



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EMMAUS MINISTRY FOR GRIEVING PARENTS AND RED BIRD MINISTRIES?

The Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parent (Emmaus) and Red Bird Ministries (Red Bird) are very different in Mission, Focus, Programs, Proposed Diocesan Structure, and Cost. The critical difference is Mission.

MISSION. Both Emmaus and Redbird are Catholic ministries that minister to grieving parents whose children of any age have died by any cause.

According to its website, Redbird's mission is to *"Systematically guide couples and individuals through the complexity and trauma of child loss and to protect the individual, the marriage, and other relationships for a spectrum of issues that can compound and lead to dysfunction."*

Emmaus seeks only to be a conduit of the Holy Spirit to impart whatever gifts He wants to impart, in whatever way He wants to impart them using this ministry as one of His instruments. Every parent's grief is "complicated." Emmaus coordinators state upfront that they are not experts in grief therapy, and they are not trained in any type of mental health counseling or therapy.

The Emmaus Ministry is pastoral only. Its mission is to *(1) Serve the **spiritual** needs of grieving parents whose children of any age have died by any cause through spiritual retreats; and (2) Help dioceses, parishes and parents introduce and maintain the ministry for grieving parents in their local areas.*

FOCUS. Redbird focuses on the psychological, emotional, relational, spiritual, and communal complexities of grieving parents. It segments parents according to the cause of death.

Emmaus focuses on the **spirituality of the parents' grieving process only**. This is because Emmaus believes focusing on the rich teachings of the Catholic Church on death and the promise of eternal life provide parents with the true peace, comfort, and hope that they need most. Once they know and believe where their children are right now, they can continue their grief journey. Emmaus does not segment parents because this can result in the parent focusing on the cause of the death, rather than eternal life. As a side benefit, parents do support each other and many psychological, emotional, and relational issues are addressed at retreats.

PROGRAMS. Redbird offers in-person and virtual support groups, workshops, retreats, and an online community, which includes support groups, private communities, video grief courses,

grief resources, and virtual date nights. Redbird has been supporting grieving parents since 2020.

Emmaus offers in-person and virtual Half-Hour, One-Hour, One-Day, and Weekend Spiritual Retreats. It also offers Virtual Monthly Midweek Gatherings, Weekly Saturday Morning Remote Retreats, Monthly *In Loving Memory* Remembrances and cards, Holiday Spiritual Reflection Emails, and a Compassion Outreach Program for Newly-Bereaved Parents. In addition, locations may offer their own spiritual support grief programs, usually monthly. Emmaus has been ministering to grieving parents since 2009.

DIOCESAN STRUCTURE. As of this writing, Redbird requires implementation of diocesan chapters, certification of people working in the chapter, and ongoing fees to access its licensed materials.

Emmaus requires (1) One designated diocesan person to oversee scheduling, promoting, and (possibly) organizing its first Emmaus retreats. (2) Grieving parents who have been to previous Emmaus retreats willing to serve on the Emmaus Retreat Team. Together, they offer at least one One-Day Retreat per year, ideally in each vicariate.

Emmaus requires no certification or licenses. Emmaus asks for a donation of \$20 for its *Emmaus Ministry Retreat Team Guidebook* containing everything needed for offering Emmaus Retreats, including digital templates. For initial retreats, Emmaus Coordinators mentor you—and travel to your location at no cost to your diocese or parish (thanks to our donors and several very generous grant awards)—to lead your first retreats.

COST. Redbird requires certification and licensing for use of its materials. As of this writing, the costs are \$299/year for Diocesan Chapter Advocates; \$150/year for Parish Flock Leaders; and \$49/year for Mentor Couples. Access to all of its materials costs \$9.99/month for parents.

Emmaus will mentor your retreat teams and travel to you (no matter where) to lead your first in-person Emmaus retreats at no cost to you--as many times as you need. We are able to do this because of our generous donors and several generous grant awards. Other than weekend retreats, parents do not pay to come to Emmaus retreats unless the diocese or parish requests a registration fee. Usually, parents are asked to make an optional free-will offering. There are no costs to access virtual retreats.

SUMMARY. Both Emmaus and Redbird are Catholic programs that minister to parents whose children have died. Redbird Ministries offers an extensive array of grief therapy programs and materials addressing all areas of grief, including psychological, emotional, relational, communal, and spiritual issues. It requires an infrastructure of leaders and ongoing annual fees for various levels of training and licensed materials. Emmaus Ministry is pastoral, focusing on the spiritual needs of grieving parents only. It requires no infrastructure, licensing, or ongoing costs. It does require the purchase of its Retreat Team Guidebook (\$20). Emmaus Parent Retreat Leaders will travel to your location as many times as you need—at no cost—to mentor your team and lead your first spiritual retreats. Local parents then continue the retreats, helped by the diocese (mainly through promotion), while Emmaus provides continuing support through its various follow-up and virtual programs.