



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#125 - September 24, 2020

A Best Practice: Grieving and Remembering

Each day we hear on the news, “900 people died today from COVID.” “The deaths for today from COVID was 1,067.” Or some variation of these numbers. Yet, it’s not numbers; these are valued and loved human people.

Even though faith leaders from across traditions came together to call for a National Day of Mourning and Lament on May 31, 2020, there has been little **collective grief and remembering** thus far. Some people have suggested various reasons why that is our reality:

- <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-where-is-the-grief-over-covid-19-victims/a-54228947>
- <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/why-no-national-mourning-for-covid-19/ar-BB1631sI>
- <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/05/grief-must-be-witnessed-a-time-of-national-mourning-for-uk-covid-19-victims-is-overdue-vie>

Much has been written about the anguish of grief at this time; many individuals, families and friends have struggled to find different ways to live in and through the death of a loved one in these times.

At the same time, in a time such as this, we are experiencing collective grief (whether we realize it or not). Collective grief happens when a community, society, village, or nation all experience extreme change or loss. Sarah Sloat reminds us: “Collective grief is experiencing grief in the context of knowing many others are experiencing that grief as well. It’s experiencing grief even if you didn’t lose a loved one. It’s experiencing grief along with, or in honor of, people who have lost a loved one.”

<https://www.inverse.com/mind-body/grief-coronavirus-collective-mourning>

As we live with our own losses during this time, as we walk with our parishioners who are grieving, are there also things we can do as (arch)dioceses and/or as parishes to grieve together, to remember the lives of the many who have died – in our families, our parishes, our cities, our country, the world?

This issue summarizes **three endeavors**.

- How might you do something similar?
- How might you tweak these ideas to meet the needs of your communities?



In Adrian, MI, the Adrian Center for the Arts presented “Power of Passage,” a collaboration between Hospice of Lenawee County and twenty-seven ACA member artists. Each artist was paired with a family whose loved one had died.

The artists and family members worked together to create a tribute to the deceased family member. Their memories and celebration of their loved one’s life were captured through various medias on reclaimed doors, the symbol of passage.



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Brenda Singletary and artist Sr. Sue Schreiber, OP used photo transfer and paint to commemorate Sara, who died at the age of 29. Sara enjoyed photography, art and writing; thus her door – on the front and back - used her photos, artwork and words.

All the doors are displayed outside under tents; additional collages and photos for each person were available for viewing in the Center.



✧ In late August-early September, the city of Detroit transformed a park into a temporary memorial for the city's more than 1,500 residents who have (thus far) died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Billboard-sized (4 x 4) photos of 907 people who died between March and August 18th were placed along more than two miles of roadway, one after another, on Belle Isle (an island in the Detroit River), in addition to a collage created by artist Eric Millikin.

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED



On Monday, August 31st, entrance onto Belle Isle and the memorial was strictly reserved for families of the deceased, although the photos were installed and visible over the weekend. The general public was able to see them again on September 1st.

On the 31st of August, the city of Detroit hosted a special drive-thru memorial procession for the family members to drive past to bid a collective farewell, to grieve and celebrate their loved ones from the safety of their vehicles.

On this day for the families, hearses (provided by local funeral homes) escorted by police led fifteen separate solemn processions around the park after bells rang across the region at 8:45 a.m.

Along the drive, a local radio station broadcast a soundtrack of gospel, classical, jazz music and a reading of the names of the deceased. Throughout the day, the broadcast added profiles of some of the victims and offered messages of hope.




GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

During the morning ceremony, Gretchen Whitmer, the governor of Michigan, said, "It's easy to get numb in this environment but we must not just look at these as numbers. These are people. Men and women. Fathers and mothers. Daughters and sons. Brothers and sisters, who had dreams and plans and a story. They weren't finished yet."

Families received a large billboard photo of their loved ones as a gift after the event.

One person recently remarked, "If we made a display like this honoring the 200,000 dead as a result of the virus, assuming each sign is 30' apart, we would need 1,136 miles of road to complete the display. You could drive 14 hours from Washington DC to Palm Beach, Florida, and there would still be 140 more miles needed before the display was complete."



 The city of Chicago hosts – on their website – a memorial wall:

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/memorial-wall.html>



Jose Gamboa

Jose, husband to Lucia, father to Edith and Maribel and grandfather/great grandfather to 8, immigrated to Chicago 63 years ago...

[Read the story](#)



Julie Skora

She was a proud grandmother and lover of animals...



Lois Meeks

Mrs.Meeks was a loving Mother-In-Law very supportive and treated me like I was her read daughter...

[Read the story](#)



Maria Elena Chavez

In Loving Memory of Maria Elena Chavez she was taken from us on April 26, 2020 from COVID19...

[Read the story](#)

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Some Related Readings

- What is Collective Grief?
<https://www.griefrecoveryhouston.com/what-is-collective-grief/>
- That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief:
<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>
- We are Experiencing a Collective Grief:
<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2020/04/we-are-experiencing-collective-grief/>
- How to cope with our collective grief:
<https://theamateursguide.com/how-to-cope-with-our-collective-grief/>
- Dealing With Collective Grief & Loss During the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://www.joincake.com/blog/collective-grief/>

Some GEMS Wonderings

- How are you – as (arch)diocesan and parish leaders - dealing with your own grief during these times?
- How have you supported and walked with your parishioners during the times they have experienced the death of a loved one?
- How have you stayed with them a month, two months, three months, etc. after their loss?
- How have you enabled your faith community to grieve for the thousands of people who have died – even if we don't know all of them?
- As you celebrate All Souls Day this year – and probably remember those parishioners who have died within the past year - are there ways that that remembrance can be expanded to include prayer and remembering of the thousands of people throughout our country, throughout the world, who have died from the virus?



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<http://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>