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Pastoral Care to the Grievers in Crisis

A Pastoral Synthesis Project

by

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the Faculty

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Introduction

The COVID-19 virus has caused 2.1 million deaths globally as of January 2021, including 433,000 deaths within the United States. To attempt to reduce infection rates and mortality due to COVID-19, authorities have implemented public health measures designed to reduce and limit the interactions between people. Such measures has impacted the pastoral ministry in many ways, including the cancellation of the worship services of various faiths and the closure of Sunday school, as well as the cancellation of all parish-level ceremonies and festivals. My parish now offers the worship through a livestream. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our life as Catholics so that the parish provides the essential services to all parishioners. For the first time in centuries the holy sites of the Eternal City, Vatican, have been closed. There has never been such a great crisis for the pastoral ministry, especially the pastoral cares to the grievers.

The number of mourners permitted to attend funerals and the minimal interactions with the deceased during ceremonies, severely affect all of those bereaved during the current pandemic. To cope with the increased number of deaths, the funerals are performed in very limited capacities without taking into considerations of the sufferings of grieving loved ones. In these circumstances the mourners are not able to express their grief and receive comfort through physical touch, such as hugs, handshakes, sitting next to each other during the funeral, last touches of the coffin and mourners cannot hold a reception after the funeral to socialize and connect with one another. Grieving families and friends are left with the reality that they weren't able to say their last farewells as they would have wished for. Funerals during the pandemic crisis are far from what the bereaved or the deceased would have wished for. According to O'Rourke, "the funeral is a fundamental component of cultural and religious mourning rituals: the rituals facilitate the offering of social and psychological support to the bereaved, and afford

an opportunity to convey love and respect for the deceased.¹ It is consequently possible that being unable to participate in funerals, rituals, and ceremonies will have a detrimental effect on the bereaved, affecting their mental health and ability to cope with or process their grief. Sudden death in such special way as COVID-19 is now striking the church and its members.

The grief in the bereaved has challenged the pastoral care to the griever in parish in numerous ways with regard to how to deal with them. It has called for many theological questions about the pastoral care to the griever at the church which is assigned to be the custodian of healing through faith. Thus the ministry of pastoral care to the griever must look and evaluate the effectiveness of the pastoral care to the griever which can be done through diverse cares to grieving that the church has to handle. In this context this paper will redefine the role of the pastoral minister and its ministry to the griever in pandemic crisis. It will search for what kinds of pastoral leaders are fit to cope with this crisis in pastoral ministry to the griever. Therefore, this paper mainly aims to validate the impact of consoling pastoral care to the bereaved, especially those currently beleaguered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the path to become a compassionate pastoral care giver to the griever during the crisis. The unexpected current situation has made it difficult to memorialize those who have died of complications from the pandemic disease and has thrown a wet blanket to the diverse religious life of the griever.

Deacon LOC of my parish died in January, 2021 of Covid-19, coupled with lung cancer. No visitation to hospital or his house was allowed. All I could do was to call his wife, Maria and offer my condolences. His family does not know when or how his funeral might take place. They were obliged to put off his funeral until the end of February. “We can’t properly bury our dead because of the situation,” Maria worried. She poured out her grieving, “We can’t mourn together,

¹ O’Rourke, *The Good Funeral: Toward an Understanding of Funeral Participation and Satisfaction* (2011)

we can't share memories together and we can't get together and hug each other." I was at a loss of how to show my compassion and religious decorum to console her family and the whole grief-stricken parishioners.

The rituals of honoring and saying goodbye to the dead run deep. Many parishioners traditionally reach out and provide a comforting touch to grieving family or friends in sympathy and condolences instinctively. Unfortunately for the time being, Covid-19 has eliminated these consoling traditions. Postponement, uncertainty and the new formula of condolences to the griever have triggered the pain more to the family of the deceased. In this circumstance, the importance of the pastoral care to the griever comes to the surface with a totally different paradigm. In the pastoral care to the griever, the physical visitation or meeting is considered essential care, especially at a time of epidemic crisis, for those who seek it, because the bodily pastoral care to the griever is the human values worth pursuing, even in a pandemic crisis. Loss of loved one isolates the griever and divides them from the relationships that make life worth living and on which the shared lives of people depend. Any isolation or alienation from the loved one brings forth a great suffering for those who are grieving with the loss of their loved ones. Pastoral care to the griever targets this suffering, not as an effective cure, but as a witness to the enduring interdependence of the human condition, restoring the griever to the relationship through the pastoral communication. Such pastoral care to the griever preserves the humanity of the griever and all those who surround them. Pastoral care to the griever is usually best offered when rendered by and within a particular religious tradition, such as religious rituals, faith dogma and cultural patterns. Therefore the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever on local parish level has to try all means possible to be connected with the griever, while exercising discretion and creativity to minimize physical contact because it would be consistent with good pastoral care to the griever during these extraordinary times.

It is known that the compassionate leaders are better prepared for the crisis thanks to their ability to help followers get over the external threat with different dimensional perspective. In his letter (Romans 8:38) to faithful Christians in Rome, St. Paul reassures the suffering people with totally different viewpoint. He argues that neither death, nor life, nor powers, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth can separate people from the love of God in Christ Jesus, whose hands and feet are made up by his people on earth called the Church. Covid-19 also brought about the need to seek out a new perception about the pastoral care to the griever. This crisis has raised the new role and obligation of the pastoral care to the griever at the parish. Even though not all congregations suffer equally, but none is untouched from Covid-19. Many people are tormented by guilty conscience of not being able to mourn the griever with the proper traditional gatherings. Some congregations in parish may be in spiritual crisis because they believed in a God who wouldn't let such suffering happen. Pastoral ministry to the griever plays a unique role to reinforce connections between griever who are isolated and the parish. Maintaining and strengthening relationships during this distancing time can fortify the physical and spiritual health of the griever and contribute to their resilience of faith in the faith community. A new perspective to re-establish the overall pastoral care to the griever at parish level is called for to reassure the holistic pastoral care to the griever. In this context now is the high time for the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever to stand up for it. Now is the opportunity for the pastoral ministry to the griever to provide a compassionate leadership. Compassionate leaders understand that people who are stricken with sufferings want to be part of something meaningful and influential. Compassionate leaders require the skill to inspire passion and endurance in grieving people who do not know how to get over the hardship. These leaders approach every task they do, down to the smallest details, with determination. Compassionate leaders know there is nothing more powerful than the care offered from their deepest heart.

Few of those who minister the pastoral cares to the griever have ever thought about how their physical voices, bodies affect the ethos of ministry.² Kimberly Long argues in her book *“The worshipping body”* that “pastoral care to the griever is an embodied event in the fact that their physical bodily communications are involved by various ways.” Tom Long also criticized the contemporary pastoral care to the griever in his book *“Accompany them with singing: the Christian funeral”* in that it has become very psychological rather than theological. Providing pastoral care well to the griever is important, but providing it in a way that brings compelling love is even more critical. So as servants of the congregation, ministerial leaders of the pastoral care to the griever need to recognize their proper ministry in this pandemic crisis. They need to find out how to reinterpret the current pastoral care to the griever at the parish level and how to incorporate both traditional and contemporary perspectives in the pastoral care to the griever. If the pastoral care givers cultivate their physical engagement along with their intellectual and spiritual engagement, they could open up a greater space for meeting God even in this pandemic. “Grief will be our companion on this journey,” Lesley Head writes in her book, *“Hope and Grief in Anthropocene.”* *“Gaudium et Specs”* also says that “the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts,” (GS 1). For this reason, the pastoral leaders to the griever should read the situation that humanity lives in these pandemic times, with its lights and shadows, from within it and not from the outside of it. The ministry of the pastoral care to the griever may discern in so-called “pandemic” the signs of life that are reflected in all the efforts made at different levels of a parish ministry that feels threatened and scared. Such compassionate leaders of the pastoral care to the griever can encourage all griever to announce hope. This is a

² Kimberly Bracken Long: *The worshipping Body, the art of leading worship* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2009)

unique opportunity to discern the presence of God both in those who suffer most from the loss of the loved one and in those who love and serve these grieverers. These times are testing the real pastoral leaders to the grieverers who are to lead the grieverers to rethink the Christian faith as a ‘salvation religion.’ The pastoral care to the grieverers in the parish recovers its genuine character when it really knows how to help the diverse grieverers at this time of pandemic to face and overcome these difficulties. In this regard, the pastoral care to the grieverers is considered best as ‘religious coping,’ which help those who are to go through the difficult or critical moments. Though the crisis of pandemic demands physical distancing but the pastoral care to the grieverers can resolve it through the united societal action by the well-qualified pastoral leaders.

Contextual Component of pastoral care to Grieverers

Parish Crisis in Pandemics

One of the most difficult things for pastoral ministry during the pandemic crisis is the challenge of providing adequate pastoral care to those who left behind after they lost the loved ones in a time of physical distancing. As diverse pastoral ministries adjust themselves swiftly with adaptations to the external situations, the pastoral care to the grief is no different. Pastoral care to the bereaved requires the most acute sensitivity and thus the wisdom as well. Pastoral care to the grieverers during this epidemic due to the “social distance” has brought forth the particular challenges. Many bereaved are not able to sit at the death bed of those they love, nor physically embrace family members and friends. Not being able to participate in the proper farewell rituals will likely result in prolonged grief to those who left behind. Such morbid circumstances fell on even my own parish, St. Christopher church. St. Christopher church is mourning at the loss of the beloved Deacon Loc due to recent disaster of Covid-19. Deacon Loc

was born in 1949 in Vietnam. As a teenager he attended Catholic seminary and later on served in the Navy of the Republic of Vietnam. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, Loc, along with thousands of Vietnamese, came to the U.S. seeking refuge from communism. Alone and without family, Loc settled in Los Angeles where he met his current wife Quynh Nga. Since 1995, Dn. Loc served for more than 25 years as the first Vietnamese permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Deacon Loc is survived by his wife, Quynh Nga; his son, Vinh Nguyen; and his daughter, Kim Thien Nguyen as well as a daughter-in-law, Chi Luu; and a grandson, Kevin Nguyen. They lost their loved one, husband and father. Those are the very parishioners whom the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever must extend its empathic hands to.

Eric Brown said that “Grief is often a visceral response to the reality of a loved one being ripped from the fabric of their lives. Thus their loss is naturally consoled by the embodied presence of surviving family members and friends.”³ The pastoral challenge of the present moment is how to provide the proper ministry of presence in an epidemic situation that has called for a social distancing. Isolation is a very big defiance to the pastoral care to the griever. The American Psychological Association has recently announced that “there increased a significant and widespread depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder symptom caused by this restriction to the intimate grieving.”⁴ After the death of a loved one, the most primary emotional characteristic of bereavement is a feeling of ‘being isolated.’ Therefore some particular pastoral cares must be provided to the griever in order for them to stay spiritually, psychologically, and physically healthy. Furthermore the loss of a loved one is uniquely painful

³ Eric Brown, “Pastoring the Bereaved During COVID-19,” *Christian Today* (May 20, 2020) <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/may/pastoring-bereaved-during-covid-19.html>

⁴ U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, “Mental Health and substance use disorder,” (June, 2020) <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disorders>

because the great personal security, what psychologists refer to as a “*secure attachment*,”⁵ had been formed, deformed and reformed throughout the long relationships with those who are closest to the griever. John Bowlby developed this theory known as ‘*secure attachment*’, after studying children and moms in hospital who were so closely entwined each other. He applied this theory to the understanding of grief from loss of loved one. Melissa Kelly also argues that “‘*secure attachment*’ has long been a corner stone of grief theory and it continues to be a critical dimension of the contemporary secular grief world.”⁶ The attachment perspective gives people a great way to conceptualize and approach the pain of grief and loss. Dn. Loc’s families felt guilty over their deep and prolonged bereavement because they feared that it could indicate their lack of faith in Christ. This guilt further isolates his family members from the community of faith. In this context the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever is absolutely needed. Special care and the role of pastoral care to the griever become crucial because “God’s love towards people is conspicuously made tangible through the ministers of the pastoral care to the grief God himself had brought into our society. However, the pain of bereavement cannot be likened to a wound or some illness that can be healed in a short period of time. Bereavement healing is a process by which the bereaved must work through their traumatic experience, adapt to their changed status and find a new meaning to life as they come to terms with the loss of a loved one. Bereavement healing is a life-long process. The ministry of the pastoral care to the griever needs to give the mourners the freedom to navigate their own bereavement in their own ways and on their own timelines. The ministry of the pastoral care to the griever must be, as reflectors of God’s image, constructive to become ambassadors of grace during the pandemic crisis. The ministers of

⁵ John Bowlby, *A secure Base: parent-child attachment and health human development* (New York: Basic books, 1988).

⁶ Mellisa M. Kelly, *Grief, contemporary theory and the practice of ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

pastoral care to the grievors are to help those suffered raise their voice to the anguish and bewilderment which they are facing caused by the unavoidable restraints of accessibility by law.

Imminence of Intercultural Pastoral care

Anthony J. Gittins described the diverse attitude and boundary with regard to sickness and even death based upon the individual cultural context in his book “*Living mission interculturally*.”⁷ He argues that “People have very different culturally shaped perspectives to death and grief.” Thus in the developed countries like United States where the medical help is well developed, the dead tends to be quickly removed from the community’s encounters, believing the death is beyond human works. On the other hand at the immigrant society in America, such as the Vietnamese community where all its constituents are closely and thickly knitted together, death is an event and obligation of the whole community and their grief from it is too serious to get over. In ordinary time the late Dn. Loc must have been well cared for and surrounded by the whole parish community through the traditional funeral. Gittins argues that “the pastoral care ministry should be more understanding of any death of a member of an intercultural community.”⁸ He criticizes the embedded instinctive attitude to invoke the ‘culture’ card as a reason not to change the way of pastoral care to the grievors is unworthy in the intercultural and multi ethnic parish. Rather he calls for ‘*Ethnorelativism*’ which is open to ‘acceptance,’ ‘adaptation’ and ‘integration’ in implementing any pastoral care ministry instead of ‘*Ethnocentrism*.’⁹ The pastoral care to the grievors is to provide the contextualized physical, emotional and psychological responses to a loss that is significant in the lives of parishioners. Grieving is the benevolent sacred place where the pastoral care to the grievors is needed to rush

⁷ Anthony J. Gittins, *Living Mission Interculturally* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 69

⁸ Ibid. 70

⁹ Ibid. 107

to and the graceful moment when the pastoral ministry to the griever rolls their sleeves out. In her book,¹⁰ *Grief: Contemporary theory and the practice of ministry*, Kelly critiques against the current culturally narrow models of caring for grieving persons. She argues that “the current pastoral caring to the griever demonstrates a wrong notion that the mourning is quite normal in the course of loss and it has rigid universal features that follow predictable and wooden sequential patterns.”¹¹ Kelley convincingly argues that “there is no ‘one size fits all’ module that universally prescribes grieving and its trajectory for all persons, and notes that there is no ‘right way to grieve’ and no prescribed expiration date on a person’s particular mourning process.”¹² According to her, no one ever really finishes their grieving, but rather hurting people learn to integrate, manage and live with their loss and sadness to varying degrees. “Grieving becomes a new character in one’s life narrative, even if receding into the wings temporarily but never fully vacating the stage and then suddenly making an unexpected entrance at particular moments if the griever are too wounded,” she advocates. Therefore the pastoral care to the griever must throw away the unwarranted myth; if one grieves normally, one will basically get back to normal in a matter of time. In fact in grieving there is no going back to what life was like before the loss. Neither is Deacon Loc’s family. “Ultimately a new normal emerges,” Kelly bluntly asserts.

The pastoral care to the griever needs to provide a new situation-oriented care to the griever. In his book *A Hidden Wholeness: the Journey toward an Undivided Life*, Parker Palmer argues that “the wholeness is not to try to find some elusive perfection, but to accept a partial wholeness that comes out of the devastation of broken lives.”¹³ That’s the way how the

¹⁰ Mellisa M. Kelly, *Grief, contemporary theory and the practice of ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). 47

¹¹ Ibid. 47

¹² Ibid. 49

¹³ Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: the Journey toward an Undivided Life*. (San Francisco: John Wiley and

bereavement ministry could accomplish the care to the griever. Wholeness in the pastoral care does not mean the loss of loved one ceases to hurt. Wholeness in bereavement ministry does not signify that suffering does not touch the wounded any more. Nouwen also asserts that “the pastoral care to the griever must learn how to descend into those in grief to become a source of a true healing of the woundedness.”¹⁴ Thus the “*stages of grief*” of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross is not prescriptive “formula of grief” but informative and descriptive one. The traditional pursuit of the pastoral care to the griever is not effective any more in the midst of the current isolation crisis. As such the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever needs to enhance coping with this unforeseen situations. The pastoral care to the griever must resort to other alternatives in absence of physical encounters. Video calls are some substitute for face-to-face conversations with griever. Voice calls, emails, texting and all other social media can also work as substitutes. The point is for the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever to stay connected as much as possible with the griever and to be open and honest in those communications about whatever they are the griever are feeling or struggling with at the moments of any isolation crisis. By consistently being present with the alternative media, the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever is caring for people during the hardest times of their lives. This window of responding to the griever with small actions interconnects the loss of a loved one and the energy the survivors had invested in their relationships. Naturally the most important characteristic in the pastoral leadership during time of loss is to be a consistent presence. “*Being present*” cannot be just what the physical pastoral care to the griever used to do in this time of pandemic any more. It is now the new dimension of who they are and what they are doing. Ignoring such newly adopted ability to be present is a loss of meaning purpose and identity of the pastoral ministry to the griever.

Sons, Inc., 2004). 5

¹⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The wounded Healer* (New York: Image Books, 1990) 42

While the pastoral care to the griever might be restricted in their access to the faithful, the Holy Spirit is not. The Holy Spirit can accomplish its work of “being present” as much in a brief phone call or any other technology-aided communication as in a full physical pastoral visit. This pastoral ministry to the griever through all alternative methodology is the answer in times of crisis and rapid transformation, when the old methodology of leadership is no more effective and the existing organizations systems are being tested.

Transformational leadership

Jaap Geerlof calls for in an article “*Integral Leadership Review*” the different engagements with leadership, such as situational leadership and even transformational leadership in the time of crisis.¹⁵ John P. Kotter¹⁶ says that “Leadership is, most fundamentally, about changes. What leaders do is create the systems and organizations that sub-level managers need, and, eventually, elevate them up to a whole new level or change in some basic ways to take advantage of new situations.”¹⁷ Peter Northouse also defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. According to Gary Yukl, the leadership of the pastoral care can no longer be defined as an “entity,” but instead as a process.”¹⁸ Similarly Alfonso Montuori advocates “leadership can only be understood as an emergent, interactive dynamic, a complex interplay between the griever and the pastoral care ministry to the grieving, which is a relational process.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Louw defines the pastoral care to the griever in terms of pastoral hermeneutics which links the story of salvation to the

¹⁵ Jaap Geerlof, “Corona-Crisis Exposes the Need for Transformative Leadership,” *Integral Leadership Review* (July, 2020) <http://integralleadershipreview.com/17469-7-31-corona-crisis-exposes-the-need-for-transformative-leadership/>

¹⁶ A retired Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School.

¹⁷ Gary Yukl, “Leadership, what is it?” (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 2008) https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/33554_Chapter1.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alfonso Montuori, *Transformative leadership for the 21st Century* (Sebastopol: Revision publishing, 2010)

story of humankind's misery and hope in order to address the human search for the ultimate meaning.²⁰ As Kelly claims, the pastoral care to the griever now should go far beyond the secularly getting over the grief up to seeking “*Meaning-Making after Loss*.” For that purpose pastoral caregivers to the griever are often in the unique position to allow themselves open to the mysteries of “open-ended creativity,”²¹ which is to remember the invisible God’s Emmanuel, being always with the griever while they are laboriously performing the pastoral care to the griever.

Theological Component of pastoral care to Grievers

What is grieving?

In order to better administer the pastoral care to the griever it is important to grasp the meaning of grieving exactly, especially its theological meaning. When people grieve, they usually have intense and enduring feelings of disbelief, shock, despair, sadness and guilt that can be hard to deal with. Even so, these feelings are a normal part of the healing process. Experiencing them will allow them to move on with their lives. Until we grieve effectively we are likely to find regaining our self-possession difficult; a part of us remains tied to the past. Grieving is not forgetting, but finding a different meaning which grieving provides grievers in a different venue. It is helpful to perceive grieving as a normative metaphoric expression to better understand the grief-provoking experiences in human life. Death is one of the serious losses. “Grief is a normal emotional response to a significant loss.”²² Sadness is a complex of normal but confusing human emotions about the loss of an important object (person or object):

²⁰ Andrew Louw, *Human Development* (South Africa: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998)

²¹ Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007)

²² Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 18-19.

guilt, shame, loneliness, anxiety, anger, fear, embarrassment, emptiness, deep sadness, despair and helplessness. Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson describe the six main forms of loss as follows:²³

[1)Material loss is the loss of physical object or of familiar surroundings to which one has an important attachment. 2) Relationship loss is the ending of opportunities to relate oneself to, share experiences, make love to, touch, settle issues with, fight with and otherwise be in the emotional and/or physical presence of a particular other human being. 3) Intrapsychic loss is the experience of losing an emotionally important image of oneself, losing the possibilities of “what might have been,” abandonment of plans for a particular future, the dying of a dream. Although often related to external experiences, it is itself an entirely inward experience. 4) Functional loss is powerful grief which is evoked when we lose some of the muscular or neurological functions of the body. 5) Role loss is the loss of a specific social role or of one’s accustomed place in a social network. And 6) Systematic loss is a concept that forced itself upon us as we studied what our informants told us. To understand it, we must first recall that human beings usually belong to some interactional system in which patterns of behavior develop over time.]

In regard to loss, there are some unfamiliar terminologies, such as bereavement, grief and mourning. “Bereavement is when a person experiences a significant loss in his or her life. For example, bereavement can be used to express the pain of the loss of a widow who has lost her husband. Grief refers to a variety of complex reactions and emotions in physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual relationships felt by a person experiencing loss through bereavement. Mourning comes from the experience of grief. Mourning is an emotional reaction of a person or a community when an important and meaningful personal relationship or object is lost. Thus it is a process in which the relationship with the lost objects gradually changes and goes from one's mind for the griever to become able to live to some extent without the lost object.”²⁴ In this paper those terminologies will be used interchangeably each other because broadly they have the same meanings. According to Freud, “normal grief is the process of slowly

²³ Ibid., 36-46

²⁴ Allan Hugh Cole, *Good Mourning: Getting through Your Grief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), xvii.

withdrawing the libido which was administered to the lost subject. But a depression arises from excessive obsession with the subject, and thus becomes a pathological reaction.”²⁵ According to Freud, “Mourning is a process that the person who has experienced loss accepts it realistically within his psychology.” On the other hand Melanie Klein argues in her writing “*Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States*” that “the fear of the loss of a loved one is kind of “depressive state” and it is accompanied by longing for the lost object of love.”²⁶ While Freud emphasizes the withdrawal of libido from the lost object, Klein emphasizes the preservation of loved ones. Either way the mourning is the process of regeneration of inner life in the face of loss and the process of reacquisition of oneself in the face of destructive circumstances. Therefore if a mourner rebuilds the lost love from his own ego with an active force and rebuilds the good inner emotions that he felt was lost, his mourning is on the right path.

According to John Bowlby, “the nature of anxiety is built on the genetic instinctive impulses and this anxiety tends to constantly seek the object of expression. Just as children experience anxiety of separation when they lost the close contact with the mother, adults respond similarly to the loss of an emotionally important object.”²⁷ Susan Kavalier-Adler proposes the concept of “developmental mourning”²⁸ and advocates that the work of mourning ultimately leads to mental growth, becoming a tool for development. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross explains the process of death in five stages, taking a serious look at the grief hidden inside her and looking at the faces of patients imminent to death: *denial, anger, compromise, depression, and*

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement: Mourning and melancholia* (London, The Hogarth Press, 1990), 252

²⁶ Melanie Klein, “Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States,” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 21 (1940): 126-130.

²⁷ John Bowlby, “Grief and Mourning in Early Infancy and Childhood,” *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 15 (1960): 9-16.

²⁸ Susan Kavalier-Adler, *Mourning, Spirituality and psychic change* (Philadelphia: Routledge, 2003)

acceptance.²⁹ Her theory was formed through empirical research on the psychological changes experienced by death and dying patients, and has since contributed to widespread interest in the subject of loss and death. However, her theory could make an error that leads to a fragmentary understanding of the process of grieving due to the linear charting of the diversity and complexity of emotions contained in the mourning process. E. Mansell Pattison insists that there are three stages in the process of mourning; “the acute phase, the chronic phase and the terminal stage.”³⁰ During the first two phases, the mourners express the fear of loss, especially express such as fear of abandonment, loss of self-regulation and loss of personal self-identity. The third terminal stage is the stage of the mourner’s self withdrawal to accept the reality. Granger Westberg describes the process of grief caused by loss in ten steps to help the pastoral care to the grievers, such as 1) fall into a state of shock, 2) express the emotions, 3) feel depressed and lonely, 4) experience symptoms of physical pain, 5) become panic, 6) feel guilty about the loss, 7) full of anger and resentment, 8) resist not to return, 9) hope is coming gradually and 10) affirm reality.³¹ According to Westberg, the ten stages of sorrow should be understood as a normal process that most people who experience loss go through, although sometimes not in sequence. Because Westberg describes the relatively complex and comprehensive feelings and behaviors of sadness, it helps those who practice caring, such as the pastoral care-givers to the grievers, to understand the process of mourning. David K. Switzer insists that anxiety is essentially a fear reaction to the separation from others. He asserts that “In the process of mourning, the person who experienced loss feels anxiety from separation, guilty with ambivalent feelings, aggressive and hostile, toward the dead and ontological anxiety accompanied by loss of meaning and emptiness. Switzer emphasizes the constructive and healing role of mourning, arguing that “life

²⁹ Kübler-Ross E. *On Death and Dying*. (Philadelphia: Routledge, 1969)

³⁰ E. Mansell Pattison, *The Experience of Dying* (Tucson: American academy of bereavement, 1994).

³¹ Granger Westberg, *Good Grief: A Companion for Every Loss* (Minnesota, Fortress Press; 2019) 11-83

can be renewed when the value, meaning, purpose and trust of life are rediscovered.”³² Erich Lindemann also stresses the importance of helping people in grief overcoming sorrow and creating new relationships. Lindemann defines grief not as pathology to be avoided, but as something necessary work for life. According to Lindemann, “Serious and sudden grief or bereavement include 1) physical pain, 2) mental captiveness on imaging the dead, 3) guilt, 4) anger and 5) loss of routine patterns of behavior.”³³ C. Charles Bachmann examines the physical and psychological reactions of a person experiencing loss.³⁴ According to Bachman, the initial physical reaction to bereavement experienced by the bereaved is a shock. The first psychological reaction to bereavement and mourning by the bereaved family is to be guilty; “I should have brought my mother to the hospital faster or if I had brought more competent doctor, the results would have been different.” The second reaction is hostility; “why does he have to die or why do I have to raise his son alone?”

The diverse definitions of grief have been given by many scholars for pastoral care-givers to understand grieving well. However and whatever the grieving may be defined or explained modern psychologists and psychoanalysts refer to the experience of mourning as a specific emotion in that this emotion cannot be depicted as linear or sequential steps, rather is described as a complex or a spiral model.³⁵ The linear model describes the process of mourning toward a special point at a special time. It is described as if the emotion of X ends and then goes out to the emotion of Y. In contrast, the spiral model adequately expresses various complex

³² David K. Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1970)

³³ Erich Lindemann, “Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101 (1944): 141-148.

³⁴ C. Charles Bachmann, *Ministering to the grief sufferer; Successful pastoral counseling series* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1964)

³⁵ Mitchell and Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 18-19, 91-92

emotions that a mourner can feel, and sufficiently reveals them while intersecting them. In this way, the experience of the mourner's serious loss can never be passed on to the next in an organized and completed form, but can be found again in a variety of other situations. Furthermore the bereaved has sometimes experienced the mourning from the contradictory perspective: both negative and positive feelings toward the dead. Therefore in the process of pastoral care to the griever, the most important pastoral task is to restore the relationship with others which was lost during the grieving in spite of contradictory perspectives.³⁶ At mourning ministry, the pastoral caregiver's goal is always relational. In the healing process of mourning, the ability for the griever to be sad enough refers to their ability to be fully involved in everything. Their relationships with themselves, with others and with God are steps to move forward more complete restoration from the loss.

Hermeneutic Metaphors of grieving

Victor E. Frankl,³⁷ a Jew, was incarcerated during World War II at Nazi camp. He experienced a deep loss of losing his beloved family. In this experience of despair and loss, Frankl argues in his book "*Man's Search for Meaning*" that "expressing the feelings of grief hidden in the human mind is to make a person's body and mind healthy." He believed that humans are motivated by something called a "*will to meaning*," which equates to a desire to find meaning in life. He asserted that "life can have meaning even in the most miserable circumstances and that the motivation for living comes from finding that meaning." Likewise tears for mourning are a way to relieve grief and an amazing natural healing device built into our body. In modern society "grieving in tears is regarded as weak, while an expressionless and cold

³⁶ Mitchell and Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 18-19. 117.

³⁷ Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1962). Austrian psychiatrist, philosopher, author and Holocaust survivor.

face is considered as strong.”³⁸ It is important to cry naturally, mourn enough and accept the pain as it is about the actual loss of a loved one. This is the process of cultivating the ability to relate to others in the circumstances of sadness and furthermore the process of creating ‘good grieving.’ The core of mourning is to express the inner feelings. Diverse language during grieving is a great way to express the inner painful feelings. Even meaningless and repetitive talk arising from anxiety, aggressive speaking that discharges inner anger and a long time self-talk while focusing on the inner self are good instruments for mourning. “The mourner must concretely accept the reality that the deceased is no more in this world so that all libidos that have been imposed on the loved one may be withdrawn. Mourning proceeds within the conflict between the uncontrollable longing for a loved one and the perception that that person no longer exists.”³⁹ Therefore, the transformation of inner life necessary for healing is possible only when the griever accepts the undeniable loss of relationship throughout all phases of life with the dead which is naturally expressed in a language. The mourner can gradually withdraw the energy of emotion that was used in the emotional relationship with the deceased. Mourners must face each day without dreading the reality without the loved one. When the feeling of despair takes them by surprise, they need to get into it. If they miss the deceased, they must miss him. If they endure such afflictions, personal maturity follows to that degree, and they realize the grieving is worthwhile. The mourner tends to accept and overcome the pain of loss and come back to normal even if it doesn't mean that the period of pain is over. The mourner now admits the grieving as it is and the grief of loss cannot completely be healed. According to Melanie Klein, “the death of an emotionally related person means the destruction of the good object that was first entered to the

³⁸ David K. Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 4

³⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and melancholia* (Penguin Classic: UK , 2005), 255

mourner. Therefore, in order to mourn successfully the object you loved should be restored.”⁴⁰

The mourners can let go of the negative self of the past and restore the positive one of the present by way of the mourner preserves and restores the object of love in himself or herself.

Pastoral care to the grievers

It is important for those experiencing loss to restore and maintain healthy relationships with others in the community. “The mourner has a desire to be cared for in a relationship with others he loves and trusts, and to share his grieving mourning with them against the threat of his inner life from loss. In this care and sharing, the mourner's current relationship with others is strengthened and his fear and anxiety of the loss can be reduced more quickly. Furthermore the restoration in harmony with his inner world will be expedited.”⁴¹ One of the negative emotions that a mourner may experience is a feeling of excessive guilt. Such excessive guilt arises from the ambivalent emotions toward a loved; privileged happiness, joy as well as sadness, responsibility intersected with the lost person. In such situation where the mourner disparages himself, the pastoral caregiver should help the mourner to properly deal with his or her negative feelings, hostility, hatred and guilt. The pastoral care-giver has to help the mourner to have a positive attitude toward himself or herself. In order for a mourner to affirm himself or herself, it is important to preserve the lost one he or she loved positively. It is very important for pastoral care-givers to sympathize and listen carefully with empathy when caring for a person who has experienced a loss. Empathy is the pastoral caregiver’s participation in the mourner’s experience without being bound by caregiver’s feelings, experiencing a sad and desperate situation from the mourner's point of view. In a situation of deep loss of mourner that cannot be expressed in words,

⁴⁰ Melanie Klein, “Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 21(1940): 125-153.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

it is necessary for pastoral caregivers to support and be with the mourner in silence. The act of expressing one's grieving feelings or thoughts while receiving support and allowance in a safe space among friendly people is important. A mourner may have anger, self-doubt, shame, regret and loneliness buried in his or her mind not only against the deceased but also against himself or herself. Under these circumstances, if the pastoral caregiver establishes encouragingly a basic trust relationship with the mourner which freely allows them to naturally express the mourner's feelings, the grief of the mourner's loss will gradually escape and the inner wound will go toward healing. Expressing the grief through appropriate mourning work, mourners can experience healing from not only the mind but also the physical pain. "The faith community promotes interpersonal strengthening and can contribute to caring for those in the process of mourning. Furthermore, the faith community encourages people to share their life purpose, beliefs, hopes and common outlooks on life in the form of narratives and provides a religious ritual that gathers the love of those who participate and express mourning each other."⁴² In the midst of mourning, the person experiencing loss can meditate on the meaning of life and death while paying attention to the religious and faithful dimensions. Pastoral caregivers should help the grieved consider their sorrowful grief from the point of view of faith so that they can mature in a relationship with God through suffering. As if going up the spiral steps, the process of mourning involves the dynamic and complicated dimensions which include the interactive changes of emotion, and thought, and behavior. It is the similar application as recommended by Richard R. Osmer at his book "*The practical theology: An Introduction*," in which Osmer argues that "Practical theological reflection is very "spiral" in that the practical theologian often benefits from moving through or revisiting the four fundamental tasks; what he calls, the descriptive-empirical task (listening), the interpretive task (wisdom), the normative task (discernment) and

⁴² David K. Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 258

pragmatic task (presence) as needed in order to discover new insights.”⁴³ As such, pastoral care-givers help the mourner to reform the self at the various stages, while both listening empathically the voice of mourner and paying attention to the development of pains.

From a perspective of pastoral theology, pastoral care-givers help the mourners accept positively human finitude in the providence of God’s creation. Mourners as well as pastoral caregivers are together able to see God who suffers with them in the context of loss and grief, to share their own pain and suffering and to make together a new hope in the presence of God. Betsy Barber claims in her article ‘*Grieving like God*’ that “Grief is a godly response. People repress grief and try to move through it quickly, or even deny it. People fear their grief may cause them to question the presence and work of God in their lives. But the truth is that a grief is a journey that ends by being integrated into our lives and expressing itself in gratitude for the life of our loved one and in hope of our own death and eternal life with God in heaven.”⁴⁴ Grief aids the theological discernment because it reminds people that they too all will die someday. Bible Ecclesiastes says, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, because death is the end of all mankind.”⁴⁵ Harold Kushner, who lost his young son to a rare disease, argues in his book, ‘*Why Bad Things Happen to Good People?*’ that “God is the God of justice, not of power.”⁴⁶ He wrote that “if people open themselves up to think of God differently, such as to acknowledge that God is not in control of all things, then many good things are

⁴³ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 11

⁴⁴ Betsy Barber, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2017/grieving-like-god>

⁴⁵ Eccles. 7:2-4

⁴⁶ Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People?* (New York: Random House, Anchor Book Edition, 2004), 50

possible.”⁴⁷ He interprets God’s power not as his ability to control the death but as to be present even in the darkness of loss in death with empathetic, compassionate and kind love. Jonathan Pye also argues in his discourse⁴⁸ that “*Christian understanding of and responses to death will always be future facing eschatological since they believe that their life, both now and in the future, is inextricably bound up with God’s purposes, made visible in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.*” Thanks to this meaning-making, “*whilst death is unavoidably ‘an’ end for Christians, it is not and can no longer be ‘the’ end,*” he added. Thus theology of death and pastoral cares to grievers, therefore, cannot be decoupled from our understanding of what it means to be human in God. In order to live with the pain of emptiness, grieving people need caregivers who will stay close by but not try to fill the emptiness until healing covers it with enough scars to enable a person to hope again, which is the very target of the pastoral theological care to the grievers. People need hope in order to grieve. Sometimes they may need to “*borrow hope*”⁴⁹ for a while from the outside. The bereaved may find hope in the gentle touch of those who listen to their pain, in the empathic words that confirm their grief and validate their grieving. That’s locus of the pastoral theological cares to the grievers. Pastoral presence with those who mourn mirrors God’s presence. Finding hope again after suffering a tragic loss is an experience of mutuality rather than a solitary process. According to Herbert Anderson, “Healing comes from “*hoping with*” someone more than “*hoping for*” something.”⁵⁰ The pastoral mutuality of consolation transforms the dread of abandonment and the terror of isolation by loss into communities of hope.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 51

⁴⁸ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/death-and-dying/theological-and-spiritual-perspectives-on-death-and-dying/towards-a-theology-of-death-a-personal-view-by-jonathan-pye/>

⁴⁹ expression quoted from the poem, ‘borrowed hope’ by Eloise Cole

⁵⁰ Herbert Anderson, *Reflections on Grief and Spiritual Growth: Moment of loss, Seasons of Grief* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005)

Biblical perspective on grieving

The Old Testament testifies that the punishment of death is given as the price for human sin (Gen. 3:1-21). However, the understanding of death in the New Testament is not the price of fear or sin, but represents the redemptive love and the resurrection through the death of Jesus Christ. When convinced of eternal life in the Triune God, Christians endeavor to live their lives responsibly and meaningfully, and can also accept their own deaths and losses as meaningful. From the perspective of the pastoral theology, death is a painful loss of the loved one, but it is impossible forever to separate the death from the hope in pastoral ministry. Rather, death is another beginning to eternal life in Jesus Christ. Therefore, *“the promise and faith in eternal life through death can be the greatest comfort that pastoral caregivers can deliver to mourners.”*⁵¹ When experiencing the pang of great loss, the mourner can be seriously challenged in his faith and feels as if God is far away from him. Thus pastoral care-givers have to think seriously about the pain of loss of mourners. It is important to admonish the mourners to recognize that God, who came to us through the cross of Jesus Christ, is not far from our pain but is with us in our pain. Traditionally the Stoics define mourning as irrational and out of control. So mourning is not considered a criterion of faithful belief. On the contrary Christian faith is rooted God’s presence and his promise through Jesus Christ so that Christians mourn more freely. *“Through the presence of God, we are provided with a resting place and space protected from the fear of deep loss and abandonment. In our relationship with the living God, we, Christians can complain to God regarding our deep pain of loss and thus pour out our anger and wounds violently before God.”*⁵² In this context Christians freely embrace unbearable grief of loss under

⁵¹ John Patton, *Pastoral Care: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 89

⁵² Mitchell and Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 102-103.

the auspice of God. Through God as the source of hope, we can enter the world of God's grace with healing from our own anger and painful outcries. Death is secularly referred to as punishment. St. Paul calls death "the last enemy."⁵³ The Bible explains in full various forms of death which arises from sin.⁵⁴ Each person has his or her own suffering story to tell, with a particular understanding of how his or her grief relates to the journey of faith. Even Jesus wept on the occasion of Lazarus' death even though he made him come back to life.⁵⁵ No one is kept aloof from these poignant experiences of grief. David mourned with crying the death of his baby son, crying "*I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.*" (2 Sam 13:23). Even Son of God himself could not escape the reality of loss and grief from it. James Mead argues that "*the Book of Lamentations in the Old Testament personifies Jerusalem to show vividly how Jerusalem herself experiences grief over the destruction of the holy city and temple (1:4-7); grief without any comforter in sight (1:16).*"⁵⁶ Lamentation has a prominent place in the scripture with regard to grief, and is one of the largest genres in the journey of healing. During this pandemic crisis many grieverers could not lament enough fully for the death of their beloved ones and could not entirely condemn their inability to be physically present with the body and loved ones. Biblical lamentation allows for the emotional processing of not only the death of the beloved but also other negative feelings often left unspoken in those who left behind. In addition to Old Testament, according to James Mead, the New Testament also offers a rich source of comfort for those who are mourning (e.g., Jesus' beatitude) as well as a hope that the current grief will someday be removed according to the gracious plan and provision of God (Rev. 21:4). In his letter to Romans (ch. 12), right after stating that all members have gifts according to the Spirit,

⁵³ The first letter to Corinthians 15:26

⁵⁴ Deuteronomy, chap 28(curse of death), 30(blessing of life)

⁵⁵ John 12:35

⁵⁶ The book of Lamentation 1:4-16

Paul also advocates our grieving with those who grieve. The diverse stories of grief in the Bible prompt us to view the pastoral cares to the grievers from the perspective of theological meanings. The diverse biblical grief over loss and the process of mourning make people understand the human finiteness, including the death of loved one, within the process of God's good creation; as such they can positively understand the pain of deep loss that occurs. The mourning is the result of our own expression of love for the world God has made. Since God designed us to give and receive love for one another, it is fitting that we can mourn when we lose something we love. Because human beings were created as a finite being, they can hope for a new life beyond loss and death. Bible proclaims that "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*"⁵⁷ It means God does not give up on those in sorrow. He will rather grant the kingdom of God to them. Because Christians live in a relationship with the Crucified One into death, they can endure their grief of loss in the power of the Lord and share the pain of their neighbors and of the world together. Because Christians live in a relationship with the Risen Christ who overcame death and rose from the grave, they are able to accept and renew their grief of loss in the power of the Lord, and sympathize the grief of their neighbors and create a new world of life. The recovery of the biblical tradition of lamentation is necessary to resist the temptation of apathy of modern society in the pretext of hiding our weakness and to reenact expressing the anguish of grief again.

Theological perspective of Grief

In this context James Mead interprets the human grieving by way of the four fundamental theological methodologies.⁵⁸ First he viewed the human grieving from the perspective of "*Christology.*" He argues that "*New Testament understands all of our life and experience to be*

⁵⁷ Matthew 5:4

⁵⁸ James K. Mead: "All our griefs to bear: a biblical and theological reflection," *Reformed Review* 56 No. 1 (2002): 5-18

“in Christ.” He claims that *“the union with Christ in his suffering with our grieving points to the pivotal role of Christ as the paradigmatic sufferer through whom we now can understand and experience both sorrow and hope in the face of loss.”* His argument is the union with Christ in grieving offers profound comfort, not merely because Christ understands what we experience (Heb. 2:18; 4:15), but because Christ's acceptance of our condition unto death is a theological insight of the highest order. Secondly James understands the human grieving through the lens of *Anthropology*. He asserts that *“Christ’s full embrace of human being in the incarnation honors the reality of all human grieving so that the Christian tradition cannot live in denial of people’s sense of loss.”* He claims that *“His full embrace of loss”* is one of the most urgent tasks left to the pastoral care-givers just like Martin Luther’s *“theology of the cross”*. In fact a realistic acceptance of *“human grieving”* does more than enable Christians to minister to a whole hurting world. According to Karl Barth *“The real test of our joy of life is not to evade the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ but willingly to be joyful even as we bear the sorrows laid upon us.”*⁵⁹ Thirdly James Mead insists human grieving is rooted in *Ecclesiology*. He said that *“the church is the community of believers who worship and trust in the living God.”* Therefore when the faith community gathers to grieve or when any members are lost or have experienced loss, they have come to acknowledge as a community that they are the lost sheep who were found. They begin to reflect for the church and world the humility and joy of God's saving embrace. Finally, James K. Mead believes in the human grieving as *Eschatological* viewpoint. He argues that *“We are all afraid of saying the words that fall empty at times of deepest sorrow. In the face of losses and failures, however, our hope of the compassionate reward to our lives enables us to speak a vigorous ‘Yes’ to heavenly reunions with loved ones with a hope won through the hard-fought journey of grief.”* The union we share with Christ in grieving becomes one constructive way of

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III.4* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 383

grasping the anthropomorphic image of God's grieving over human sin and suffering. "Our union with the God at the final destiny of the soul and body is the landscape of our journey in grieving, where we, with all our grief, are tucked away in the wounded side of Christ. And though this journey may be long, *"we are united to the one who, after death, was exalted by the power of God (Phil. 2:6-11),"* James Mead added.⁶⁰ Christian grieving in loss is always concerned with hope in eschatology, the last things. Herbert Anderson argues in his book *"Moments of loss, seasons of grief"*⁶¹ that *"understanding the pervasiveness of loss gives us opportunities for learning how to grieve and prepare for death from the beginning of life because we know creature's finitude. It is inability of the created creatures, including human beings, to live with finitude. Naturally the loss is a common dimension of living and all are legitimate to grieve for losses."* Anderson claims that

[The human journey is an ongoing struggle with the perpetually perishing in life And therefore the pains of grief are an inevitable part of finite living. God has made us people of passion with the needs for loving and being loved. The belief that suffering is a consequence of loving fully and living faithfully is embodied most clearly in the Christian symbol of the cross. Because we are finite creatures, we are vulnerable to suffering as well as to death. The courage to affirm and accept suffering as an element of finitude, in spite of the pain that accompanies it, is one mark of Christian spirituality.]

The cultural pluralism in the United States presents us with a new challenge to honor radically different views of death and diverse modes of grieving. Whenever we decide not to speak the truth to dying people so that they *"do not lose hope"*, we in fact diminish hope by limiting their possibility of *"hoping with"* those they love. When we say *"nothing matters"*, we in

⁶⁰ James K. Mead: "All our griefs to bear: a biblical and theological reflection," *Reformed Review* 56 No. 1 (2002): 5-18

⁶¹ Herbert Anderson, *Reflections on Grief and Spiritual Growth: Moment of loss, Seasons of Grief* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005)

fact shut ourselves off from the world's suffering, from our own and from the love of God. It is against the very mutuality Jesus promised that he would be with us.

Methodology of grieving

Grief is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion for people regardless of where their suffering comes from. But individual experiences of grief are different based upon the nature of the loss. Some people are under grief due to the death of loved ones and others are grieving at the loss of dignity in humiliation. No one ever grieves in the same way. Proper understanding the causes of grief can help resolve the grief. Mayo Clinic says “*Mourning can last for months or years even though pain is tempered as time passes.*”⁶² Historically, theories of bereavement started with Freud’s theory about the necessity of the grieving process.⁶³ Freud cautioned about the risk of complicated grief without an adequate grieving process. Tony Walter also argued that the purpose of grief work is not to separate or detach from the bond with the deceased, but rather to construct a long-lasting and enduring memory of the deceased, which is then integrated into the life of bereaved individuals.⁶⁴ Melissa M. Kelley in her book “*Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry,*” brings forth “*attachment theory*”⁶⁵ to build a constructive meaning-making pastoral methods to offer fresh and innovative perspectives for coping with grief. Kelley explains attachment theory as “*each relationship plays a particularly substantial role in our lives and each shapes how we experience grief.*” The attachment theory of grief was particularly helpful because by understanding the core attachment needs of human beings in general, while simultaneously attending to the particular attachments needs of those needing care,

⁶² <https://www.mayoclinic.org/patient-visitor-guide/support-groups/what-is-grief>

⁶³ Hyacinth C. Okafor, *Perceptions of loss and grief experiences within religious burial and funeral* (university of New Orleans thesis and dissertations, 2013), 1657

⁶⁴ Tony Walter, “A new Model of Grief: Bereavement and Biography,” *Mortality* 1(1996): 7-25

⁶⁵ A psychological, evolutionary and ethological theory concerning relationships between humans

the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever can deepen its proper pastoral cares. Kelly effectively employs current grief research, including various psychological theories, multi-cultural and theological perspectives, and narrative practices, to deconstruct popular myths about grief and then refocus pastoral practice on respecting the uniqueness of each person's particular grief experience to provide "compassionate, substantive care" to grieving persons. Calling her method as a metaphor of "*mosaic grief*", she asserts that "as no two mosaics can ever be exactly the same, so no two experiences of grief are the same." She means that although pastoral caregivers honor a longer view toward learning about the general elements and forms of grief, simultaneously balancing it with the particularity of grief must always be attended to. Her "*mosaic*" metaphor is helpful in viewing people's lives as a mosaic is germane to understanding all manner of human wholeness and brokenness. Kelley critiques the out-dated and culturally narrow models of understanding and caring for grieving persons by demonstrating the absurdity of the notion that there is a normal way to mourn and that grieving has rigid universal features that follow predictable and wooden sequential patterns. Kelley convincingly argues that "*there is no 'one size fits all'*⁶⁶ *template that universally prescribes grief and its trajectory for all persons*" and that "*there is no right way to grieve and no prescribed expiration date on a person's particular mourning process.*" Furthermore her three suggestions for the pastoral care to the grieving, 1) understanding, 2) acceptance, and 3) hope well provides the perspective of the practical theology in that she emphasizes the practical methodology fit for the particular cultural context. People think the more theological means the less practical. Pastoral care to the grieving is totally theological because pastoral care is the root to form theological perspectives. Theology includes practically all pastoral care, as Augustine stresses in his classic work *On Christian*

⁶⁶ Melisa M. Kelly, *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry*(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 36

*Teaching.*⁶⁷ Thus pastoral cares in church are themselves no less theological for being practical. Augustine asserts that “*people believe theological knowledge is deeply shaped by all mundane practices from childhood on, thus the meaning of theological statements continues to reflect thoroughly practical experiences of human life.*”

Leadership of pastoral care in grieving

Joel A. Jueckstock argues in his treatise “*Relational Pastoral Care and Counseling: A Practical Theological Exploration of Relational Spirituality and Grief*” that “The concept of the presence in pastoral care-giving is the essence in the pastoral care to the grievers. The presence has to be the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence.” According to him, “the pastoral care-givers must move beyond a passive view of presence to be fully empowered with the paradigm of relational spirituality, whereby listening characterizes the most.” He asserts that “Pastoral care-givers ought to participate meaningfully in the process of care-giving with intent to impact how individuals are relating to the sacred via relational spirituality.”⁶⁸ Osmer also argues in his book “*Practical Theology: An introduction*” that “presence is fundamentally about ‘relating to others with openness, attentiveness, and prayerfulness’ in ways that enhance potential for an ‘I-thou’ relationship, which occurs when others are authentically known and the relationship is dependent upon the communion-creating presence of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁹ Therefore, the concept of presence is fundamental and it ought to be the starting point for the pastoral cares to grievers. Such new vision of presence in grieving can provide the pastoral care-givers with an interpretive

⁶⁷ *De doctrina Christiana* 2.18.28: “All good and true Christians should understand that truth, wherever they may find it, belongs to their Lord” and is “useful for the understanding of the Holy Scriptures

⁶⁸ Joel A. Jueckstock, *Relational Pastoral Care and Counseling: A Practical Theological Exploration of Relational Spirituality and Grief* (Luther Seminary thesis, Practical theology commons, 2016) 197

⁶⁹ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An introduction* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008) 34

lens to transact a wide scope of human needs in various contexts of caring. This new perspective for the imminence of attentiveness of the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever can offer new paradigms for conceptualizing both death and grieving with different social, affective, behavioral and existential dimensions to the ministry.

Pastoral Project Component of pastoral care to Griever: Current problems at Parish

The society has approached a new normal age and a new society of non-face-to-face, digital and social distance has become a routine in everyday life since Corona-19. This new development has most severely impacted the faith community. Churches are experiencing the suspension of the essential face-to-face worship and the accommodation of online non-face-to-face worship. As such, this phenomenon has brought tremendous changes not only to the pastoral scene for care-giving to the griever but also to the methodology of pastoral care-giving to them. In this context one of the most imminent issues in my parish is the need to adopt a new paradigm of care-giving to griever. My parish ministry of pastoral care to the griever so far has believed in the normal model way in mourning, such as the mourning will gradually fade out with times. Thus my pastoral care ministry has been attempting to provide hope to the bereaved person on the spot, saying the sweet things of the glorious resurrection. Therefore my parish ministry in pastoral care to the griever has been busy taking off the thorny crown of mourning, trying to replace it with a gold-plated one. But Melissa Kelly argues that “A normal and universal path through grief has sometimes unhelpful and even destructive.”⁷⁰ As if going up the spiral steps, the process of mourning involves the dynamic and complicated dimensions which include the interactive changes of emotion, and thought and behavior. Naturally the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever in my parish does not know well how to empathize with griever’s sufferings.

⁷⁰ Melissa Kelly, *Grief: Contemporary theory and the practice of ministry*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 36

The ministry rather used to be uncomfortable in that particular situation, so the ministry focuses on the issue of hope and resurrection without even giving the bereaved an opportunity to ventilate their feelings. Here I suggest five projects that help resolve the current pastoral dilemmas and challenges in my parish. To overcome the so-called linear approach to the loss and mourning which my parish used to apply to and rely upon in promoting the healing of loss and mourning of the griever, my current parish pastoral care ministry needs to explore these five comprehensive project processes of loss and mourning and consequently to adopt them.

Pastoral Projects

For that aim the ministry of pastoral care to the griever in my parish first must listen empathically to the griever's distinctive cultural situation of mourning. Doka and Davidson say that "Some parishioners cast doubt upon the faith of a griever who continues to grieve. Not allowing the griever to grieve within their own way is perhaps the greatest tragedy in our Western culture."⁷¹ Grief knows no timetable and is exhausting but should be allowed to occur at each individual's own cultural situation. Frequently in the Christian community, "the church does serve well in the moments of death, but it is often not prepared to walk with the bereaved down the long path based upon the culture."⁷² My pastoral care ministers seem to feel some discomfort with death due to the culture that adores life and vitality, thus their care giving seemingly attempts to just ignore death and discomfort. But my pastoral care givers can help the mourners to establish the new and alternate relationship with others when care-givers share sincerely the intercultural sense of loss and grief. In that sense the pastoral care to the griever in my parish needs to bring forth a new pastoral care to the griever in spiral perspective. Especially

⁷¹ Doka and Davidson, *Living with Grief: Who We Are, How We Grieve* (London: Routledge, 1998), 42

⁷² Ibid.

as a multi-cultural ethnic parish which is involved in many pastoral cares to Asian grievers, such as Vietnamese, Korean, Filipino parishioners, my pastoral care ministry must be advised about this Asian attitude toward death, for example, paying attention to the peculiar ethnic cultural customs in grieving. Vietnamese community is always dressed with white headband and black suits in grieving gathering. Korean community recite so-called the Purgatory Prayer all day long by turns without any ceasing until the corpse is buried in the earth. Instead of the traditional pastoral care which emphasizes that hope and resurrection, a different cultural contextual paradigm needs to be adopted as a new protocol of pastoral ministry to the grievers in my parish. Eduard Thurneysen argues that “Pastoral care should not be confused with soul healing based on modern psychology.”⁷³ The object of pastoral care in grieving is humans. Therefore the pastoral care always should be oriented to the current contextual life of the grievers.

Second, the ministry of the pastoral care to the grievers needs to integrate the parish-wide pastoral care to the grievers. It needs to encourage all parishioners to participate in the grieving. John Patton says that “Pastoral care to the grievers is pastoral because it combines the meaning that all parishioners have responsibility for care to the grievers and share the duty of care.”⁷⁴ Patton uses the image of the body Paul used⁷⁵ in his letters to Ephesians and Corinthians to describe the community dimension of pastoral care ministry. According to Patton, communal caring is important because it helps the grievers in the process of experiencing God and discovering inner problems as the grievers experience and establish relationships within the community. The communal perspective in pastoral care is understood as a field in which all parishioners can take responsibility, build relationships, and provide care to grievers, whereby

⁷³ Eduard Thurneysen, *A theology of pastoral care* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962)

⁷⁴ John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology: Theological Action and Reflection* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 14

⁷⁵ Ephesians 4, 1Corinthians 12

they can know God. This parish-wide participating pastoral care to the griever could make the griever aware that they are not alone. Thus it could provide them with a haven of understanding to relieve their isolated aloneness. So far my pastoral care to the griever tends to be an exclusive ministry of the pastoral care to the griever alone which begins to serve whenever the funeral or death-related incidents take place. Khalil Gibran says that “Sadness is but a wall between two gardens.”⁷⁶ Sadness means making an individual isolated without being able to interact with anyone or in any way. The sorrow that cannot be told to anyone makes the individual more lonesome. Isolation and loneliness caused by sadness are like the eyes of a typhoon, making people think they are free from sadness, but rather, it is like an iron fence that traps people so that they cannot escape from the typhoon. Seen from the perspective of the attachment theory, a close relationship among all parish-wide members can make the griever feel that they are valuable and important and thus help them overcome a sense of grieving. This parish-wide participation in the pastoral care to the griever can play a role like a “*matrix*” that enables the process of searching and processing emotions⁷⁷ in the midst of grieving.

Third, my parish pastoral care to the griever needs to focus its ministry on the griever left behind after loss of their loved one more concretely and substantially. American psychologist William Worden summarized the goals of mourning ministry as follows:⁷⁸ “First, it increases the realistic awareness of loss. Second it helps the bereaved to overcome various obstacles and rearrange after loss. Third, it helps the bereaved comfortably remember the deceased while reinvesting in his or her life with a comfortable feeling.” For that aim, the ministry of the pastoral care in my parish needs to support the bereaved to accept tangibly the breakup with the deceased as a reality. The ministry needs to induce the bereaved to talk about the situation of the

⁷⁶ William Paul Young, *Shack: where tragedy confronts Eternity* (Thousand Oaks: Windblown Media, 2007), 60

⁷⁷ Jeremy Holmes, *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993) 264

⁷⁸ William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008) 96

bereavement and let them visit virtually the place where the remains of the deceased are enshrined and realize the bereavement.⁷⁹ The bereaved have various emotions after the bereavement, for example, anger and guilt, anxiety, helplessness, and loneliness. Anger is a common reaction when people lose someone they care about, but if they don't get it right, it can get inside them and experience low self-esteem. Therefore, the ministry of pastoral care to the grievers in my parish must help the bereaved to face those feelings actually.

Fourth, my parish pastoral care ministry needs to educate parishioners as much as possible about how to encounter the grieving sufferings. Death education includes education in all aspects related to death, the process of death and the attitudes and skills on the subject related to death. From the perspective of bereavement counseling, death education provides knowledge or prejudice against death. Thus it could lead to a change of perception, and help parishioners accept death and have new perspectives and insights about the bereavement. People never want to talk about the death.⁸⁰ An attitude to conceal and dilute death without facing death leads to a distorted perception of death. When people actually experience bereavement, they avoid even mourning. Through death education, parishioners can think of death as their problem and explore the meaning of life and death and furthermore they could willingly have a self-awareness and attitude toward the death of others. Education about death doesn't just end with overcoming anxiety and fear of death but rather it enables people to be faithful to their present life. John W. James & Russell Friedman argue that "Through the death education people can overcome the taboo, fear, accepting afterlife and a respectful attitude toward death so that they are no more a victim and passive being but rather try to cope with their sufferings in a dynamic relationship

⁷⁹ Ibid. 103-104

⁸⁰ John W. James & Russell Friedman, *The Grief Recovery Handbook: The Action Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Losses including Health, Career, and Faith* (NY: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2017) 81.

with their environment.”⁸¹

Fifth, my parish pastoral care ministry will beef up the digital exploitation for the grievors at this time of pandemic because the ministry is well done with renewed respect for the positive role of technology. Kirk A. Bingaman argues that “Artificial intelligence is changing what it means to be human. For pastoral care providers a new approach to theological reflection is needed. To preserve the humanity in a digital age the ministry of the pastoral care to the grievors must put to good use the emerging digital technologies.”⁸² Zoom is a good way to gather digitally and one of the primary tools out there right now. My parish already began to set up Zoom communication on a computer and smartphones, where virtual meeting is possible. Nevertheless the ministry of the pastoral care to the grievors must set up more Pro-accounts in which the parishioners are able to host everything between themselves. Furthermore my parish needs to extend Face-book events to livestream for pastoral care to grievors. Text messaging is a pervasive method of communication in the 21st century. With entire generations preferring text to a phone call as less intrusive, text messaging services provide a way to send a mass message to the entire parishioners, giving them a chance to respond when they’re able. This opens the door to a more active communication in a way which is more immediate, less formal, and requires less effort than composing an email and more comfortable for grievors than a phone conversation. My parish pastoral care ministry must choose and organize some parishioners to send consoling cards to grieving families through the digital networks.

⁸¹ Jeremy Holmes, *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993) 69

⁸² Kirk A. Bingaman, *Pastoral and Spiritual Care in a Digital Age: The Future Is Now* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018)

Pastoral care ministry as Servant Leader

The ministry of the pastoral care to the griever in my parish will become the supportive leader when equipped with the above-mentioned five projects. The supportive leadership is one of characteristics of servant leadership. “Supportive leadership” can have a positive association with parishioners in grieving. Supportive leaders can provide both emotional and instrumental support by acting as role models who take care of the mental and spiritual grieving. To show emotional support, supportive leaders must demonstrate empathy and concern for parishioners’ well-being in grieving by checking in frequently and asking how they are doing using open-ended questions, such as ‘How can the pastoral care ministry help?’ Supportive leaders can encourage, inspire and motivate followers to innovate and create change that will help grow and shape the future perspective of ministry, especially pastoral care to the grievers. Supportive leadership eagerly moves away from the machine-thinking of parish or church and rather transforms into a participatory leadership wherein leadership can no longer be defined as an “entity,” but instead as a “process.” Nicholas Clark argues that “The leadership can only be understood as an emergent, interactive dynamic, a complex interplay between parishioners and the pastoral care ministry, which is a relational process.”⁸³ According to Keith Grint, “The skills and competencies of transformative leaders are not innate. Thus transformative leaders have to develop them to be able to enact a genuine, responsive, and generative leadership presence to the grievers.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Nicholas Clarke, “Model of complexity leadership development,” *Human Resource Development International* 16:2 (2013): 135-150

⁸⁴ Keith Grint, *Leadership: Limits and Possibilities* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 32

Conclusion

Nietzsche is famously quoted “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how”. During this uncanny time, living with a pandemic in social isolation, the ministry of the pastoral care to the griever is challenged how the ministry must change. Many parishes are now experiencing their own loss and grief in numbers and density due to the pandemic crisis. The loss of social connection and physical mobility has especially been impactful to the pastoral care ministry. It has been said that the only cure for grief is to grieve. Grieving the loss of a loved one taken by the sudden pandemic, such as Deacon Loc’s loss in my parish is typical example that is important to acknowledge. During this crisis it is important to grieve what has been lost, and it is also important to find meaning and hope in how life has changes. Jonathan Ishoy asserts that “We must find a why to live during such an unsettling time. We must find solace in new forms of connecting with others, utilizing space for being creative, and taking time to care for the griever.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Jonathan Ishoy, *Coping with Grief and Loss; Mourning the Changes since COVID-19*
<https://www.purdue.edu/caps/covid-19/coping-with-grief.html>

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