

FUNERAL MINISTRY TEAMS

Visiting the Home – Sensitivity

Preparation

- Have the basic information about the person who died and if possible their relationships (husband, wife, partner, son, daughter etc.)
- Be clear on the purpose of the visit – to express the sympathy of the parish community and help with preparing the liturgy.
- Know your boundaries – no need to talk about the circumstances or to compare stories. It's not a competition for the saddest story or the most unusual death.
- You have no obligation to fix things.

Arrival

- State your business at the door and wait to be invited in.
- 'I am here to express the sympathy of the parish community and to offer you help as you prepare for the funeral of ...'.
- Offer practical information on the details of the church ceremonies and the possible prayer services in the home or at the funeral home
- Give them a framework for the ceremonies and offer options – there is nothing cast in concrete.
- Give them leaflets on music, suggestions for scripture readings/prayers and reference to the helpful website – www.litmus.dublindiocese.ie
- Rituals such as Sprinkling water, burning incense, putting on a pall, placing Christian symbols on the coffin etc. when done with dignity speak more than words can
- Kick for touch when 'outside the box' suggestions are presented which may be incorporated later
- Allow for tears and don't compare deaths – each one is unique - it may undermine the sense of confidentiality.
- Don't stay all night/day – give people space. You are a stranger no matter how welcome.
- Take away a list of relevant names for the liturgy to pass on to the celebrant.
- If there is time, offer to drop back when the family members have had a chance to work on liturgy.
- 'I can leave all things with you and call again tomorrow when you have had time to think'.

Reflection

- Write down your thoughts and concerns after the visit.
- Share the information monthly/bi-monthly with the support group.
- Sign up for a period – one year – almost like a contract – then review.