
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 87

M.I.D.D.L.E.

September 2004

Sunrises And Sunsets

Each life is lived in neat and tidy segments of time ... weeks, months, years, sunrises and sunsets, births and deaths. There is nothing that happens to us that cannot be placed in a specific framework of organized time.

Spring, summer, winter and fall not only measure the seasons of the year, but the ages of our life as well. It is said that the very young are in the springtime of their life; the very old are in the winter of their years.

Sunrises are beginnings. Sunsets are endings. During the progression of time, we keep mental ledgers where we record the passing of time by our successes, mistakes, love given and received, and if we are lucky, we live long and our sunsets are bright and beautiful and welcome when we are full of time and memories.

But there are sunsets, which are not so fulfilled, when the evening comes prematurely to a child of ours, and we are plunged into darkness in the middle of our day. Then, there is only night, pain and confusion to measure, the what might-have-beens to tally.

Every scrap of memory is salvaged to bring a spark of warmth to the coldness of the night to come. Each failure in our ledger is magnified and mixed with guilt and unanswerable questions. When memories are painful, we may even replace them with a more acceptable unreality to armor our hearts and minds until the time when we can accept the harshness of what has been, and we're strong enough to begin again-never the same, but sustained by our faith and the healing of time.

But when the child's sunrise and sunset have been compressed into a few minutes or hours, the lack of memories can be equally as hurtful. There are no memories of a beloved face, no remembered firsts or lasts, not even a remembrance of some irritating habit to tuck into our battered hearts-only the vacuum created when the mind has been geared to expect so much and is rewarded with only empty arms and blank pages in a baby book.

And so if you should find yourself measuring your pain against another's, remember this: if you have memories and if your memories are beautiful, you have a gift that is the most worthy of all. For when your morning finally comes after the darkness has lifted, you can look back and see that the darkness was not as complete as you had thought. For there in the darkness will wink and glimmer the light of your memories-like fireflies on a summer night.

~ by Judy Dickey TCF, Greenwood, IN

<http://wtv-zone.com/Blulady/memorials/SunrisesSunsets.html>

Grief Grafts

Marge Semons' son, Robert III, (2-9-67), was murdered 7-29-00.

Marge shared a great idea for remembering our children at Christmas:

I bought an angel for Robert this year to put on our tree. Each year I make him a homemade wreath and decorate it with the things he like and mail it to the caretaker of the cemetery in Chillicothe, OH, to put on his grave. I live so far away and I am a widow (65), but still working 3 jobs. I own a small marketing business that I can do from home.

As I was going to mail Robert's wreath today, a small baby bird was in the car. My other son had left my windows down just a bit in the back. I tried to get it out and I was thinking Robert sent this to me today to tell me "thanks" for making him this wreath. I get signs from God all the time.

Robert's symbol is a butterfly.

Steve and Susan Owings' son, Cullum, died in an auto accident 12-1-02.

The family sent the following letter to those who had meant so much to them after Cullum's death:

Dear Beloved Friends:

It will never be possible to adequately thank all of you for the overwhelming love and support you have given to us since our tragic loss of Cullum. As soon as we got the terrible call, you were there with us and for us anticipating our every need when we were too grief-stricken to think clearly for ourselves. Through your gifts of delicious food, beautiful flowers, offerings of comforting books and Bible verses, donations to Washington & Lee as well as to Westminster and countless other gifts of kindness, you have let us know that we are not alone in our loss and grief. Most important, we have felt the power of your prayers that have uplifted and sustained us and have shown us God's love in our time of greatest need. We appreciate so many of you attending the visitation and the funeral in spite of the awful weather. Having you with us at the beautiful services and experiencing the powerful presence of God among us were truly inspiring.

The love that we experience as parents makes us at once so blessed, so complete, so happy and yet so vulnerable. It is as though parents get a glimpse of God's love for each of His human children...what a gift! We have been strengthened by our faith; and our loving community of friends and try each day to remember that Cullum is a joyous, positive spirit and the last thing that he wants is for us to live in sadness, especially on his account. But we are human, and feel robbed of all the happiness that his continued life here promised. Nevertheless, we have resolved to channel our energy into making changes in our nation's

laws that incredibly now allow trucks to be driven as if they were cars, endangering the lives of citizen motorists every day.

Cullum and Pierce were hit by an 18-wheeler truck that was still traveling at a speed of at least 50 miles per hour at impact, even though there was an unimpeded distance of at least 1000 feet in which to stop on a clear, dry evening. It is a miracle that Pierce was unharmed. In the midst of our sorrow, we are so thankful for him and he is a daily source of purpose, hope and happiness. The details of this accident are even more shocking and compel us into action to do all that we can to spare other families the anguish of experiencing this kind of loss and suffering. Many of you have expressed an interest in joining us in our efforts and, while we are still in the due-diligence period of this project, we would like to have permission to contact you when we are ready. We have to make the highways safer for all of us and for those we love. Please email Susan at susanowings@westminster.net or Steve at sowings@bellsouth.net or call or write to us if you will join us in this important work.

*With Gratitude and Love,
Susan and Steve*

PS: We have just learned that a bill is in committee at the Georgia House that would reduce the speed limit for trucks to 10 mph below that for cars. While our effort will be nationwide in scope, this would be a great precedent-setter. To support this please call Ken Birdsong (Committee Chair) at 404-656-7149 and let his office know of your support for Larry Walker's proposal to do this.

Dinah-

Thank you for sending the grief newsletters. They are helpful and we appreciate your kindness in providing them.

While we've been made forever incomplete by this devastating loss of our dear Cullum, we are also encouraged by the amazing outpouring of love and concern from our community. Thank you for your part in that.

Carol Kiparisus' son, Johnny (6-17-75), died in a drowning accident 3-9-03.

Johnny

*As an infant, oh so small
His tiny fingers, I studied them all.
To hold him in my arms, and nibble on his ear
My sweet little baby boy, I loved so dear.*

I stood there and watched him as he slept.

*I would be there for him before he wept
My precious baby grew before my eyes.
I cherish every memory from the years gone by.*

*And as these years passed, I watched him grow,
From a toddler to adolescent I loved them so.
The older he got, and changed and matured
Suddenly before me a man had emerged.*

*And in this man was a heart full of love,
For his family and friends and the Lord up above.
My special little man, oh how I will mourn.
You have completed my life since the day you were born.*

*I find myself asking, "Why did you leave today?
Why did the angels take you away?
Why aren't you here where you belong?
Why have you left me, why are you gone?"*

*I have to thank God for the time he allowed.
And to know He wanted him back makes me very proud.
I know my son's life was not lived in vain.
As I see all your smiles when I speak his name.*

*He lived his life to the fullest every day
And taught us something in his own special way.
Now once again I watch him sleep.
I pray to the Lord, his soul to keep.*

*A guardian angel, you've always been one.
And I know you'll stay near us, my beautiful son.
With those sweet eyes of heavenly blue,
My beloved angel we will never forget you.*

*In loving memory to Johnny,
From your sisters*

Johnny's symbols are a 4-wheeler/Sportrax and a gamecock.

**Helen Goodwin Szymanski's daughter Lisa Goodwin (11-14-89),
died from complications after heart surgery, 5-18-02.**

Helen shared:

Lisa was born on November 14, 1989 and went to Heaven on May 18th, 2002.

Lisa loved fairies, angels and butterflies. She also loved volleyball!! So, maybe fairies and volleyball will be her symbols? She won the last game she played and was so proud; I can still see her smiling now. I guess, those are her symbols. If you can only use one or two, then pick fairies and volleyballs....LOL. I am working on "Lisa's Garden" we had planned it together. It has angels, fairies, and magical statues. The Water fountain has two doves at the top. It is a work in progress and when it is near completion I will add it to the web site. Lisa was a very sweet child, and had a great love of others. She was known as the child with the widest smile and big hugs. So many recall their last memory of Lisa with her running back for a hug.....What a wonderful memory they have.

Lisa's website is www.lisaforever.com

Lisa's symbols are fairies, volleyball, angels and butterflies.

Becky (11-26-83), the daughter of Barbara Sester, was killed in a train/car accident 11-11-99.

Barbara would love for you to visit Becky's website:

<http://www.geocities.com/mysparklingangelbeckyjo/index.html>

Becky's symbols are a pink rose and a ladybug.

Tony & Nancy Schroeder's son, Scott (1-5-74), was killed in a military accident, 6-16-94.

Nancy tells of one of the ways she knows Scott is with her:

Tony & I want you to know how much your card and thoughts meant to us for remembering Scott's angel date. After ten years the pain isn't as severe as previously, but nonetheless it will always be there. We will never get over our son's passing but we do learn to cope.

As a symbol, we have chosen a "C-130 plane." Scott always flew to various locations in that type of aircraft and we have had many "signs" from Scott as C-130's fly over our home, it seems, when we need an uplifting experience. This has happened not only over our home, but also a few times while I have been at the cemetery. I would be sitting at his gravesite, saying prayers, talking to him, or just reflecting and I could hear the plane. I would look up and there it would be!!! On one occasion two of our friends (who I met through Compassionate Friends) were with me, as they had never been to Scott's gravesite, and lo and behold above us is a C-130!!! It's just as your card says.... It is possible between

the stars that there are openings in Heaven where our children's love shines down to let us know they are happy!!!

What a wonderful experience the conference was!! This was the first time I had attended and it was so comforting and informative. You are to be commended for organizing such a meaningful conference.

I will definitely mail you a picture of Scott and also memorial articles that we had published in our local newspaper. There are many more "signs" I would love to share with you and hopefully one day that will happen.

Again, thank you for being so kind and understanding.

God's Peace, Nancy Schroeder

Scott's symbol is a C-130 plane.

Carol Lyon's daughter, Ashley (7-21-85), and unborn grandson, Landon, were murdered 1-7-04.

Carol shares how she has chosen a symbol for Ashley and Landon:

Ashley Renee Lyons was born on July 21, 1985, and she was murdered on January 7, 2004 along with her unborn son Landon. Ashley was 5 1/2 months pregnant at the time of her death. My choice of a symbol is a mare and foal to represent Ashley and her son. She loved that baby so much that it cost her her own life. Ashley's former boyfriend has been arrested and charged with her murder. But we will never have justice for Landon because at the time of her death there was no law in Ky to protect our unborn children.

Ashley was a beautiful child that had just grown into a lovely young lady. She always had a smile for you and she was kind to everyone. Ashley loved animals, babies, old people, and the handicapped. She would always say how sorry she felt for some one that was disabled or crippled and she would tell me how fortunate she felt to be healthy and happy.

I had a good time meeting others at the conference and I read the book Children of the Dome and it was wonderfully written. I wish I could put down on paper how wonderful my daughter was, but I guess it is too soon because I just start crying and I give in to my anger over how she was taken from me and I write things other people would not understand unless they have felt my pain. The loss of a child is so tragic and devastating when they are killed in an accident or taken by an illness, but when someone TAKES their life I can't describe the depth of my hurt and pain. I also feel guilty because I did not see thru this boy that claimed to once love her. I feel like I let her down and I pray every day that she forgives me for not being able to save her or realize the danger she was in. I would give my own life just to let her have hers back. Ashley had just started her life!!!!!!!!!!!!!! She was murdered 6 months to the day from when she graduated high school.

Ashley's symbol is a mare and Landon's symbol is a foal.

Luis and Pam Mendoza's daughter, Nikki (10-31-84), was killed in an auto accident, 8-4-03.

Pam explained her choice of a symbol for Nikki:

My beautiful daughter Nikki graduated to heaven after graduating from high school. We called her Nikki but her name was Autumn Nicole Mendoza, born from heaven 10-31-84, born to heaven 08-04-2003. She was killed in an automobile accident, her fault, but praise God the occupants of the other vehicles were only scraped and bruised. She was being her usual self by helping friends in need of a ride, but she never made it to them. I didn't know she had gone so it was quite a jolt when the police showed up at 1:30am to tell me. She had died at approx. 10:22pm the night before and she was 150 miles away. They had her come on an unfamiliar road and it was raining. I later learned she died where many have gone before her and it's aptly named dead man's curve. I know God blessed me with her for 18 years and I also know I'll see her again.

She has a 22-year-old brother. He graduated from college May 1, 2004. It was the hardest school year of his life and yet he made the dean's list the first semester and the president's list the second. She and I had gone to register her at the same college on June 4 and her brother couldn't wait till she came to join him. They had finally arrived at the point of friendship instead of rivalry. She had also rededicated her life to Christ 2 weeks before. I couldn't have more comfort than that! She was beautiful, kind, compassionate, loving, giving and loyal to God and friends. We live in a town of 9,000 so she was known well. She participated in several clubs and performed a lot of community service. My grief seems to never end, especially as her heaven anniversary approaches, but God's grace helps us endure the unendurable. My husband moved out a week ago, but my God is sufficient. I will prevail with the Lord's ever-present promises. I miss her more than anyone as we talked several times a day and she always lit up my world. She could make a statue smile. Just kidding. She loved praise & worship and a favorite was "I Can Only Imagine" which her 3rd grade teacher (who is now in prison ministry) sang at her funeral. She loved music and dance, so that song creates beautiful images in my mind of her presence in His presence.

Pam wrote this later:

I will gladly expand on her life as if that's a hard thing for a mom to do. She played softball from age 5 to 17 on both county and school leagues. It was her very favorite sport. She also played school basketball from 4th grade peewee ball through her senior year. She finally was a starter her senior year. She was always the cheerleader, encourager and congratulator for her team members. She always prayed, "I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me." Before each game and when the coach was hard on someone, she'd tell them, "keep your head up you're doing fine. She also was on the county swim team for four years. She qualified for the Jr. Olympic three of those years in the "butterfly" stroke. Again,

always the cheerleader. She began her first summer job at 15 as a city lifeguard and gave swimming lessons on the side. The little kids loved her too. One of the local daycares brought the entire daycare for lessons and they wanted to take a picture with "Miss Nikki." She lifeguarded for three summers and always tithed on her own. She also bought swimming suits for 2 girls who didn't have any, always compassionate and giving.

I recall 3 separate instances in her teens that other teens called her with thoughts of suicide. She always took action but first she offered prayer. She and I had prayed for her Dad's salvation for several years and in March 2003, God did a work & we both cried. How awesome that she got to see the fruit of her labor before she went home to heaven in August. She was in every club and an officer in many. She participated in a lot of community service projects thru clubs and once every year, she would get up at 5:00AM to volunteer with United Way Day of Caring, all by herself. In the clubs, FCCLA, formerly, FHA, was where her dedication was. Her Parliamentary Procedure Team won gold at District and State five years in a row. They attended Nationals in Orlando, FL, Anaheim, CA and Minneapolis, MN. They won the Silver Medal in Anaheim and got to take a limo down Hollywood Blvd. In 2001. It is sad that she again went down Hollywood Blvd. on Aug. 1, 2004, only as a name and a picture; a child gone too soon. I have a beautiful picture of her in the Beverly Hills Hotel sitting at the baby grand piano where "Pretty Woman" was shot. I don't know of any enemies except those that were jealous. Girls!! I know I'm partial, but she was a beauty and even more so because she didn't realize it. She was nice to the least of them and nice to the best. In this small town, we had over 800 people at the visitation (which by the way is still a jumbled memory). She was a beautiful, bright, inspiring young woman, but not always perfect. I must add that many teens insist on testing the water outside of God's care and that we know is never a good move. It didn't take her long to realize that she was not "of this world." I give God all the glory for lending her to me, if only for a while. This has been the hardest year of my life, and yet, I know when it's the worst, there is only one set of footprints and my Savior is carrying me.

One of her very best friends from her 7th grade FCCLA Club until her death, is the vocalist in a new Christian Rock Band, Kingsdown. About a month after her death, he performed, live, a song called "Everyday" (Autumn's Song). It is now on CD also. It can be listened to at www.purevolume.com. How he honored us with this tribute, this group had just come off a three month travel with Extreme Tour UR 2004, with some great praise reports. There is also a memorial scholarship at her high school in her honor. The first was given out this year at graduation. It's amazing what we do as a bereaved parent, praying our children will not be forgotten as if they were never here.

Thank you, if for no other reason than you read about the love of my life.

*Nikki's symbol has to be the **butterfly**. She loved them and had pictures, puzzles, wind chimes, jewelry and knick-knacks all with butterflies on or in them.*

Janice Goodman's daughter, Krissy (11-1-82), was killed in a boating accident, 6-20-04.

Janice shares "The Gift":

My Angel's name is Kristen Elizabeth Goodman. Everyone called her Krissy. She was born 11/01/1982. She came in a big hurry. I had little over an hour of labor. The doctor almost missed the delivery. She left this world as suddenly as she came into it. On Father's Day, 06/20/2004, she was tubing behind her father's boat and hit some type of channel marker. They airlifted her to the hospital but when I arrived there the doctor assured me that she died instantly.

I have been on quite a spiritual journey since that day. I was blessed with what George Anderson calls "The Gift" in his book Walking in the Garden of the Souls. The morning of Krissy's accident she called my cell phone. My partner, Gyla and I were in North Louisiana visiting her Dad for Father's day. I had planned to see Krissy that weekend but it hadn't worked out. It was strange because I wanted to see her but this thought kept coming to me..."You don't want to see Krissy this weekend." I argued with myself that I DID want to see Krissy but the thought would just return.

Krissy called my cell phone the morning of Father's day. I usually answered my cell phone, but that morning Gyla answered and had a long conversation with Krissy. There was a lot of drama going on in Krissy's life at the time and Gyla had not talked to her since it began. They had a good conversation. We were outside. Gyla told Krissy that she loved her and handed me the phone. I only talked to her a few minutes. We ended our conversation as we always did by saying, "I love you" to each other. Knowing she was going to the lake with her Dad, I added "Be careful" and hung up the phone. Just as I disconnected the phone, I heard a voice inside my head that whispered "You will never speak to Krissy again." At the time I thought it was weird...Where did that come from? I shook it off but remember thinking that something about it was familiar.

Later that day Gyla and I were returning to Houston when we got the call that Krissy had been in an accident. We had been delayed leaving town by two different situations. Normally we would have been back in Houston already, but instead we were just an hour out of Shreveport. Gyla's cell phone rang. She was told that there had been an accident and Krissy was being airlifted to the hospital. I immediately remembered the voice I had heard that morning and knew that Krissy was gone. Gyla kept telling me not to jump to conclusions, but in my heart, I knew.

It was a long drive back to the hospital to face what no parent ever wants to face. We arrived at the hospital and were ushered into a small room and were told to wait. I asked about Krissy's Dad and was told that he was there. Eventually a couple of family friends came in the room along with the hospital chaplain. They all prayed over me. I remember feeling a bit odd. That wasn't my style, but if it made them feel better that it was okay. Finally a doctor came in the room. He sat directly across from me. He looked me right in the eyes and said "CPR was administered at the scene and all the way back to Shreveport in the Life Flight helicopter but I can assure you she died instantly." That was it. I thanked him for telling me that and he left. The events of the next few minutes were a blur. Gyla was crying. Krissy's Dad and his wife came in and there was a lot of hugging and crying.

The next few days went by in a blur. We only had to make a few decisions and the rest just happened. A lot of love and prayers carried us through. My motto became "I can do this." I said that to myself at each step of the way. I felt like the tent pole holding up the tent. Krissy's Dad was not so strong. He had been driving the boat and experienced the horror of

the accident. Everyone was looking to me to see how "we" were doing. I knew if I was strong, everyone else would be too. If I fell apart, everyone else would also. At the time I remember resenting it. Now I realize it was simply what Moms do.

When it was over, we returned to Houston. A week later I returned to work. During all this time I kept thinking about that voice I had heard saying "You'll never speak to Krissy again". It gave me complete Peace. I have always had Faith and Belief but now I knew that everything I believed in was true. I kept thinking about how that voice sounded familiar ...like I had heard it before...I suddenly remembered...

I had always promised both my children trips to Las Vegas for their 21st birthday. On May 20th Krissy, my son Cory, Gyla, and my mother and sister all flew from different locations and we met in Las Vegas. We were celebrating not only Krissy's 21st birthday, but also my sister's 50th. We had a wonderful trip. Krissy spent time with each person separately. She said, "Aunt Lisa and I are going to have a bonding experience. We are going to the Chippendales." They did and had a great time. She sat and played poker with her brother for the first time. She played slot machines with her Grandmother. We all had a nice dinner downtown one night. She took pictures of herself with each of us. She gave each of us a crystal that she had dug up on a recent trip to Arkansas with her fiancé. The last night she spent alone with her brother. She took him out to a very nice dinner before going to see George Carlin.

The morning of May 24th, Krissy had an early flight. I went down to her room to be sure she was ready and see some pictures she had on her computer. As usual we were running late. When we got to the taxi line it was pretty long. I told Krissy "Go up to the bellman and see if he can help you find someone to share a ride with to the airport." In typical Krissy style, she walked up to the line and loudly asked..."Is anyone going to the airport?" A couple meekly raised their hands. She said, "Can we share a ride?" They nodded yes. She hopped over the taxi line rope. I hugged her and told her that I loved her. I turned around to walk back in the hotel and I heard that voice....."You'll never see Krissy again."

At the time I blew it off just like I did the morning of the accident. Now I know that it was the greatest gift I could have ever been given. I have spent the last two months reading all I can about Angels and life after death. My faith has strengthened ten-fold. I now know that I can talk to her and she is always with me. The hardest part is making other people understand. Mostly I want Krissy's Dad to understand that this was part of God's plan. He did not cause her death. He was just there to witness it so we were left with no questions. My task now is to help him understand that.

Looking back, the signs started around Christmas. Krissy always gave me Dreamsicles for gifts. Along with the Dreamsicle she gave me two other Angels. Not typical gifts from her. She did a lot of traveling around her school schedule. For my birthday she gave me the usual Dreamsicle and a very special gift, diamond earrings. She said they were something she wanted me to have. She visited a lot of people in the last few months. The last week she took a quick trip to Florida to spend two days on the beach. On the way back she made an unexpected stop to spend the night with my Mother. At the visitation many people stopped and said, "Krissy just stopped in to see me last week." She was saying her good-byes. Writing this I just realized that we arrived in Las Vegas on May 20th. She died on

June 20th. We left Las Vegas on May 24th. Her Celebration of Life was June 24th. Coincidence?

The most amazing is this.....About two months before the accident she changed her email address to IMAANGELNHEAVEN. What more can I say?

I have spent the last couple of weeks designing her monument. Through the Internet I found a wonderful man who makes custom monuments. I took pictures of one of the Angels she gave me for Christmas for use in the design. I really had trouble with the words. One day at work I was inspired to put "I'm an Angel In Heaven" in the search engine and came up with a lovely poem called "I'm an Angel Now." I took part of it and reworded it a little and this is what it will read:

*I was chosen by the Lord above
And now I'm in His care
Take a look inside your heart
I am always there*

*I'm an Angel in Heaven now
My spirit is set free
I'm an Angel in Heaven now
No need to weep for me*

The design for the monument is beautiful.

I get through each day. The grieving process is slow. I can't concentrate much. I can't do house work. I don't care what I eat. I go to counseling once a week. That's all to be expected. Mostly I'm grateful that, because of the Gift, I'm at peace. I really never understood that term before, but I sure do now.

*Well, thank you for "listening." I have been looking for someplace to tell my story. After reading your wonderful newsletters I realized that this is the right place. If you print any or all of this please include my email address is **jebber99@earthlink.com**. I would like to hear from anyone who was touched in some way by my story.*

*Her symbol...a **Peacock**. It was her fiancé's last name. We liked to kid her about becoming Krissy Peacock.*

"I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow."

Jeremiah 31:13

Diana Stillwell's son, David (8-17-78), died from a drowning accident, 9-24-95.

Diana shares her story:

Hi, my name is Diana Stillwell and I live in Great Mills, Maryland. I was born a cradle Catholic, but left the church at age 18. I then started searching for a religion that would meet my needs, even Buddhism and New Age. At age 29, I had a hysterectomy and really hated God for that one! A book fell on my foot one day while shopping, entitled Why Bad Things Happened to Good People. I read it and then apologized to God. Three months later, I received a phone call from a patient's mother telling me about a 16-year-old who was looking for parents for her son. I called and she felt that we would be great parents for David. I was still searching for a religious belief that would give me a peaceful feeling and even tried returning to the Catholic faith. A big no-go for me. I had a major fight and told the priest he could keep his religion. In 1993, a dead priest whom I admired as a child came to me in a dream and stressed the urgency to return to my faith. It made such an impression that I called and talked to the base chaplain (we were stationed in Japan) and told him about the dream and all the difficulty I had in the past with the church.

He agreed to talk to me and bring me back into the church. In fact there was a trip planned to Tsuwano where there were Japanese who were tortured and died in the name of Christ. Father Anderson even allowed me to receive Holy Communion on that one occasion and said I had to make a general confession etc., then I would be allowed to receive Our Lord regularly. I will never forget the wonderful feeling I had receiving Our Lord again. I returned to the Church and within a year, my son saw many wonderful changes in me and he, too, decided to become Catholic at age 16. He started RCIA that year.

In February of 1995 I decided to go on a pilgrimage. I wanted to go to Medjugorje, but that was not meant to be. Someone told me about Betania, so that is where I was going!

David asked to go as well, I told him no. It would be too expensive flying from Japan across the world. Upon making my reservation, I went to bed when a voice inside stressed the urgency of my taking David. I got up and made reservations for him as well. We spent a week at the [apparition] compound in Betania. David was always playing baseball and hanging out with members of Maria Esperanza's family, while the group I was with pretty well hung among themselves.

Maria told everyone they needed to be more like David. We each had a special time with Maria, except that because David was with me, we were told to see Maria together. Maria told David that people would learn from him, that he would be a great teacher, and that his life would be one of spontaneous giving with expecting a reward and that God would reward him. She also told him he needed complete conversion. At that point Maria adopted David as her spiritual "grandson" and told him that from now on his life would be changed.

David was to become Catholic in April but the devil decided to make things complicated for him. We were not informed of the profession of faith on Holy Thursday and the chaplain felt David should wait to become a member of the church. When he talked to David, my son came out crying and said he really wanted to become Catholic and had he

known about the service, he would have been there. It took everyone in the church to convince the chaplain to change his mind.

David became Catholic in April of 1995. In early September, Maria Esperanza bilocated to Japan and talked with David. When David got up that morning he told me he talked to his grandmom. I got upset because calling home from Japan is costly. He said I wouldn't believe him, but it was his Spanish grandmom who was there sitting on the bed talking with him and that everything in his life will become better. His whole persona changed.... seemed he had goals for his life now and started applying himself at school etc. On September 24th a typhoon had passed through in the early a.m.; the remainder of the day was beautiful, so David and several friends decided to go to the river for a swim. The river was flowing at about 18 to 20 knots and was muddy and full of floating debris, but one of the boys decided to go swimming anyway.

Halfway across, he was trapped in a whirlpool. David and a friend formed a human chain trying to reach the screaming boy when an undertow pulled them in toward the whirlpool.

They started screaming for help and three young Marines who were upstream, jumped in to help. One Marine almost drowned while the other two managed to rescue two of the boys. David was pulled back under, and evidentially hit his head and was floating face down. The Marine was unable to grab onto him because of the current. They recovered my son's body the next day! Two years later, I returned to see Maria with a very small group. Maria was again at the compound with her family but was not receiving visitors. I gave her son-in-law some pictures I had taken of David with her family and a ring that I thought David would like her to have.

We were then invited to return and see Maria the next evening and Maria asked why it took so long for my return. She informed me she was with David when he died and said David died in Our Lady's arms very peacefully and quickly. I was so thankful that God made sure I found my way back to Him and that David died in full communion with the church...I know he is happy with his Heavenly Father and I am at peace with his death...

David's symbols are angel wings with a halo above them.

Jeremy (5-9-91), son of Michael and Debby Stein, died in a drowning accident, 7-13-00.

Sue Hoffman wrote the following article about one of the ways the family has remembered Jeremy:

The Solon Board of Education expressed appreciation Monday to the Jeremy Stein Memorial Fund for a new automated external defibrillator.

The unit and a plaque commemorating the gift will be placed in the high school lobby outside the pool area.

The fund was established by Jeremy Stein's parents, Debby and Michael Stein, and their two children, Greg and Hallie. The fund also provides an annual scholarship to a graduating senior from Solon High School.

Jeremy died July 13, 2000, at the age of 9 from a swimming accident at summer camp. He was a student at Parkside Elementary School.

Superintendent Joseph V. Regano said the defibrillator is one of 14 in the district. He said Mrs. Stein thought the pool lobby was the perfect place to put the one donated in Jeremy's memory.

"They're wonderful people and have suffered a terrible loss," Mr. Regano said. "This may end up saving someone's life."

"When you have a tragedy like that in your life, they're trying so hard to make something good come out of it," said board member Margo Morrow.

Defibrillators have proven to be effective in cases of sudden cardiac arrest.

Jeremy's symbol is a baseball.

James and Dawn Vinson's son, Matthew (8-25-01), died in a home accident, 9-15-03.

The Vinsons would like for you to visit Matthew's website,
www.vinsons-n-angels.com

Matthew's symbols are butterflies, owl, bus, bee, balloons, bubbles and fries, and anything yellow.

Louis McIntyre and Lizanne O'Toole's daughter, Fallon (3-3-02), died from brain/spinal cancer, 6-21-04.

Lizanne explained Fallon's symbol and wants to encourage each of you to visit the website her sister, Tiffany O'Toole designed in honor of Fallon:

I unfortunately don't have a lot of free time during the day (or nights for that matter). I had a new baby a week to the day after Fallon's death and I have a 3-year-old and an 18-month running me ragged. I was 7 months pregnant when my daughter was diagnosed with brain/spinal cancer. I never expected to enter the world of serious illness/death.

I quickly learned that life goes on -- it has to when you have little ones depending on you... Fallon was born on 3/3/02 and she passed away 6/21/04. She was 2 years, 3 months and 18 days...

My sister Tiffany and her husband started Fallon's website. I had nothing to do with it but it was/is an amazing site. I thank God that they had the knowledge/thoughtfulness to do that for her.

I can't imagine it ever getting better. My life will forever be changed and will ALWAYS have less joy. I miss my daughter more than I could ever possibly express in words. I know I am not alone in my grief and I know there are many who have stood before me. I just wish no one ever had to "join" our exclusive club.

Kind regards -- and I too pray for you and all who go before us and those who will come after us.

My husband's name is Louis McIntyre and I kept my maiden name Lizanne O'Toole. Fallon's symbol will be bubbles. She got such a kick out of blowing bubbles with her sisters/family. My husband's eulogy also talked about Fallon as a bubble (delicate, light, airy...). So I think bubbles are a great choice for her symbol. Though, the symbol that makes me think of Fallon is the sun. For I know that even when the sun is not shining, it is still there -- and that's how I like to think of Fallie --even though she's not physically present, I know in my heart that she is still here.

I'd like to know what you have found in your "research" into grieving what most parents do to feel better during the first years. I, for example, find great solace and comfort visiting her "place" (graveyard). I go every day (except for the two days I was in the hospital delivering my son) and I sit and write to her there. I write how I am feeling that day, what my thoughts are, what I remember about her that brought a smile to my face, etc. I also bring along the book Daily Meditations for Healing where I read each day's entry. I am curious how others survive/keep it together. I am fortunate that I live 15 minutes from her site so I know that this is not a realistic solution for others.

<http://www.fallon.freewebsitehosting.com/>

David & Cindy Jo Greever's daughter, Michelle (8-24-84), died when struck by a car as she was attempting to catch her school bus, 11-5-93.

Cindy Jo shared what her daughter, Melissa, had signed in her guest book at her wedding shower:

I love my sweet baby sister Michelle very much and miss her dearly. If only she could be my maid of honor at my up-coming wedding, my wedding would be perfect!! Mommy, I love you with all of my heart and what a beautiful web page this is!! Love always, Melissa Mae

Michelle's website is: www.geocities.com/michellemaries

Michelle's symbols are a 5-pointed star, with a heart and flower in the center of the star.

Karen Jenkins' son, Geoffrey P. Edwards (5-6-84), died from an overdose of heroin, May 22, 2002.

Karen shares her feelings:

My son Geoff died from an overdose of heroin. The heroin was given to him by another who drove up to Newark, bought the heroin and gave Geoff 2 glassine packets to "snort." Geoff made a grievous error in judgment. Geoff was left to die by the other person who told the police that Geoff was disoriented, could not walk or talk and had a severe headache. This fool never thought to let us, Geoff's parents, know that Geoff was in trouble. He just left Geoff to die and for us to find Geoff the next morning. The fool was given a year's probation for killing my son - there was no justice for my Geoff and his life was only worth a year's probation. May God forgive this person, for I cannot.

My son dressed as an Angel with Pink Wings on Halloween 2001. Geoff used my brand new 350 thread count sheet for his robes. I so laugh at that now, but at the time I could not help but wonder why he didn't use the old white sheet. We have pictures and he was a mighty big Angel at 6'5" and 280 pounds. He went around protecting other kids from being bullied. He had such a tender, loving spirit and was loved by so many other people. My heart hurts from the devastation I feel.

It is so hard and painful to lose a child. I think there is no greater agony in this world. I pine for my son and there are days that I can't bear knowing he will not come home and yell "Yo, Ma." Today has been a particularly hard day and I know that these kinds of days will come and go. It really never gets easier knowing you have lost a child, it just gets more copable (is there such a word; if not, there is now). I know there will never really come a day that I will not mourn my loss - he is my only child and I always prayed for the Lord to keep him safe.

Geoff's symbol is an angel with pink wings.

Ken and Brenda Osborne's son, Johnny (2-20-71), was killed in an auto accident, 5-14-02.

Brenda tells us how special Johnny was to his niece:

Lauren (4-years-old), told her Uncle Johnny she wanted to play "getting married." Johnny agreed and threw a baby blanket over Lauren's head for a veil. She said, "No, Uncle Johnny, you have to be the bride." So Johnny took off his baseball cap and put the baby blanket on his head and put the cap back on. She then made him leave the room and enter as the bride. Mimi (me) said the "marrying words" as Lauren calls them. As you can tell, he adored Lauren. This is such a precious memory to me.

Thank you so much for keeping the memories alive of our beloved children. The past two years have taught Ken and me many things. You can smile and laugh again, and you get through holidays and special family days, and you can look at your friends without envy because they can hold their child and say, "I love you."

Watching the news is heart rendering. We know how much pain and emptiness those 900 plus families are feeling. How precious our freedom is. It was bought with the lives of brave men and women and those left behind to mourn.

I pray your days bring more sunshine than rain.

Thank you again for all you do in helping fellow travelers. Lamentations helps us remember we are only one of many.

Johnny's symbols are butterflies, squirrels and his dog, Max.

Debbie Lohr's daughter, Michelle (8-9-76), died from a pulmonary embolism, 8-22-94.

Debbie explains how she chose Michelle's symbol:

Michelle had a pulmonary embolism and passed with full cardiac arrest. She was in the hospital 4 days, which was on a weekend. They did no tests on weekends, but we did not know that until after. She loved music, she sang, played piano, was the lead in both "Phantom of the Opera" and "West Side Story." She loved everyone and everyone she met loved her. She would take time to sit and swing and talk to older people. She sang at churches locally on Sundays with her Chamber Choir. She was to pick up her college books the day we lost her. She wanted to be an English Professor. She was my angel on earth and is still an angel. It's been 10 years and I miss her so much. I found a saying that says it all: "If tears could build a stairway, and memories a lane, I'd walk right up to Heaven and bring you home again." It's sad because there are so many of us that have broken hearts, but it helps talking to others. Thank you for caring.

Thank you for the card remembering Michelle. I had not chosen a symbol before, but I'd like it to be a musical angel. It has been 10 long years and I still miss her so much. Every year comes and goes, but she isn't ever out of my mind. Again, thank you, it means a lot to me.

Wordie and Beatrice Hounshell have lost 3 of their 4 children: Wordie, Jr. (7-30-54), died 3-19-91; Ruth Ann (10-13-59), died 7-14-86; and Aaron (3-29-61), died 10-13-98.

Wordie wrote the following letter about their children:

Dear Dinah,

I read every thing you send me. We both are very sick. I am 69 years old and my husband is 77. As you know, we had four children; all are gone but one. Our baby (Aaron) died October 13, 1998. Ruth Ann had never been married.

Wordie, Jr. died of Leukemia and had 2 kids; a girl and a boy. Aaron had 2 kids; a girl and a boy. Wordie Jr.'s daughter, Becky, graduated from Eastern Kentucky University last year and his son, Jonathan, is in college at Hazard. Aaron's daughter, Beth, went to college and Natasha is in Boulder CO., and graduated last year. Her brother is still here with us. His name is Shane and he went to Morehead. He hates to leave us since both of us are sick. We have one daughter, Debbie, who lives in Corbin. She has one son and is a dietician.

You know how it is to lose a child. We will never get over it. You just learn to live with it. We had 4 fine children. Ruth Ann and Wordie worked with handicapped children and adults. They both graduated from EKV. They loved life so much. Everybody in Jackson knew them.

At the bottom of every card or letter Ruth Ann would send us, she would say, "No matter how far apart we are, you are always on my mind and in my heart. Lots of love, Ruth Ann." Her symbol is an angel.

Wordie, Jr. would always leave little notes saying, "I was here and you were gone, now you are here and I am gone. Lots of love, Wordie, Jr." How I would love to hear those words one more time. Wordie's symbol is a rose.

Poor little Aaron was so loving. Every card or letter he would send us, at the bottom he would write: "Love forever and ever." Aaron's symbol is a horse.

We have three beautiful angels waiting in heaven. That's what keeps us going on.

ON GRIEF & SORROW From THE LETTER By Richard Paul Evans

*When David was alone, he slowly approached the stone monument. He glanced at its inscription. **Our Little Angel.** He knelt down on one knee before it. In a serene voice he said, "I've got to tell you something, honey. I am letting you go. I once thought that to release the pain was a type of betrayal. I now know the opposite is true—that the greatest gift I can give to you is to free you from the burden of my grief. If life is so precious that I mourned the loss of yours, how wrong to throw away mine. I wonder if the loss of my life has caused you the same pain that the loss of yours caused me." He stopped, glanced up to the angel, and then dropped his head again. "I know how much you loved your mother. I promise you that I will not close my heart to her again." He looked around the cemetery, & the glare of the yard forced him to squint. "That's all I wanted to say." He closed his eyes for a moment, then rose & walked home.*

FROM THE TCF NEWSLETTER OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY, JUNE 2004.

Now, a word about chocolate:

**Exercise and dieting are dirty words.
Every time I say them,
I wash my mouth out with chocolate!**

**If you are a bereaved parent and/or would like more information about
Lamentations, please e-mail:**

dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu

Please visit our website:

<http://www.cumberlandcollege.edu/lamentations/joininginmemory.html>