



# Grieving with Great Hope

Dear St. John Vianney Parishioner,

Please accept issue two of *Grieving with Great Hope* newsletter. While you face daily reminders of your loss, we hope that you are receiving the support you want and need. Each issue is meant to shed different insight for reflecting your own grieving process. It's our hope and prayer that this newsletter will help as you commence your personal and unique grief journey.

During your encounter with the loss of a loved one, much is brought to the surface; much is awakening beneath. Like the snowy fields during winter that veil what is coming to life underground, so can your time of quiet introspection and memories hide the deep shifting within you.

During your daily signs of loss, you prepare space for that unrelenting separation.

Allow yourself to remember other losses you have experienced; support the healing that you have already begun.

With the knowledge that you can't make it by yourself, you realize that it's time to reach out to those sources of strength—and to *that* Source of strength—that have inspired you before and that inspire others now. In what may seem to be frozen in time, you *will* begin to move forward.

Our hope and prayer is that with the grace of God, you will embrace the stirrings in your heart and soul. Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

The SJV Grief Ministry Team

The Seasons of Grief: Winter

When the **reality** of the death sets in, you may feel that you're worsening because you know that the death really did happen while other supports may diminish as family and friends expect you to improve.

**Confusion** plays with your sanity; you can't think and you forget your thoughts mid-sentence. You are disorganized and impatient with yourself.

While you **identify** with your loved one to stay close to him, you may copy his style of dress, hobbies, interests or habits. You may carry /wear a special object like jewelry or clothing.

**Anxiety** increases and you are frightened of losing control or going "crazy." You panic about the future, money or other people who could die.

Sometimes you feel **relief**—you've had a good day! You feel so much better: you can laugh and have fun without feeling guilt. Enjoy these moments when they come; you deserve a rest from your pain.

**Depression** may return periodically, sometimes when least expected and surprise you because you thought you were better. You may hurt so much you don't care about anything; everything is an effort.

**Expectations** are important; you may feel you aren't grieving "correctly." Your friend was better in a few months—why aren't you? It's better not to compare. Expectations—your own or others—may add to your burden.

Like most bereaved people, your **self-esteem** and **self-confidence** may temporarily fall far below normal levels.

You're **isolated** and **lonely**. You're empty and you want to withdraw from family and friends, or they are too busy with their own lives.

Your **sadness** seems inconsolable. Unhappiness pervades your life and you miss your loved one's presence.

You feel **helpless** and unable to help yourself cope with grief. You feel powerless because you can't control your feelings. You see other couples together or children with their parents and you envy their togetherness. You feel keenly what you've lost.

Your **frustration** builds as your fulfillments are gone and you haven't found new ones yet. Nothing interests you.

Temporary feelings of **bitterness** and **resentment**, especially toward those who are, in some way, responsible for your loss are normal. Habitual bitterness, however, can drain energy and block healing.



### Healing Demands Work

Grief is a painful process that we naturally resist. The healing process is called "work," it demands that we work through our feelings to release the pain and work through any relationship issues that may not have been reconciled.

The more *fully we grieve* in the *early* months, the more relief we feel as time passes. Unfortunately, we can't reduce our pain by postponing it. It simply isn't possible to avoid our grief without jeopardizing our healing and recovery.

### Finding the Courage to Reach Out

How often have friends or family members offered, "If you ever need anything, just call."

Your friends and family want to help but they don't know how. You need to be pro-active in finding the support and help you need during this time of transition.

### Building a Diversified Support System

Recognize that no one person, no matter how caring or concerned, can meet all of your needs. As you identify family and friends who want to help, think about how each person can best help you, based on the nature of your relationship and how he or she has supported you in the past. Be aware of the good listeners from "movers and shakers," and those who are comfortable with practical tasks. All of these people may be players in your support network; the key is to know the right person for the appropriate task.

Tell people your needs. Most will struggle with this task because you must be willing to be vulnerable at the risk of appearing weak. Experience shows that the strongest people are those who recognize their need for assistance and seek out the help they need. Muster your courage, swallow your pride and ask for help. People really do want to help but they simply don't know how. Sharing this newsletter can be a successful tool in educating your loved ones in understanding you and your grief better. ✦

Consider contacting **Dale Morgan of Hospice Compassus for free grief support** at the Sedona Community Center: (928) 282-2834 ; or email Grief Ministry: [griefministry@sjvsedona.org](mailto:griefministry@sjvsedona.org)



### *This Child of Mine*

As I traveled this lonely road through grief, I found that the depth of my pain could consume me on any given day. Minutes, hours and days would pass where I felt overwhelmed by the loss of my only child to the war in Afghanistan.

But, as this darkness surrounded me, this dark night of the soul, over time I came to realize that I had a choice: I could wallow in the rawness of my pain or I could survive by finding the power within myself to choose a new perspective. I chose to remember.

Memories are a funny thing. Images of times gone by can flash through my mind and, like a summer's breeze, certain memories can fade away. When it came to losing my son, I found that I needed to find the courage to rediscover who he was. I decided to grab on to some of those memories and make them tangible—something that I could hold close in my heart.

As certain memories of my son's life came flooding back to me, I remembered our family's first military assignment with the U S Army, settling into a new home in Ft. Hood, Texas. I was in the kitchen preparing lunch when my son called to me, "Hey Mom, come here, quick!"

Wondering what all the commotion was about, I quickly walked toward his bedroom. Leaning against the doorframe I took in the atmosphere in the room. Our son's love of all things having to do with flight encouraged my husband to build several small model airplanes that now hung suspended from the ceiling, swaying gently with the slightest breeze.

As I looked across the room, Adam sat motionless at the end of his bed, mesmerized by the scene that was being played out before him. Following his gaze, a small garden had come to life, heralding the coming of spring. Just beyond the window, a flying jewel, a beautiful ruby-throated hummingbird with iridescent green feathers, floated delicately above a tall Asian lily. The tiny bird hovered for a time, beating its wings as it dipped its long beak to catch the sweet nectar.

Adam stared in fascination and, as I watched him, I found myself viewing this marvel of nature through his eyes. At the age of 6, this was his moment of discovery and I suddenly realized that this precious child that had been entrusted into my care had chosen to share this moment with me. As he grew, his curiosity in exploring his world helped me to develop a new appreciation for how I looked at the world as well.

As time passed, Adam developed a passion for being outdoors and, right before my eyes, he had suddenly changed into a fearless young man who could be found, on any given day, climbing the tall, red rock formations with friends in Garden of the Gods nature park in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

One beautifully clear day, he invited me to join him and I had another chance to share the treasured moment with him. I found that Adam had just begun to taste the sweetness of his life and that he embraced the fullness of the moment when he wrote the following poem:

### **The Ascent**

I see red sandstone surrounded by fearful friends,  
weighted down by their own gear. I see blue skies  
and a vertical limit. All fear has been expelled. All  
problems have been repelled. Nothing but adrenaline  
remains. Finally, peace.

On February 18, 2007, at the age of 23, Adam chose to answer a higher calling by giving his life in service to our nation during Operation Enduring Freedom, in Afghanistan. While serving as a crew chief transporting troops on aircraft 472 with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), the helicopter he was in crashed. There were 22 people on board but, because of the bravery of the crew in their attempts to land, 14 soldiers survived.

We never know what direction our children's lives may take but, in the end, it is the memories we make with them that matter. ✦

By Felicia V. Young-Wilkinson

Gold Star Mother of Sgt. Adam Alexander Wilkinson  
160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR)  
2nd Battalion, B. Co., Ft. Campbell, Kentucky

Special thanks to Hospice for *The Seasons of Grief: Winter*

## ***Grieving with Great Hope***

Editor & Respect Life/Grief Ministry Chair: Mair Moran

Email: [griefministry@sjvsedona.org](mailto:griefministry@sjvsedona.org)

Contributors: Rosemarie Hanson, Maria Mendoza

St. John Vianney Roman Catholic Church

180 St. John Vianney Lane, Sedona, AZ 86336

Call 928 282-7545 or see [sjvsedona.org/grief-ministry/](http://sjvsedona.org/grief-ministry/)

© 2021, St. John Vianney Grief Ministry

