



Diocese of Madison

Catholic Herald

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Madison to offer retreat for grieving parents

On February 1, 2023

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MADISON — Losing a child is one of life's most tragic and difficult experiences, leaving parents with deep and horrific grief that can test and challenge the faith and spirituality of a mother and father.

The parents' life is changed, drastically and dramatically affecting them forever.

But there is hope and healing, support and comfort for both mothers and fathers through the Emmaus Retreat for Grieving Parents.

The first Emmaus Retreat for Grieving Parents, which was held in the Diocese of Madison and hosted at Our Lady of the Assumption in Beloit in May of 2022, served 25 men and women participants who had suffered the loss of a child.

A second one-day spiritual Emmaus Retreat for Grieving Parents in the Diocese of Madison will be held at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, 602 Everglade Dr., Madison, on Saturday, March 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The retreat is open to anyone of any faith who has lost a child of any age, at any time, by any means.

Spirit and purpose

The spirit and purpose of the Emmaus Retreat are for parents to examine and discern where their spirituality and faith, which may have been shaken or questioned as a result of their loss, now rests, and to return to a place of hope and a sense of wholeness.

As Jesus walked with the two disciples and comforted them as they struggled with their grief on the road to Emmaus after His crucifixion, retreat participants are invited and encouraged to ask Jesus to be with them on their journey of grief.

While there is no stated cost for the retreat, a free-will offering is appreciated.

The Emmaus Retreat is not a conference or a workshop or even a support group, but rather an opportunity to examine how the grieving process has affected the spirit, the spirituality, and the faith of grieving parents.

With a deeper understanding of the Catholic Church's teaching surrounding dying, death, and loss, parents can find comfort and peace.

However, the retreat is open to parents of all faith denominations.

The one-day retreat format includes prayer, Scripture, personal witness presentations, music, and time for personal reflection.

The opportunity to attend Mass and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available.

Participation in individual sessions is optional for those attending.

Both lunch and dinner will be provided.

True to its name, one of the Emmaus Retreat sessions will invite participants to "walk with one another" on their grief journey.

More information

Facilitators for the retreat will be Tom and Beverly Hartberg with Msgr. Larry Bakke, parochial administrator of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Madison, presenting the reflection.

Fr. Bart Timmerman, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, will offer Mass and Reconciliation.

Erik Gyr, parish pastoral minister, is the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish liaison.

Tom and Beverly, who have lost two children, attended the May 2022 retreat and found the support and comfort afforded the participants inspired and encouraged them to become involved in bringing the same peace, hope, and comfort to others.

Register early as registration is limited.

For additional information or to register for the retreat, contact Diane Monaghan at emfgp.org or call Erik Gyr at St. Thomas Aquinas at 608-833-2600.

If you have questions, contact Beverly Hartberg at 608-845-7897.

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