

# Single Parent Networker

**Ascension, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit,  
Corpus Christi, St. Anne, St. Mary, St. Joseph,  
Christ the King, and Spirit of Life**

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## Raising A Child Alone - By Death

Becoming a single parent due to the death of a spouse and co-parent has special challenges for both the parent and child. Not only are you dealing with your own grief and assisting your child(ren) in dealing with their grief, but you are also being forced to adjust to being the only parent. This is one time when it is perfectly acceptable to feel like screaming, "Life just is not fair!" It certainly isn't.

First and foremost, dealing with the death of the spouse and co-parent should be your top priority. However, you and your child(ren) will deal with that pain in different ways and on different time schedules. There are a few things you can do to keep the channels of communication open and to share the grieving process with your child(ren).

- Discuss your child's views of death. Let him/her talk without attempting to change their views. Try to understand what they believe and if possible, why they believe it.
- Share your views of death. This is not a "right or wrong" discussion, but rather a discussion of different perspectives.
- Be sure your child does not feel guilt – survivor's guilt or otherwise.

- Emphasize the love that the deceased parent had for the child. Stress that the deceased parent was aware of the child's love for them.

- Be both a parent and a person – share the grieving process with your child. Cry together; remember together. Don't try to keep a "stiff upper lip" in front of your child. They need to know that it is normal to grieve.

- Allow the child the rituals they need to obtain closure. All children are very different. If they express an interest in viewing the body, allow them to do so. If they want to attend the funeral but are uncertain of the graveside service, do not force the issue. Do not attempt to tell them "what is best" or that they will feel better if... Even though we, as adults, believe that we know what is best, children generally know what they can handle and what they cannot. Keeping them from attending a service they wish to attend or forcing them to attend one they do not wish to attend will only make the process more painful.

- Maintain normal routines and rules. It is all too easy to give in to a grieving child when it comes to bedtimes and basic routines/rules; however, you are only setting yourself up for

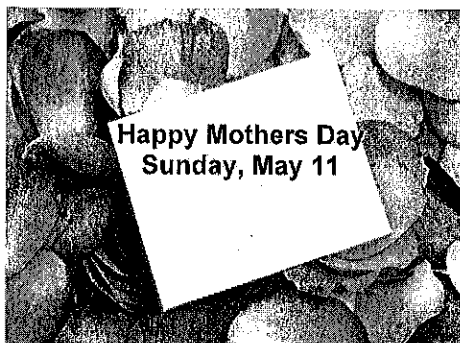
issues that will arise. Many of the typical tactics used in divorce and abandonment surface during this time in the child's attempt to manipulate the situation to their advantage. "My dad/mom would have let me...", "If only dad/mom were here...", and even then anger-inspired "I wish that mom/dad hasn't been the one to die..." will become the words you dread to hear. Don't take anything personally, because it isn't meant that way. Think about the problems that adults have dealing with their emotions and then compound that by 1,000 – you now have an approximation of the difficulty that your child(ren) is having in dealing with the aftermath of death. Remember this when dealing with the situations that will arise.

In some cases, children will develop a fascination (or a bit of a morbid curiosity) with death and dying. If the parent was the victim of a particular disease, they will research it and perhaps ask questions about the possibility of the disease being contracted by other family members. If the parent was in an accident or the victim of violent crime, the child(ren) may become interested in crime statistics or fascinated by violent television shows or movies. They may become fascinated with the process of death and particular interest in their own death, these

are usually just a way of them working through the process of acceptance and/or understanding. Be sure to make yourself available for conversation at any time they need you with your priority being on listening! In any case, if the child appears to be obsessed, maintains unusual interests, or develops a fascination with their own mortality, counseling may be indicated. You know your child best. However, remember that you are in a stressful and painful situation, too. The danger level that you may have set in your mind for your child may actually be much lower than you anticipate due to the fact that your own emotional state is out of focus. If family members or close friends become concerned about your child and you don't see the issue, then set aside your perceptions and trust them. It is much better to ask for help and not need it than to need it and realize it too late.

Above all, keep the lines of communication open! It is incredibly important that you and your child talk on a regular basis and that your child knows that you are available to him/her whenever needed. If there is a tension between the two of you, make sure there is another family member or a close friend who is available to your child. Do not take offense that your child is more comfortable talking to them rather than you. Instead be happy that they are talking to someone rather than bottling it all up inside. The greater good for the child is what is the most important.

Used with permission, Parker, Cynthia  
"Raising a Child Alone - By Death",  
BellaOnline.com



If you have a mom, there is nowhere you are likely to go where a prayer has not already been.

- Robert Brault

A mother understands what a child does not say.

- Author Unknown



## Cinco de Mayo

May 5<sup>th</sup> is a date of great importance for the Mexican and Chicano communities. It marks the victory of the Mexican Army over the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. It is a symbol of Mexican pride and unity and includes great festivities.

Although the Mexican army was eventually defeated, the "Batalla de Puebla" came to represent a symbol of Mexican unity and patriotism.

In the United States, the "Batalla de Puebla" came to be known as simply "5 de Mayo" and unfortunately, many people wrongly equate it with Mexican Independence which was on September 16, 1810. Cinco de Mayo is celebrated on a much larger scale here in the United States than it is in Mexico. People of Mexican descent in the United States celebrate this significant day by having parades, mariachi music, dancing and other types of festive activities.



## Parenting Pointers

570. May 2: May 5-11 is Screen Free Week. Talk with your family about whether you'd be willing to take the Pledge. If not for a week, try a day. Secret weapon: Tell your child it would make a great Mother's Day gift.

571. May 9: "Come to Christ, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God." (1 Peter 2:4) Sometimes one of our children may feel rejected or left out. Perhaps they are socially awkward, visually unattractive, or handicapped in some way. Share a time you felt rejected with your child.

572. May 16: "You need to water those plants." "Your skin looks dry - why don't you try some moisturizer." As your kids grow into adults, your role needs to change too. Unless it's a life or death situation, only give advice when asked. Try to be a listener and encourager, instead of a criticizer. (from Mark Merrill's Family Minute)

573. May 23: Parental words that sustain and heal: "It's normal." "I'm proud of you." Look for an opportunity to say something like this today.

574. May 30: The end of the school year can bring lots of banquets and ceremonies. For high achievers this is reward time but not all kids get honored. Perhaps make some silly home awards like, *Best finisher of other people's food*; *Fastest to answer the door or phone*; *One who remembers where Mom put her keys...*

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[www.SusanVogt.net](http://www.SusanVogt.net)



## Celebrate *Mary* The Mother of Jesus

People of God from May cultures and generations have shown a special devotion to Mary. Mary's "yes" to doing God's will is a good example for all believers. The Church focuses on her during two months of the year, May and October. In May, we experience the new life of spring and celebrate Mary as the Mother of the Life-Giving Savior and the Mother of God's people, the Church.

### Ideas For Families To Celebrate Mary In May

- ♥ Create a space in a prominent place in your home where a favorite statue or picture of Mary can be placed for the month of May. Family members can take turns putting fresh flowers or other "treasures" around the shrine daily. Gather together nightly for prayer.
- ♥ Set aside some family time to read one of the stories in Luke's gospel that mentions Mary. Then talk about the kind of person she was when she lived and how she models Christian values for today.
- ♥ Pray the rosary together as a family. Instead of saying all five decades of the rosary, some families say a decade of the rosary prior to the evening meal or as a part of night prayer.
- ♥ On Mother's Day, give a special 'thank you' to God for the example and intercession of His mother/our mother. Show our gratitude by extending some act of kindness to a mother in your neighborhood or church community.

Plant a flower box or planter for your deck or patio in honor of Mary. In October, cut and place these flowers at a special place dedicated to Mary in your home.

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## Love Letter to My Children

My mother died from Leukemia in the days when there was no effective long term treatment. She was ill for only 2 years. My father took her to the finest hospitals, but it was not meant to be. She died at the young age of 37, on a sunny June morning just as the sun was rising and my brothers were leaving to deliver the Sunday paper. My father arrived home from the hospital to tell me that my mother had received a wonderful gift, she was with God.

For many years even after becoming a mother myself three times, I felt great sadness on Mothers Day. The thought that I had missed out on so many things with my mother clouded my thinking in remembering how fortunate I was to have 3 wonderful children of my own to cherish on that day.

One year while I was contemplating Mothers Day and how it would once again play out I decided I needed to think about changing that "stinkin thinkin" and begin to look at Mother Day differently. That was the year I wrote my first "love letter" to my children. In that letter I shared my pain at losing my own mother at such an early age and always wishing I would have had something concrete to hold onto and look back on. I explained that this letter to them was my way of always knowing that they would have a part of me with them. I told them how very proud I was of each of them and how much joy they had brought to me. I also apologized for any times when I wasn't the mother I should have been. Years later while helping one of my sons move I spotted the letter in his things. I knew the value that it held.

Writing that letter changed me, it freed me to accept what had happened so many years ago and to allow God to open my heart to all the wonderful graces he had bestowed upon me and not continue to allow the past to dictate the future.

If this Mothers Day finds you alone due to a divorce or death perhaps the death of your own mother, think about how you may take that pain and turn it into something positive. Invite God into your sorrow, he wants to share your trials. Allow him to walk with you.



## From a Working Mother

My Loving Creator,

You know how really tired I am. On days when things are really frantic, I consider how you made the world in seven days -- and then I try to remember that you aren't asking me to re-create that feat.

Please help me to remain a loving mother to my children and to keep some balance in my life. Help me to remember that you are with me in every packed hour of every day. As I am finishing a work project or planning dinner or buying the kids shoes, (sometimes all at the same time) help me to remember your loving care for me and let me sometimes stop for a moment and just wallow in that.

Most of all, my caring Father, let me remember to ask for help and to rely on you for strength when I have none left; for patience when mine is so often gone; and for the wisdom and endless well of compassion and love I need in my job as mother.

Used with permission from Creighton University's Online Ministries, 'Prayers By and For Mothers' <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html>

### **Beginning Experience:**

Separated, Divorced, Widow  
Tara at 701-426-8303

Level I—Charity Lutheran

Level II—Faith Lutheran

Level III—Good Shepherd

Each level is 10 weeks. All levels run concurrently. See website below.

### **Children's Beginning Experience:**

Susan at 1-701-258-3152

Free Preschool for 3&4 year olds for eligible families, contact **BECEP** at 701-323-4400 for school year.

**Caring for Children Program**—health coverage to uninsured children. 1-800-342-4718. [www.ndcaring.org](http://www.ndcaring.org)

### **Single File Newsletter**

For information

[www.bismarcksinglefile.com](http://www.bismarcksinglefile.com)

### **Parish Information:**

Cathedral—222-2259

St. Anne—223-1549

Ascension—223-3606

St. Mary- 223-5562

Corpus Christi—255-4600

Spirit of Life-663-1660

Christ the King -663-8842

St. Joseph -663-9562

### **Office of Family Ministry—Diocese of Bismarck—**

Joyce McDowall 701-204-7209

Toll Free 1-877-405-7435

[www.bismarckdiocese.com](http://www.bismarckdiocese.com)

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**If you would like your name removed from the mailing list, please call your parish coordinator**

**Parents Forever-Education for Families in divorce Transition**, call NDSU Parent Resource Center, 667-3342 or 667-3340

### **WEBSITES THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST:**

- [www.celebratesimply.com](http://www.celebratesimply.com)
- [www.bereavementmag.com](http://www.bereavementmag.com)
- [www.beginningexperienceofwesternnorthdakota.org](http://www.beginningexperienceofwesternnorthdakota.org)
- [www.vibrantfaithathome.org](http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org)
- [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

[www.fambooks.com/moms.htm](http://www.fambooks.com/moms.htm)

[www.singleparents.about.com](http://www.singleparents.about.com)

[www.bridgetobenefits.org](http://www.bridgetobenefits.org)