

# Blessed are those who mourn

At the start of winter in the UK, we have a string of festivals and services aimed at remembering the dead. On Remembrance Day, All Souls Day and The Day of the Dead, we remember those who have died and mourn their loss.

The gospels make it clear that we should mourn, that this will bring us blessings and comfort. Yet mourning the death of someone you have loved is often a lonely and grim business, made all the worse by being far from home. So how can we help ourselves, and our colleagues and friends to grieve for their dead and be comforted?

To begin with we need to accept that being upset is healthy, and that the processes of grief should not be rushed or hidden. Meanwhile, we need to carry on with life; time does not stop and life does go on, but we must be gentle with ourselves.

Practically, that means living in a regular pattern: eating good food, going to bed and trying to sleep in the patterns you are used to, taking moderate exercise, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.

Spiritually, it means finding someone to talk to or email who you can trust, and performing the rituals of grief as fully as you can; for instance: if you can't be at the burial, then try

to find some time on the same day to remember the person who has died and say goodbye to them and to pray. Then when you get home, visit the grave and family. We need these actions and stable regular life to be able to start to come to terms with death, and then we will start to be blessed with comfort.

Grief does not pass quickly, rather it comes and goes, like waves gradually fading; loved ones who have died are always with us, and we would not want it any other way. However, those waves can take us by surprise, and it is worth noticing that often grief strikes unexpectedly nine months to a year after a death and six to seven years later as well. The anniversaries can also be hard, so be careful around those times, make sure you have friends around if you can, and mark the occasions.

The death of a loved one is always hard and we are called to support each other at these times, but if your friend turns to you and talks about their grief, just listen; don't immediately turn the conversation to your problems, and do not offer solutions, rather listen and comfort them. We cannot understand our own grief let alone someone else's, but we can be there with others, making it all less frightening and lonely.

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