



“None of our lives can be judged by our darkest moments.”

Into the Light Mass at St. Anthony Shrine
for Those Affected by Suicide
September 8, 2018

In recognition of September as Suicide Prevention Month, and in loving memory of all who have died by suicide, Fr. Frank Sevola, ofm, celebrated the fourth annual “Into the Light Mass” on Saturday, September 8 at St. Anthony Shrine in Boston.

The Shrine’s Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents sponsored the Mass and reception immediately following.

People who wanted to remember a loved one lost to suicide wrote their names on “In Loving Memory” cards on their way into the Mass. In addition, names of children of Emmaus Ministry parents were entered onto cards.

Oscar Zapata, father of Pablo and an Emmaus Parent Companion, used the Emmaus Ministry prayer bowl to present the cards during the Offertory. The prayer bowl remained on the altar in a special place for the rest of the Mass.

Before going into the church, participants lit their own “Into the Light” votive candles, then placed them on a table in front of altar. After the Mass participants took their candles home.

“One thing we learn from the death of Jesus is that when an innocent person dies tragically and much too young, God is close at hand taking the innocent immediately

In keeping with the “Into the Light” focus, the Arch Street Band began the Mass with “Christ Be Our Light” as the processional. Throughout the Mass, the upbeat music provided by the Arch Street Band inspired all to “pray twice” by singing loudly with enthusiasm.

The first reading of the Mass from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 35: 4-7) seemed to speak directly to those who have been affected by suicide: “Be strong. Fear not.” The phrase “Fear not” or “Be not afraid” is the command most often repeated in Scripture--more than 100 times.

Fr. Frank’s homily was well received by everyone there, but particularly poignant for those whose loved ones have died by suicide. One grieving mother said,

“You don’t often hear homilies like that.” She appreciated Fr. Frank’s honest, compassionate, and hopeful approach to suicide.

Fr. Frank began his homily by asking us to picture ourselves during a storm resulting in the loss of electricity and how it is such a shock when the power goes

off. Suddenly, everything is plunged into darkness. “This sudden death of the ones we love is like a blackout,” he said.

“One minute the sun was shining, the next minute, it is dark as night. Without the slightest warning or the slightest chance to prepare, we are plunged into an impenetrable darkness. In no time, the world is turned upside down. Nothing can prepare us for this or save us from its devastating effects.”

“We have the tendency to say, ‘It’s the will of God.’ Let me be perfectly clear...God never wanted this to happen! There is only one thing we can do. Just as when a blackout occurs, we rush for a light, any light, even the light of a small candle, so now we must rush to the only light that can penetrate this darkness... the light of Christ.”

“The people we love and celebrate today were vibrant people who brought light to the world. However, every once in awhile, darkness takes over the light for a brief moment. But the darkness never triumphs. Our faith tells us that the light of the resurrection always conquers the darkness.”

“As Christians,” he said, “we believe that Jesus won our salvation for us by his passion, death, and resurrection... But before the resurrection came the passion and death.”

“One thing we learn from the death of Jesus is that when an innocent person dies tragically and much too young, God is close at hand taking the innocent immediately home.”

“Sisters and brothers, if nothing else, that is a very important thing for us to hold onto right now. You see, sisters and brothers, God never lets darkness triumph.

None of our lives can be judged on the darkest moments. No, the light always prevails. The only conclusion a Christian can draw is that our loved ones now live with God.”

“Sometime it can feel like God has abandoned us. No matter how hard we try or how hard we pray, we just can’t seem to find God.”

“None of our lives can be judged on our darkest moments.”

“In our gospel today (Mark 7: 31-37), we hear about finding God... Jesus opens the ears of the deaf man and suddenly he can hear. Imagine how that must have been for the man.

Suddenly he could hear the noise of the crowd; he could hear the sweet voices and fun screams of children. He could hear the comforting words of a friend. He could hear the magical sound of birds in the air, crickets on the ground and people in the market.”

“Yes, he could hear all of that, but most importantly and perhaps most miraculously, he could hear the voice of Jesus—and in that voice, the deaf man, who could now hear, found God. He found God and so did everyone else in the crowd that day because *they were open to God’s immediate presence.*”

“Sometimes when God seems the furthest away, God is actually closer than we can imagine. All we have to do is listen to the voice of Jesus in the people closest to us.”

After the Mass people joined in fellowship at a reception. It was good opportunity to share experiences with others who have experienced similar pain.

This event was sponsored by The Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents, which serves the spiritual needs of parents whose precious children of any age have died by any cause, no matter how long ago. In partnership with St. Anthony Shrine, its spiritual home, and the Archdiocese of Boston, it offers One-Hour, One-Day, and Weekend Spiritual Retreats throughout the year at various locations. See <http://www.emfgp.org> for more information. Or call Diane at 617-542-8057