

Remembering

During November our thoughts and prayers turn toward family members and friends who have died. On Nov. 1, we honor all the saints in heaven. On Nov. 2, we honor all the souls in purgatory. On Nov. 11, we honor the men and women who have served our country, including those who died in service.

The Catholic Church, in her wisdom, knows how important it is for us to remember our loved ones. But how do we involve children in this sacred tradition of remembering?

Explaining death

It's not always easy to explain death to children. They may ask: Where did that person go? Why can't we go see that person?

The best way to answer these questions is to explain that we are with God before we are born and that when we die, we go back to be with God in heaven. We can't visit people who have died, but someday we will all be together again. We can remember those people and pray for them. We can ask them to pray for us.

Who will you remember?

If you've had a recent death in the family, you will naturally want to remember that person. But if your children don't have any memories of family members who have passed away, you might want to share stories about special people – perhaps your grandparents, a favorite aunt or uncle, or a close friend – and why it is important to remember them.

How will you remember?

Here are some ideas for remembering:

- Honor your deceased loved ones by looking at photos and

talking about what they were like when they were with us.

- Visit their graves at the cemetery.
- Arrange for a Mass to be offered at your parish for the person you want to remember.
- Make a donation to your parish or to some other charity in remembrance.

Helping Children Grieve

Children show their grief in different ways. They may begin to act out or become quiet and withdrawn. Young children may revert to thumb sucking or bed-wetting. They may have nightmares or bouts of whining. Older children might become moody or have difficulty concentrating on school work. They might refuse to talk, or perhaps talk only with their friends.

No matter what their age, when children are grieving it is important to:

- Allow them to ask questions and answer them honestly.
- Try to create a sense of security and safety.
- Assure the children that the death was not his or her fault.
- Talk about your own feelings of sadness.
- Allow them to talk or draw about the way they feel.
- Involve them in creating a memorial by planting a tree or making a photo album.
- Seek professional help if you are worried about your children or yourself.