

Muscatine Catholic Community
Youth Ministry

Responding to the Death of a Young Person

Adapted from a resource by the same title produced by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (www.nfcym.org)

Some portions of the prayer service have been adapted from the Rites of the Catholic Church (Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying and Christian Funerals)

This plan should be implemented in the following situations:

- **Unexpected death of a young person in grades 6 – 12 (sudden illness, trauma, accident, etc...)**
- **Unexpected death of a college age parishioner**
- **Crisis situation (i.e. school shooting; multiple suicide; accident involving multiple youth; etc...)**

Introduction

Response to any sort of crisis is based on the nature of the crisis itself, however this plan is designed to help facilitate some of the more basic or stressful aspects of that response.

The primary responsibility of Muscatine Catholic Community Youth Ministry staff in responding to the death of a young person is to reach out to the family and friends of the young person with the love of Christ, and the support of the parish family. While pastoral staff will be directly responsible for this sort of pastoral care, this document is provided to help alleviate some of the stress associated with logistical concerns.

There are two types of situations in which this plan may be activated. The first involves the death of a single young person, and is described below as “Standard Response.” The second type of situation involves the death of multiple young people, and is described as “Augmented Response.”

As soon as we are notified of the death of a young person or young people we will implement the following plan:

Step One: People to Contact:

INSERT CYM HERE (home phone: _____, cell phone: _____)
Priest On Call (INSERT PHONE # HERE)

Those listed above, in consultation with family members and school officials, will decide on how to continue.

School Phone Numbers:

INSERT SCHOOLS & NUMBERS HERE

Standard Response:

In the event of the death of a single young person there will likely be no special arrangements beyond the traditional vigil & funeral service, but parish staff may be asked to be present to the school community for counseling. The young person's school should be called and made aware that our pastoral staff is available if they are needed.

Augmented Response:

In the event of the death of multiple young people from a single incident parish staff will likely be involved in counseling which will take place away from the parish campus, therefore making it difficult for them to make arrangements for things such as announcements, prayer services, etc... In such situations the young person's school should be called and made aware that our pastoral staff is available if they are needed.

The Diocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry should also be made aware of the situation.
INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION HERE

The following information/templates may be helpful.

Special Prayer Service

In addition to the standard vigil and funeral service, the parish may offer a special prayer service to allow young people to gather in a 'safe environment' to share prayer and mutual support. Such a prayer service will likely involve the following:

- **Media Announcement**

The following announcement may be provided to media sources (i.e. television or radio stations).

"The Muscatine Catholic Community is saddened by _____
(make reference to the event, i.e. 'recent events at Central Middle School,' or 'the death of John Doe, Jane Smith, and Jack Doe')

and will hold a special prayer service _____
(make reference to the time of the service, i.e. 'tonight at 7:00pm)

_____ *(make reference to the location of the prayer service i.e. 'at St. Mathias Church, located at 215 West 8th Street,' or 'in the Religious Education Center, located in the in Bishop Hayes Catholic School, 2407 Cedar Street.')*

We request that members of the media respect the needs of those who wish to participate in the service by not bringing cameras or other equipment into the worship space. Muscatine Catholic Community pastoral staff is available for anyone who wants to talk, and can be reached by calling INSERT PHONE NUMBER HERE."

A similar message including the time & location of the prayer service should be added to the Religious Education Center voice mail greeting.

- **Facility**

If we expect a large attendance at the prayer service we will likely hold it in the Church. We will need to check the calendar to see if any other groups are scheduled to use the Church, and if they are we will need to contact them and explain the situation to them.

If we expect a smaller attendance at the prayer service we may use the Religious Education Center. Again, we will need to check the calendar to see if any other groups are scheduled to use the RE Center, and if they are we will need to contact them and explain the situation to them.

- **Prayer Service**

Included with this document is an outline which may be used to plan/prepare a special prayer service:

- **Other Resources**

Included with this document is the document "Dealing with the Death of a Young Person," published by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. This document includes a list of resources that can be utilized.

A Service of Prayer and Remembrance

Presider: _____

Location: _____

Time: _____

Musician(s): _____

Supplies:

Bible

Candles

Other:

—

Call to Prayer/Introduction

The opening includes a call to prayer, and a reminder to those gathered as to why we are present (to remember the life of the deceased, and to pray for the community left behind).

Presider: We gather this evening to remember _____, and to pray for his/her friends and family, and all those who mourn the loss. As we gather to share stories and to support one another we remember that as Christians we

believe

that life has changed, not ended.

Opening Song: _____

Suggestions: "Healer of Our Every Ill" (Haugen); "You Are Mine" (Haas);

Opening Prayer

Presider: Lord God, source and destiny of our lives, in your love you gave us _____, to grow in wisdom, age, and grace. Now you have called him/her to yourself. As we grieve the loss of one so young, we seek to understand your purpose. Be with us as we gather to share stories and to

reach

out to one another in prayer, and keep us always mindful of the love you

have

for each of us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R./ Amen.

Scripture Readings

Hebrew Scripture Reading

Suggestions: Isaiah 25: 6a 7 – 9 (The Lord God will destroy death forever.)

Sirach 6:14 – 17 (A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter)

A Reading From _____

Psalm Response (if possible a sung responsorial psalm helps those gathered to participate in the service)

Suggestions: "Shepherd Me O God" (Haugen); "Be Not Afraid" (Dufford); Psalm 25 (To you O Lord I lift up my soul); Psalm 46 (God is our refuge and our strength)

Christian Scripture Reading

Suggestions: Revelation 7:9-10, 15-17 (God will wipe away all tears from their eyes)
Romans 8:31-39 (Nothing can separate us from the love of God)

A Reading From _____

Gospel Reading

Suggestions: Luke 24: 1-8 (Why do you seek the living one among the dead?);
John 6: 51-58 (All who eat this bread will live for ever, and I will raise them up on the last day)

A Reading from the Gospel According to Saint _____

Reflection or Remembrance

Time is allowed for the community to reflect on the words from scripture. This allows those gathered an opportunity to process their emotions and feelings while remembering the deceased as well as the promises God has made to us.

Suggestions:

The presider, pastor, youth minister, or some other leader (youth or adult) might offer a few words of reflection based on the scripture readings.

The presider might begin the period of reflection, and then invite those gathered to share their thoughts as they pass a candle. All should be reminded that if they do not wish to share aloud they may simply pass the candle to the next person.

Ritual or Symbolic Action

Ritual or symbolic action allows those gathered to turn their feelings and emotions into a physical action.

Suggestions:

Book of Memories – those gathered are invited to write down their memories of the deceased, and to then come forward and place them in a book of memories that will be given to the parents of the deceased. Paper & pencils/pens are provided, and reflective music is played quietly during this time.

Lighting Candles – those gathered are invited to light a candle as a symbol of their prayer. Small taper candles are set out, along with a large bowl of sand. The tapers can be lit from a larger candle and then placed in the sand. Reflective music should be played quietly as this is happening.

Intercessions

Presider: In this difficult time let us turn to Christ Jesus with confidence and faith in the power of his cross and resurrection:

For _____, a child of God, that he/she be held securely in God's loving embrace now and for all eternity.

We pray to the Lord.

R./ Lord, hear our prayer.

For _____'s family, especially his/her mother and father, [and his/her sister(s) and brother(s)] that they may feel the healing power of Christ in the midst of their pain and grief.

We pray to the Lord.

R./ Lord, hear our prayer.

For _____'s friends, that we/they may be consoled in our/their loss and strengthened in our/their love for one another.

We pray to the Lord.

R./ Lord, hear our prayer.

The prayers of the community are welcome now, whether spoken or silent. (Time is give for those gathered to share their prayer concerns.)

Presider: Lord God, you hear the prayers of our hearts, and your spirit intercedes for us

even when we cannot find the words to pray. Be there to welcome our departed brother/sister into your kingdom, and help us to trust always in the love you have shown for us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

R./ Amen.

Presider: Lord, remember us in your mercy, and teach us how to pray.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven...

Closing

As the prayer service concludes a leader should inform those gathered of the resources/support available to them (parish staff, other counselors, etc...), as well as any other memorial services, wakes, visitations, or funeral services that might already be scheduled

Presider: The Lord be with you.

R./ And also with you.

Presider: Let us pray,

Lord, _____ is gone now from this earthly dwelling
and has left behind those who mourn his/her absence.
Grant that as we grieve for our brother/sister
we may hold his/her memory dear
and live in hope of the eternal kingdom
where you will bring us together again.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R./ Amen

Presider: Eternal rest grant unto him/her, O Lord.

R./ And let perpetual light shine upon him/her.

May he/she rest in peace.

R./ Amen.

May his/her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R./ Amen

May the love of God and the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ
bless and console us
and gently wipe every tear from our eyes:
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R./ Amen

Closing Song: _____

Suggestions: "In the Day of the Lord" (Ridge); "We Will Rise Again" (Haas);