reminds us of the peace which the ‘Last Rites’ bring to a dying person” Jesus accompanies a person on their last journey”. Death is merely the leaving of the body behind, whilst the soul goes to



Frances Hogan

God.

We were left with the feeling that we all had a great deal to reflect on and an evener greater amount of aspiration for the need to fully develop our daily spiritual life.

In conclusion, the day ended with the Eucharist celebrated by Father S. Forde of Knocklyon Parish, to whom we are very grateful.

This was a very moving and uplifting ending to a very moving day. Many thanks to Frances, for her very informative and thoughtful presentation.

Prayer service at the drop in meetings

Many groups have found little success in their drop-in meetings and indeed many have ceased holding them over the years. At a recent G.E.C. meeting Fr. Myles suggested that meetings should still be held even if unattended by the bereaved and the Bethany members could use this time to pray for the dead. As the discussion continued and developed the idea of a prayer service for the recently deceased in the parish emerged. Two G.E.C. members agreed to have trial run.

Rathfarnham Parish Bethany group ran a very successful prayer and reflection meeting for the bereaved.

We concentrated on inviting 15 who had been bereaved during the past 2 years. They were a mixture of men and women who had been visited by members of the group.

These people were bereaved from 6 months to 2 years and most of them had lost a spouse. A notice was also placed in the church and an announcement was made at mass on the previous Sunday

Nine attended on the night, six Bethany members facilitated the evening

The evening was based around the fable of the cracked pot with meditations and reflections from Joyce Rupp’s book “Praying our goodbyes.”

We began the evening by lighting our Bethany candle and then each person lit person lit a candle naming their departed.

The group were invited to give a brief memory of their departed if they so wished.

A reflection on the brokenness of Christ was read together with a PowerPoint picture of the Crucifixion displayed.

Quiet music was played to give people time for reflection.

This was followed by a picture of broken pieces of pottery. A prayer was read. The fable of the cracked pot was then presented on PowerPoint. A further picture showed a picture of broken pieces of pottery brought together and a closing prayer was read from Joyce Rupp.

Quiet music was intermittently played at appropriate times.

After this presentation we broke for tea for 20 minutes. The group was brought back together and an article on grief was read. We then broke into groups of 4/5 and were asked to share how each person was feeling and what image had spoken to them.

The groups were brought together after 15 minutes and given an opportunity to share with the whole group.

A reflection was read from “seasons of grief “

The evening concluded with extracts from the Shalom prayer which was passed around so that each person could read a section if they so wished.

Feedback was very positive and we in Rathfarnham would hope to organise a similar evening and invite other bereaved persons, Perhaps next time concentrating on those who have lost a younger member of the family.

Members of the General Executive for 2011:

Myles O'Reilly SJ (Spiritual Director),

Winnie Keogh (Chairperson),

Moira Staines (Secretary),

Ronan Hughes (Treasurer), Anne Butler, Brendan Nugent, Maeve

Mason, Deirdre Ó Muiri, Gobnait O'Grady, James Garland.

Bethany Bereavement Support Comes North

For some time, among the Family Ministry training team and volunteers in Down and Connor Diocese, there has been a concern as to how parishioners are supported in their parish at a time of bereavement. While there are good examples of how support from within a parish community can be beneficial on both a practical and emotional level, in Northern Dioceses this form of ministry was not present. One major contributing factor to this gap in ministry was the difficulty in accessing accredited and supported training and practice.

A tried and tested model, Bethany involves parish-based volunteers helping those within their own community in both listening and in ritual. This seemed to be just exactly what we were looking for so two Family Ministry Volunteers and I met with Winnie Keogh and Fr Myles O'Reilly from the National General Executive in Dublin - Unfortunately they were not in a position to send trainers to Belfast for the ten weeks and suggested that we receive the necessary training and then coordinate the training in the North.

With Josephine O'Neill and Cathy Curran I undertook the Bethany Bereavement Training course in Esker Retreat

House enabling us to coordinate and provide instruction on this model of bereavement support in the Diocese of Down and Connor. Having completed the accredited Bethany training in November 2010 we then established an appropriate diocesan Bethany facilitation team. In January 2011 - As Family Ministry Coordinator - I sought approval from Bishop Treanor to run the course; then contacted at least three parishes within the diocese that were prepared to support the training and subsequent bereavement support activities of a team of at least 6 parishioners.

With a lot of help and support from Winnie Keogh we delivered the Bethany bereavement support training programme from March 2011 - June 2011. Winnie was always on hand to help with queries and in fact came to Belfast one night to deliver the session on running a Parish Bethany Group and also travelled to Drumalis Retreat and Conference Centre in Larne for the final day and commissioning of the new group.

It was a privilege to work with the very enthusiastic and committed people who are undertaking this Ministry of Consolation and the Core Team are now looking forward to September when another three parishes will embark on the training to be able to listen to the bereaved



St Bernadette's Group: Paula Livingstone, Dolores Whittaker, Eileen Lynch, Tony Macklin, Liam Dowds, Irene Maguire with Bishop Farquhar and Winnie Keogh.

and support them on their grief journey.

As Cardinal Hume wrote:

Silence is the best response to another's grief.

Not the silence that is a pause in speech, awkward and unwanted, but one that unites heart to heart.

On Saturday 11th June twenty-four volunteers were commissioned as Bethany Bereavement Support Group Members by Bishop Anthony Farquhar

and Winnie Keogh from Bethany General Executive Council.

For more information please contact:

Claire Dowds,
Family Ministry Office,
Good Shepherd Centre,
511 Ormeau Road,
Belfast BT7 3GS.

Phone: 02890492777

Email: familyministry.dc@btconnect.com

Bethany Bereavement Support Group contact details:

Bethany Bereavement Support Group,
c/o Rathfarnham Parish Centre, Willbrook Road,
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.

Bethany Phone: 087 9905299

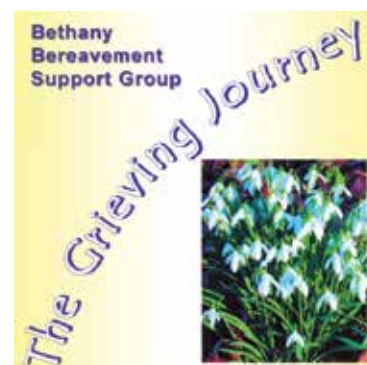
Email: bethanysupport@eircom.net

Website: www.bethany.ie



Down & Connor Bethany Core Team with Bishop Farquhar and Winnie Keogh. (L to R) Fr Gary Toman, Bishop Farquhar, Winnie Keogh, Claire Dowds, Josephine O'Neill, Cathy Curran, Marie McGuigan and Br George Gordon.

The Grieving Journey CD



Personal stories, reflections, and practical suggestions for times of grief.

Cost: €3.00 (for more than 3 CDs - €2.00 postage)

Order through GEC, contact details are above.