

Leaning on the Heart of God

*I am leaning on the heart of God.
I am resting there in silence.
All the turmoil that exhausts me
is brought to bear on this great love.*

*No resistance or complaint is heard
as I lean upon God's welcome.
There is gladness for the coming.
There is comfort for my pain.*

*I lean, and lean, and lean
upon this heart that hurts with me.
Strength lifts the weight of my distress.
Courage wraps around my troubles.*

*No miracle of instant recovery.
No taking away of life's burdens.
Yet, there is solace for my soul,
and refuge for exiled tears.*

*It is enough for me to know
the heart of God is with me,
full of mercy and compassion,
tending to the wounds I bear.*

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Suggestions to Ease the Stress of Holiday Grief

- Be gentle with yourself
- Acknowledge and express your feelings
- Plan ahead but be flexible
- Determine your needs and inform others
- Change holiday traditions as needed
- Avoid overextending yourself
- Respect your need to be alone but don't isolate yourself
- Utilize your spiritual resources
- Trust that you will make it through the holiday season



Marriage and Family Life Office

Diocese of Columbus

197 E. Gay Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

614-241-2560

www.FamilyLife.coltsdioc.org

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Grieving During the Holidays



*Marriage and Family Life Office
Diocese of Columbus*

Grieving During the Holidays

Under the best of circumstances the holiday season can be a stressful time. If you have experienced the death of a loved one, separation or divorce, lay off, illness, or the loss of any other important part of your life, you are grieving. The combination of grief and the stress of the holidays can create a very challenging and painful time. For many people, the anticipation of the holiday is more difficult than the day itself. You dread the holidays because you fear being hurt again. Your sorrow may be a result of remembering the joy of the past that now seems so out of reach. You may even feel sad when you are wished a "Merry Christmas" because you don't feel very merry.

It is best to have a flexible plan and realistic expectations. Be aware that, at the very least, your holidays will be different. You won't be able to recreate what once was nor eliminate all the pain. The difficulty is to learn to live with your grief while you endure your present situation.

Give yourself permission to choose what will be best for you and make the necessary changes to your holiday traditions. This can help you feel more in control.

Be gentle with yourself and with those close to you. Let your family know your needs. Decide with them which holiday rituals you will continue and those you will forgo this year. If your needs differ, discuss how you can support each other and compromise. You can always reinstate the traditions next year.

*"Be patient
with all things,
but first of all
with yourself."*

- St. Francis de Sales

Grieving is hard work and it may deplete your energy. Try not to overextend yourself. Prioritize what needs to be accomplished and ask for help. Respect your physical and psychological limits. Try to eliminate unnecessary stress. For example, you may choose to shop on the Internet or through catalogs if the thought of going to the mall is too overwhelming for you. Avoid the temptation to "spend" grief away because buying presents will not provide lasting relief from the pain.

You may need some time alone but don't isolate yourself. Find family and friends who understand and will not judge you for giving a voice to your grief experience. Accept social invitations based on your desires and energy. Explain that you may have to cancel at the last minute or stay for just a short time depending on how you feel.

At times of loss, you are often reminded more of what is missing than what remains in your life. Some people feel that their pain is their only connection to their loved one and may even feel guilty if they experience any happiness. Feeling joy is not a sign that you have forgotten or love them any less. Find time to recognize and be grateful for the good that remains in your life.

*Accept the
strength that
comes from the
grace of Christ
Jesus.*

2 Timothy 2:1

Discover what works for you. For many, prayer is a comfort. Giving to or caring for others can be healing. Talking with a friend or family member can be beneficial. Some find it helpful to put their thoughts on paper. It can be a way to externalize powerful emotions. Others listen to music or use artistic endeavors as paths to internal healing. Reading may also provide a welcome respite.

Take to heart the message of St. Francis de Sales: "Be patient with all things, but first of all with yourself." Realize that what helps you get through one day may not work the next. Trust that you will make it through the holidays. Try to focus on the spiritual message of the holiday. Give yourself permission to acknowledge the season in any manner you choose this year.