



A Way to Say “Good-Bye”?

Father Arnaldo Pangrazzi, in an article entitled, “*After a Loved One Commits Suicide*,” St. Anthony Magazine, offers the following letter which he composed and sent to many families who have lost someone through suicide. If we fill in the name of our loved ones, the message seems to interpret the feelings and pain of survivors.

My Dear _____,

As you read this letter, we would like you to know that we miss you and that so much has changed because of you. We always thought this sort of thing happened to other people, not to us. Maybe in your heart, you thought you were doing us a favor by taking your own life.

What hurts most is that you never really said good-bye or gave us a chance to say good-bye to you. Our eyes have been filled with tears as we’ve tried to change what has been, tried to understand your despair, your misery.

At times, we have been angry with you for what you did to yourself, for what you did to us. At times, we’ve felt responsible for your death. We’ve searched for what we did or failed to do – for the clues we missed.

Yet we also know that, no matter what, we couldn’t choose for you. We are learning to stop feeling responsible for your death. If we were responsible for you, you’d still be alive!

We all think of you so often, even when it hurts to remember. We are really lonely for your presence and whenever we hear your songs, we still cry for you. We feel sad that you’re not here to share so many events with us. That’s when our mornings have no beginnings and our nights seem as long as winter.

Slowly, though, it’s getting less hard. We try to remember the good times. Maybe you’ve seen us smile a little more. Yes, we are learning to live again, realizing that we cannot die because you chose to die.

We pray that you have peace. At the end of our days, we look forward to being with you again. Peace.

Father Arnaldo Pangrazzi served as chaplain at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Milwaukee, WI. He has coordinated numerous support groups for the bereaved, cancer patients and suicide survivors. He has conducted education seminars on his ministry for both clergy and lay people.