

# Life's Healing Journey





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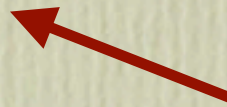
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## oo. Grieving

Healing begins with grieving  
Nature's way of letting go





When we experience a significant loss or hurt  
we are tempted to ‘not let it get to us’,  
kidding ourselves that we are keeping control  
when the truth is that the loss or hurt is controlling us.

Grieving is our way of letting go of that control.

Grieving is as natural and necessary as breathing.

We live in a culture that resists grieving:

‘Be strong!’ ‘Don’t let go control!’

We need to grieve over our losses and hurts.

When our losses and hurts no longer control us  
and we no longer blindly react to them,  
we will have experienced a healing.



It is important to emphasise the need to grieve over any loss or hurt.  
We need to grieve over the loss of a job,  
a dream,  
a relationship,  
our health  
and the loss of any person, place or thing  
to which we have become attached.  
The greater the attachment, the greater the pain of separation,  
the greater the need there will be for grieving.





oo\_I For Grief: John O'Donohue

When you lose someone you love,  
Your life becomes strange,  
The ground beneath you gets fragile,  
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;  
And some dead echo drags your voice down  
Where words have no confidence.

Your heart has grown heavy with loss;  
And though this loss has wounded others too,  
No one knows what has been taken from you  
When the silence of absence deepens.



Flickers of guilt kindle regret  
For all that was left unsaid or undone.  
There are days when you wake up happy;  
Again inside the fullness of life,  
Until the moment breaks  
And you are thrown back  
Onto that black tide of loss.

Days when you have your heart back,  
You are able to function well  
Until in the middle of work or encounter,  
Suddenly with no warning,  
You are ambushed by grief.  
It becomes hard to trust yourself.  
All you can depend on now is that  
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.



More than you, it knows its way  
And will find the right time  
To pull and pull the rope of grief  
Until that coiled hill of tears  
Has reduced to its last drop.

Gradually, you will learn acquaintance  
With the invisible form of your departed,  
And when the work of grief is done,  
The wound of loss will heal  
And you will have learned  
To wean your eyes  
From that gap in the air  
And be able to enter the hearth  
In your soul where your loved one  
Has awaited your return  
All the time.



## 00\_2. Grieving

There are physical symptoms of grieving

The physical symptoms may include numbness, waves of grief felt throughout the body, muscle weakness, sighing and changes in our sleep and eating patterns. Ignoring these symptoms will block the grieving process, which can wreak havoc on our immune system, leaving us vulnerable to sickness.

There are emotional symptoms of grieving

The emotional symptoms may include guilt feelings, blaming, hostile reactions to others and events, confusion, difficulty in making decisions, and the inability to continue usual patterns of behaviour.



Avoiding grieving will only delay the healing process and often cause serious physical, emotional and spiritual complications.

When we begin to share our story of loss with someone we trust, grieving will happen.

The Healing Journey we have agreed to make together provides us with a prayer companion who has experienced a degree of healing and believes in the process.

Prayer companions exhibit the qualities of being trustworthy and safe when they accept us as we are, with the feelings we have; when they are non-judgmental, able to validate what is real to us, and be real with us. They can help us identify and express both the surface feelings and the deeper feelings associated with our grieving.



The aim of Life's Healing Journey is to help us come to terms with our hurts and losses, learn to forgive and find peace. We do this through a process of meditations, exercises and prayer.

Life's Healing Journey is not a program that one starts and finishes; it is an experiential on-going process that includes trust, sharing, forgiveness and a closer relationship with God. It is a process of change which leads to transformation.

To be open to welcome God's healing grace we need to be willing to change; we need to want to embrace change. Until we can face our hurts and losses and share our story with another person, no healing or life-changes can happen.



This healing ministry never forces you to look at your pain.

Instead, we encourage you to share at the level you can manage.

As we share our story, pain will surface and we will be able to recognise the deeper source of our hurts and losses.



Tomorrow (Day 1) we will continue to ease ourselves gently into the process

1. We will also look at Spirituality of the Heart: the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for this permeates the healing process which we are offering in this retreat.

2. We will examine our image of God. This can be a serious blockage, hindering the healing journey.



From Day 2 we begin taking the first of the three basic steps for the Grieving/Healing Journey:

1. We face the reality of our hurts and losses without making judgments.

This includes looking at

denial,

anger

and bewilderment (which includes bargaining)

2. We face the sadness we experience over our losses/disappointments and allow ourselves to experience an energising anger.

(There has to be a better way!)

3. We let go of the effects our hurts and losses are having on our life by engaging in the process of forgiveness.



There are three barriers which block grieving and healing:

1. The desire for healing to be painless. Grieving may be painful for a time, but refusing to grieve will cause far greater pain. To be healed, we must walk through our pain. When we feel the pain of our past hurts and losses, it is because our pain is leaving us.
2. The need for grieving to be fast. Grieving needs to be slow and gradual. When the grieving process is too fast, it will be only temporary. "I'm over that" is usually a statement of denial.
3. The thinking we can heal ourselves. Our libraries are full of "how to" books. Grief needs to be shared with someone who will listen with their heart. Sharing is, in itself, a part of the letting go process.



## Life's Healing Journey

In the mid 1970's, MSC Fathers Peter Campbell and Eugene Trainer noted that retreatants were returning year after year with the same issues still unresolved. They decided to close the retreat house and visit other centres worldwide. After some research they decided that the work done by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross on the stages of grieving in the dying process was most useful.

They chose to use and adapt these stages of grieving to prepare for forgiveness, which they also identified as a process.



## Grieving happens in stages.

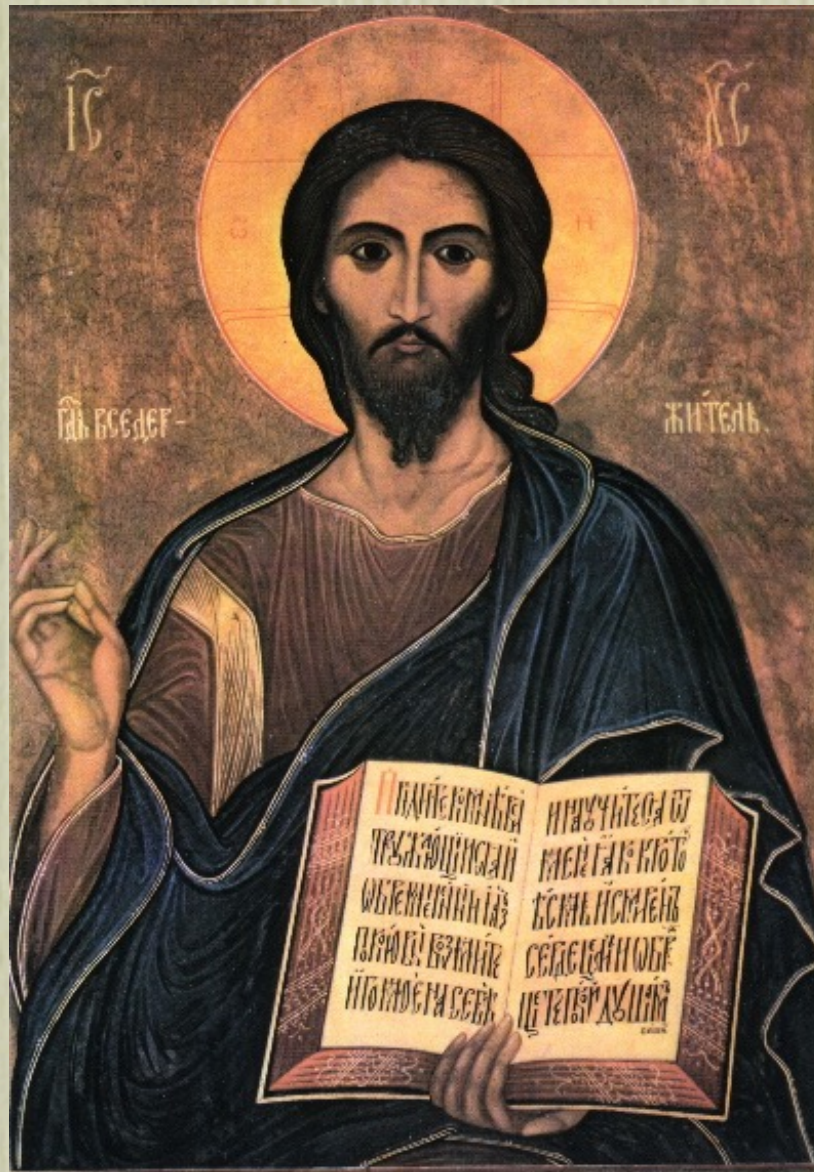
In her study of the dying process Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (*On Death and Dying*) identified five stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression ('Guilt-grief'), Acceptance.

She described the stages of death and dying in an orderly manner, but cautioned that we usually do not grieve in an orderly fashion.

Peter Campbell msc applied these five stages to the process of grieving any significant loss or hurt. As a Missionary of the Sacred Heart he approached the process within a Spirituality of the Heart. We will have more to say on this tomorrow.



When we reflect on the stages in the company of Jesus, we grieve in an orderly way thereby quickening the process. Keeping our focus on Jesus empowers us to travel our healing journey.





00-2

Kübler-Ross

Peter Campbell msc

1. Denial 'I'm not dying'

'I'm not hurting'

2. Anger Blaming others

Blaming others for my pain, loss

3. Bargaining Setting up conditions  
to be fulfilled before  
I'm ready to die.

Confusion, Bewilderment  
(includes Bargaining)

'I'll face grieving IF ...

'I'll stop blaming IF ...

4 Depression I blame myself for  
[Guilt-Grief] my dying

1. Sadness: I feel sad over the hurt  
and the loss it caused.

2. Energising Anger: I am angry for  
letting the loss continue to hurt  
me. There must be a better way!

5. Acceptance I accept that I am  
dying. I am peaceful  
and ready to let go.

Ready to forgive to let go. Peace  
+ COVENANT



The Life's Healing Journey program offers us an understanding of the stages of grieving as a kind of “life-raft”: an assurance that our feelings are normal. Our feelings need to be experienced and shared. “You can’t heal what you don’t feel and reveal.”





## 00\_3 Reflection questions

1. What am I grateful for?
2. What am I not grateful for?
3. What would I most want to be different in my history (past)?
4. What do I want to change in my present?



## 00\_4 **Keeping our eyes on Jesus**

Throughout Life's Healing Journey, we will be encouraged to begin our reflections by meditating on a scene from the Gospels. Jesus will offer us an experience of his loving presence and will reveal to us the love his Father has for us. Jesus will gradually heal our heart and transform our life. He will offer us hope when we are feeling alienated, isolated, or separated from God in any way.

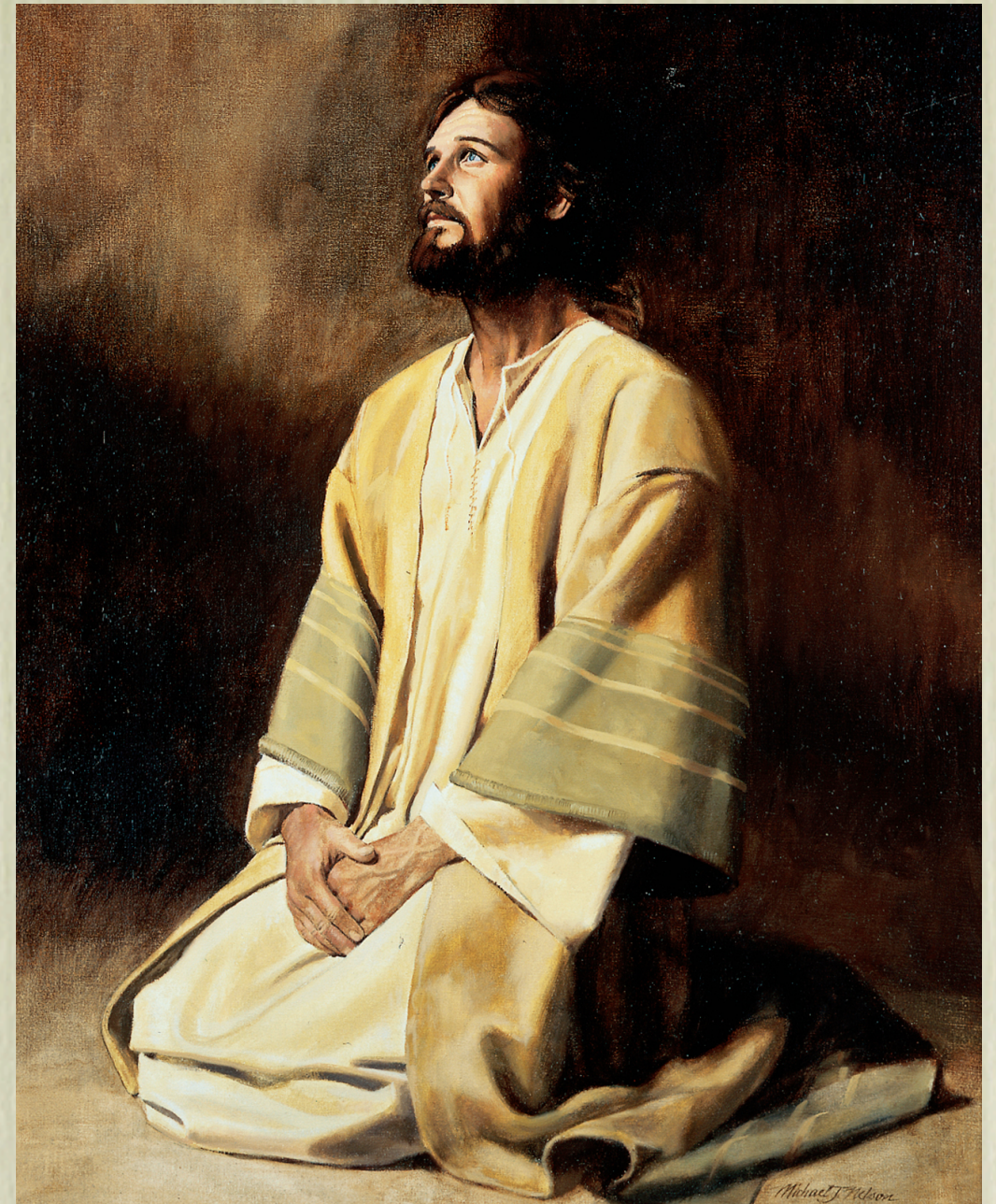


Healing prayer is a way of involving ourselves in Jesus' journey, and an invitation to Jesus to involve Himself in our Journey as our guide, companion and friend.



## Some essentials for prayer

1. Go to prayer without any preconceived ideas about your prayer.
2. Trust your prayer. Trust that the Spirit you invited to do so, is guiding your prayer.
3. Be radically honest with yourself and with God.





1. As you read the Gospel passage bring all your senses to bear. See what is happening. Listen to what is being said. Let your imagination fill out the scene. Notice your emotions as you feel with the person who is encountering Jesus. Ask Jesus how he was feeling.

2. Imagine yourself as the one who is encountering Jesus in the scene. What are you saying to Jesus? What is Jesus saying to you? Listen to him as he shares his feelings with you. Tell him how you are feeling. Complain or blame or be angry. Just be honest about your real feelings. Don't worry if you can't get in touch with your feelings. Being silent with Jesus is okay with him. Trust that he is with you in your prayer.

(Write your conversation if you find it helpful)



3. Don't expect explanations or solutions. Pray: 'Lord, reveal to me what needs to be revealed.'

4. Remain with Jesus in loving silence. Treat him as your friend.



## 00\_5 Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit.

Replace the tension within me with a holy relaxation.

Replace the turbulence within me with a sacred calm.

Replace the anxiety within me with a quiet confidence

Replace the fear in me with a strong faith.

Replace the bitterness within me with the sweetness of grace.

Replace the darkness within me with a gentle light.

Replace the coldness within me with a loving warmth.

Replace the night within me with light of your day.

Replace the winter within me with your spring



Straighten me crookedness.

Fill my emptiness.

Dull the edge of my pride.

Sharpen the edge of my humility.

Lighten the fire of my love.

Quench the flames of my lust.

Let me see myself as You see me.

That I may see You as You have promised me,

And be healed according to Your word.

Amen.