



PRESENT IN THE PAIN – A RETREAT FOR GRIEVING MOTHERS

Retreat format:

Session 1 – The Unexpected Elements of Grief and Trauma

In this session, I discuss the complexity of grief, and some of the things that made grieving the loss of a child more intense and difficult than I anticipated it would be. This includes the jumble of emotions, dealing with the lingering guilt and unanswered questions, the secondary losses that can continue to come up as the years go on, and finally any emotional trauma that may be present from the experience. We discuss how husbands and wives may grieve differently. I talk about why it may feel hard to pray right now and how even NFP can feel frightening. I offer practical tools for dealing with these complexities and trauma (with the caveat that I am not a counselor, and that professional counseling can be very helpful to move through these things). We end with St. Thomas Aquinas' five remedies for sorrow.

Session 2 – The Example of Our Lady of Sorrows

In this session, we look to Our Lady as the perfect example for us of grieving with faith, hope, and love. We discuss each sword of sorrow and how it can relate to our own experiences of child loss. I share my own personal experience with Our Lady specifically under this title following our losses, and how it helped me come to know her as a compassionate and loving mother who understands this unique pain and desires to give us the grace to suffer well, uniting our suffering with her Son's, as she did. We close this session by praying the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows together with a prayer book that I have written. (Ideally done inside the church as opposed to a meeting room, if possible).

Session 3 – The Gifts That Come by Way of Suffering

In this session, we discuss trusting in the Lord in the midst of our pain. We look at the things that He has already told us about Himself in the Scriptures – that He loves us, that He will never leave us or forsake us, that He works all things together for our good – and how we can lean on these instead of our own limited understanding (Proverbs 3:5). We discuss the growth in faith and perseverance that St. James tells us comes from facing trials, and we look at scriptures and quotes from the Saints that tell us that suffering is an opportunity to grow in holiness. We discuss suffering with an eternal perspective and the reminder it provides us that this world is not our home.

Additional information:

- Each session lasts approximately 45 minutes, and it is helpful to have short breaks and discussion time in between. If time permits, there is a creative activity that we can do between the first and second sessions that can be very helpful and therapeutic for healing.
- Ideally, a retreat may be scheduled before an evening Mass or after a morning Mass, so that participants may attend Mass as well.
- A shared luncheon meal can be a good time for discussion, if facilities are available for this. Volunteers from the parish would be helpful for setup and cleanup times.
- I can provide text to be shared in your parish bulletin and PDF files of flyers, signs, or inserts for you to print to advertise the retreat, if desired.
- It can be very helpful for a priest to be available to share the Church's teaching about children who have died without baptism (specifically CCC 1261) and to answer any questions about this that the women may have. This could be an additional brief session with time for questions whenever his schedule allows. It would also be very meaningful if he may be available to offer a [Blessing of Parents after Miscarriage or Stillbirth](#) for anyone who may be interested in receiving that.
- Finally, if there is any interest in offering this for couples as opposed to just grieving mothers, my husband, Patrick, is available to join me. He can be present to offer his perspective for joint sessions 1 and 3, and offer a breakout session 2 for the men. In it, he focuses on the Seven Sorrows of St. Joseph and the unique difficulty of being a grieving father and husband.

To schedule a retreat for your parish or local retreat center, please contact Eileen Tully at presentinthepain@gmail.com or use the contact form on my website, EileenTully.com.



Thank you for your interest in helping grieving parents in this way!

God bless you!

Eileen Tully