



BETHANY BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

A Tribute to Mary Brady

Mary died 21st May 2013. May she Rest in Peace.

It was with great sadness the GEC and members of Bethany Bereavement Support Group learnt of the death of Mary Brady. On behalf of all in Bethany we extend our deepest sympathy to her daughters Julie and Sarah and their families on the loss they now experience without the presence of their dear mother and grandmother.

In this great loss Mary also gives us hope. I was privileged, together with Winnie Keogh, to have visited Mary while she was convalescing in Caritas after her operation. Her serenity and acceptance of God's will and the journey she knew lay ahead was extraordinary. She had the peace of knowing that her dear husband Dermot was close by. In the hospital she told me that Dermot had come to her in her own kitchen before she

went into hospital. Now they are again united and she no longer has to suffer the pain she expressed in her poem 'To Dermot' from 'Time without you': 'Without your love I no longer belong. With your absence loneliness fills your place'.

They are both now united in God's presence in eternal love. The legacy and memories that Mary has left with us in Bethany will always remain in the two books that Bethany had such a close involvement with. In her beautiful book 'Time Without You' she reflects on her own journey of grief and also speaks of the support she received from Bethany Bereavement Support Group. This was real endorsement of what Bethany can be to others.

In 2012 Mary took on the mammoth task of revising the history of Bethany and in October of that year we had the launch

of the 'The Bethany Journey' revised by Mary Brady. This task was taken on with great love and dedication and it was wonderful for us in Bethany to have worked so closely with her. These legacies will remain forever with us.

We thank God for the gift of knowing Mary so well. For the wonderful artist and poet she was and that we shared, in particular, the art and poetry that came out of her journey of loss which she expressed so beautifully in 'Time Without You'.

May the memory and gifts that Mary has left with us inspire us all in the work of Bethany Bereavement Support Group.

We remember especially in our prayers and support Sarah and Julie as they experience the pain of their loss. May they be comforted on their journey and experience God's love and care. As Mary said in 'Time With-



out You', 'Bethany has remained an important part of my life.' May she now remain an important part of Bethany.

Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis

Moirá Staines
Chairperson
Bethany Bereavement
Support Group

Bethany 30 years on and into the Future



Bishop Eamonn Walsh presents an icon of Our Lady to Fr. Myles O'Reilly in recognition of his 30 years of ministry to Bethany.

Over hundreds of retreats in Tabor retreat centre, I learnt that whenever anyone spoke from the heart, I could not but be moved and feel connected

to them. It was as life giving to me as to them. I also found in my training as a Jesuit, that whenever I was listened to at depth and with compassion, it

always changed me. There is something very sacred about real listening. It brings the heart, the whole person into play. No matter how intellectually well qualified a person was, no matter how high a status they had in society, once they spoke from the heart, we were on level ground. When I started off as director of Tabor House in 1981, there was a major experience that people were not talking about, the experience of dying and impending death, and the experience of the loss of a loved one. Through my summer work in a New York Hospital, I discovered the great

strides that Dr Kubler-Ross had made with dying people in getting them to talk about their experience. She inspired me to suggest to the then Tabor team, the idea of designing an experiential retreat for the dying and the bereaved. At first it was a scary business; would people have the courage to open up? Would we be blown away by their grief? Would our own griefs get in the way? It was so miraculous to find, that no matter how sad the stories that were told, a matching and greater com

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A Parish Cluster Initiative

5-session Bereavement Programme

Last year our parish of St. John the Baptist Parish in Blackrock, Co, Dublin was clustered with Guardian Angels Parish, Newtownpark Avenue and Church of the Assumption, Booterstown.

Our three parish Bethany Group members met and decided to take turns in providing events throughout the coming year, aimed at helping the bereaved of our parishes. Following Guardian Angels Parish's initiative in the Spring, when they invited the bereaved of the three parishes to attend their evening of "Reflection and Remembrance", the Blackrock Bethany Group members decided to offer an evening of training in the 5-session Bereavement Programme to neighbouring Bethany groups.

In July Bethany members from Dalkey, Kilmacud, Foxrock, Cabinteely and

Newtownpark Avenue parishes attended the training in Blackrock Parish Centre.

The nineteen who attended were split into four groups, each group being given the task to prepare a presentation of one of the themes of the programme eg. Understanding Grief: Stress: Surviving Loneliness: There is a life after grieving a death. To do so they were provided with simple guidelines and some background reading. After 30 minutes, each small group presented their findings to the full group so that by the end of the evening everybody had experienced/learned how to present each part of the programme. The feedback from the participants was very positive.

Other Bethany cluster-groups who may be interested in this training evening, please contact Gobnait O'Grady at 087-2052177.

Bethany 30 years on

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passion always arose in the hearts of the listeners that was healing and consoling! The bereaved no longer found themselves isolated in their grief. In those initial days of the bereavement retreats, we had the added resource of Christy Conneally, with his exquisite humour and emotional poetic insight into the grieving journey. The faith context into which the whole weekend was set also had its healing effect.

I left Tabor house in 1989. Bethany was up and running at that stage thanks to initiative of Fr. John Murphy SJ and Derek Whelan. When I returned in 1996, I was invited to become chaplain of Bethany. The bereavement retreat was no longer in existence as Tabor House had closed down. Bethany seemed to be on its last legs. The think-

ing was that it was no longer needed. Mairead Allen became the new chairperson. She was determined to restore the bereavement retreat. It was hard at first; people did not have the money, and we had no consistent place to host the retreat. Grace intervened. The government started supplying money for our work and we found Orlagh Retreat centre as a very suitable home for the retreat.

Since 1996, the main factors I see in the revival of Bethany besides the restoration of the bereavement retreat are, the improvement of the training under the initiative of Sr. Sheila McCauliffe; the outstanding commitment of executive members down through the years, issuing in things like creative worthwhile AGM's, significant reflection days, ongoing refresher courses, interviewing candidates for training, making of the CD, drawing

Bethany Support in Spain

As my doctors felt that a warmer climate was essential for my health I moved to Spain for autumn, winter and spring. This had a very positive effect and my health improved. During these months friends and family members came to visit and stay with me. As it happened many had been bereaved some recently and some many years ago.

The loss of children is particularly difficult and the grief never truly goes away. One mother had lost her lovely son tragically many years ago. Another couple had more recently lost their only son, a boy with a promising future, who died from a brain injury following an accident. They bought his coffin on the day of his 20th birthday.

Another person had lost her only sibling to whom she had been very close, who died leaving a 4 year old daughter. A mother

had seen her son of 42 lose his fight with cancer leaving small children.

Being with these people in their sorrow I was most grateful for the training I received from Bethany especially for the listening skills and the ability to be present to their grief. There were many tears but much laughter too.

So the ethos of Bethany continues far away from Irish shores in a home environment which was very relaxed and of course continued out of doors over coffee or lunch. One friend told me I was like a mother (I couldn't ask for a nicer compliment). They found some healing, solace and respite from their grief and I felt so privileged and humbled listening to their stories. They are just wonderful people.

A Bethany Member

Notices.....

Celebration of Mass for Mary Brady Deceased

@ 2.00 pm

Saturday 9th November @ Gonzaga, Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

Followed by Workshop for members finishing approx 5.00pm.

RSVP to bethanysupport@eircom.net or text 087 9905299

Irish Hospice Foundation

Living With Loss - an information evening for the bereaved

Friday 1st November 5.30pm to 8.30pm

Alexander Hotel 41 - 47 Fenian St. Dublin 2.

Guest Speakers:

John Lonergan and Mary O' Rourke.

Orlagh Weekend for the Bereaved

22nd to 24th November all enquires to:

Anne Butler 087 2050514

up a constitution, taking hold of our identity by publishing the booklet on Bethany's history 30 years on, and Mary Brady's book "Time without you". As I see it, the crucial elements for the future of Bethany will be the quality of its training, and the level of commitment from the executive. At a recent event run by the excellent "Console"

6 of the 8 speakers did not mention faith and spirituality as part of the resources to deal with the wound of suicide in our society. I think that this is a strength that Bethany will always have, it's faith perspective, and I hope it will continue to nurture it in the future.

Fr. Myles O'Reilly SJ

Bereavement Group Support Programme

Report of a 5 Session Workshop

At our AGM in 16th February, 2013 the Chairperson Moira Staines said one of her priorities would be the implementation of the 5 module programme for group meetings. With this in mind I approached Aileen who is the Pastoral Worker in my parish. She was very enthusiastic and felt several parishioners would like to avail of a structured programme. She advertised it in the weekly bulletin and invited a response. Six persons came to the first meeting, five of whom attended all sessions. In addition Aileen and I were present as facilitators.

At the first meeting we introduced ourselves and explained that we were trained "listeners". We emphasised that the lighting of the Bethany candle symbolised that we were now in a sacred place. This enabled complete confidentiality and freedom to speak without fear of judgment. We then recited the Bethany prayer after which Aileen led us in a short meditation. This approach was used at the start of each session.

Session 1

We explored preliminary feelings, being in a group setting, trying to differentiate one's own concerns whether

fear, anger, loneliness. I said that grief was Nature's way of healing a broken heart. It is an emotion but not a disease. The booklet is useful in enlarging on any feelings

Session 2

There was a more in depth exploration of all types of feelings resulting from physical symptoms such as extreme fatigue, headaches, nausea, irritability, inability to concentrate. We gave each member time to explore thoughts and feelings and shared some of our own experiences. We also used one episode from the C/D produced by the Bethany organisation. This encouraged more sharing and led to a brief discussion on coping strategies such as physical exercise, more rest, trying to organise priorities, accepting help from others who care.

Session 3

This session dealt with regrets, things said, unsaid, poor relationships at crucial moments. We allowed time to articulate as much as they felt able to share, encouraged letter writing. It helped that they rolled a stone before placing it in a bowl before the lighted candle. We recited the prayer "Remember Them" slowly.

Session 4

This concentrates on survival



Back L to R: Maeve, Aileen and Tom.

Front L to R: Sally, Margaret, Geraldine and Patsi.

strategies whilst understanding that gradually letting go does not mean forgetting the person. The group were now more comfortable so that any plans were listened to with respect, maybe not always agreed with and more were suggested. Some had already taken up hobbies such as walking, coaching a team, joining a group. They felt they were beginning to re-engage with life. The "Bill of Rights" provoked quite a lot of discussion and even encouraged those reluctant to seek help.

Session 5

We started by placing letters, photos and mementos before the candle. Each one also placed an individual candle on our little altar. They shared their thoughts with group. Very slowly we recited "Prayers of the Faithful" from the booklet. We used Fr. Myles section from C/D followed by quiet time and brief discussion.

Evaluation

- It was good to talk with others who are working through their grief and to feel that's its ok. to be how you are.

- Writing the letter was very healing.
- I really enjoyed the course and finding I was in a safe place to share some of my life.
- As a facilitator I felt 7/8 to be a good number. Planning and running a meeting requires a bit of practise

Conclusions

We had a very supportive Parish Priest and this is essential. Aileen provided invaluable help in advertising the proposed series and in setting up the meeting space. She also produced very clear presentations on PowerPoint of salient items for discussion. This focused our attention and was helpful in directing comments within the group. (A flip-chart would serve the same purpose). She also provided laminated copies of the prayers used. Members said they liked taking these away. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for each participant to share whilst not disregarding a person unable to share. Enjoying a "cuppa" afterwards was relaxing and quite therapeutic.

General Executive Committee 2013

Fr. Myles O' Reilly - **Spiritual Director**

Moira Staines - **Chairperson**

Phil Crowley - **Secretary**

Anne Butler - **Treasurer**

Winnie Keogh, Deirdre O Muirí, Gobnait O Grady,

Maeve Mason, Liz Ronaldson, Jean Cleary.

Bethany Bereavement Support Group contact details:

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Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.

Bethany Phone: 087 9905299

Email: bethanysupport@eircom.net

Website: www.bethany.ie

In Memory of my Unborn

I think of you tonight, my little unborn that never will be,
 I remember the date and time,
 Christmas day, five o'clock,
 No, you died two nights before,
 Misdiagnosis "Something you ate"
 But the pain was real I screamed.
 I never scream in pain, but I did that night.
 "It will pass" but it didn't
 Two days later scarcely able to bend,
 I phoned an old familiar friend.
 "Anne, you are in trouble, get over here fast"
 But I still had to dress for dinner.
 I felt every bump and pothole in those fifteen miles.
 At his house I noticed the waiting room door ajar
 Table bedecked with silver and crystal and linen,
 We were intruding... No No No, lie down on the couch.
 We had to wait as he reached another old faithful friend.
 I remember glasses of wine being offered
 "Not you today" he smiled as I looked expectantly.
 At the hospital the reaction was swift.
 That other old faithful friend shouted and bullied and nearly swore.
 The anaesthetist smiled when I said "I am still here"
 Afterwards, worried faces around my bed,
 "But your Christmas dinner" I said.
 They said it was unusual but not unheard of,
 They said it wasn't my fault,
 But of course it was,
 I was the one with the defective mechanism
 Why couldn't I conform?
 Why had I to be different to the norm?
 The pain didn't go away that day.
 It hurt six weeks later when an uninformed nurse said
 "How is your baby?"
 It was compounded when she said
 "You have other children?"
 I cried for miles and miles.
 It continued when an unthinking neighbour spoke
 incessantly of children
 Not realising my pain.
 The pain has eased, but the memory remains.
 You would be eighteen now,
 Would you be blond and beautiful and teasing the boys?
 Parents of unborn that never will be
 Do you hurt like me?
 Do you wonder like I wonder?
 Are you crying like I am crying now?
 Please don't cry,
 It's nobody's fault.

At the time of my ectopic pregnancy there were no counselling or support services available and it was many years later before I found an expression for my grief.

Anne Butler.

Day of reflection 2013



Fr. Jim Cogley P.P. Oylegate and Wood Turner with a selection of some of his wood carvings.

Fr Jim Cogley is a grief counsellor and a maker of wonderful wooden objects which he uses to symbolise ideas and emotions. In the first session of the day he spoke of being stuck in bereavement and the need for self care. Fear is sometimes the reason why we cannot progress towards acceptance of loss. Fear of yesterday, feeling secure in today, having no hope for tomorrow, can cause us to stagnate.

Busyness is a way in which we put off dealing with grief and we ignore our feelings until we are exhausted and in danger of burnout. We need to realise that we are allowed to feel and respond to our grief and take care of ourselves.

After a coffee break session 2 concentrated on the Art of Letting Go.

We hear criticism as children which can restrict the way we see ourselves and cause us to be blind to what life is offering. Letting go, being open, we can see providence and abundance. If we can be open about a problem we have a better chance of solving it.

The listening ear is a powerful thing and, as we were trained by Bethany, we must avoid joining in the outpouring of grief ourselves, glazing over with inattention or trying to think of ways to solve problems as we listen. The power

of a healing silence to allow the bereaved the chance to feel and perhaps cry over events of the distant past should be realised. Sometimes a particular phrase may unlock the unprocessed grief and allow the development of understanding and the possibility of letting go. Session 3 was entitled The Tunnel of Grief. We must all enter the tunnel, which will differ for everyone, but we are often side tracked. Denial (don't even know I am lying) often prevents us from grieving. Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves the mean actions we remember and try to remember the good we did.

Recrimination, Adults often regress to childhood when a parent dies and blame them for abandoning them. This must be dealt with before grieving can progress. Earlier losses may be recalled when grieving a new loss by unresolved earlier griefs.

Throughout the talk Fr. Jim illustrated his points with symbolic wood carvings which intensified the meanings of his remarks. Each session ended with comments and questions from the attendees.

Clonliffe College 27th April 2013.