

**New
Ministry!**



St. Mary Parish, 55 Catoonah Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

During this time of unprecedented sadness, pain, disruption, and uncertainty, I am privileged to introduce a new **grief and loss program** for children and teenagers.

I was eight years old when my mother died suddenly. Afterward, no one spoke of her, they didn't have the words. With the best of intentions, adults felt they were protecting me but the silence made my loss even more painful, isolating and confusing. As I grew older, I had to deal, on my own, with that gaping mom-shaped hole in my life, the tragedy compounded by not having her memory kept alive for me. Grief is one of the most universal human experiences, yet we don't talk about it—the *elephant in the room*.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, our *GALE* program (Grief And Loss Education) is offered free-of-charge to schools and community organizations. Designed for students K-12, this workshop complements the social and emotional education already provided in school. Developing empathy and learning how to cope with adversity are vital for healthy development.

The stark reality is that 2 out of 3 kids will experience a traumatic loss during childhood:

- Death of a parent or sibling 1 in 14
- Breakup of parents' marriage 1 in 4
- Parent deployed 1 in 40
- Incarceration of parent or guardian 1 in 12
- Parent with substance use disorder 1 in 8
- Classroom with at least one grieving student 7 in 10

Unaddressed grief puts children at increased risk of developmental delays, poor school performance, anxiety, aggression, addiction, depression, suicidal ideation, diabetes, and more. Tragically, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the number of families living with grief and loss is now greater than ever. While we cannot eliminate trauma, we **can** support kids, and help them grieve and grow after loss. We **can** create a culture of caring, compassion and healing. We **can** educate teachers about grief. We **can** build resilience.

Our interactive workshop:

- explores ways to help students talk about grief—their own or the grief of someone close to them—in ways that are not scary, and
- normalizes grief and gives students the language and tools to reach out to their friends who are hurting.

Call or email today to schedule your free *GALE* workshop. Dates available January through May 2021. We are also offering a virtual program this November—more information to follow.

Grace and peace,

Mary

Mary Curley

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Supporting children and teenagers who are grieving the loss of a parent, grandparent, guardian, sibling, friend, or other loved one — whether from death, divorce, deployment, illness, incarceration, violence, or other trauma