

## **Fr. Dan Brandt's Corner...**

It was great to see so many familiar faces last month at the south-side blue Mass at St. Cajetan and at the north-side comedy club (The Laugh Factory), for our sold-out "Funniest Cop in Chicago" competition. These happy occasions helped to balance some of the grief we as a police family experienced in previous weeks, burying several of our own members and spouses in an untimely manner.

Also wonderful to see were the hundreds and hundreds who gathered at Gold Star Memorial and Park to pay tribute to the 574 officers taken from us in the performance of their duties over the years.



We remember these fallen heroes at our regular **police Mass**. In addition to our usual 11:00 a.m. Police Mass every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at Mercy Home, next month we'll also celebrate a special Thanksgiving Mass on Thursday, 26 NOV, at 10:00 a.m. (Please note the adjustment in time for the holiday.) No matter your faith tradition, you are **most** welcome to attend. On-duty worshippers, you'll be out as usual in less than 30 minutes.

I received an email recently from a detective in Area North, mentioning his need to find something compassionate (but not trite) to say to parents who have lost children to violence, accidents, suicides, etc. In answering him, I realized such advice might help others in the department, as well.

Here are some helpful things you **can** say / offer:

- + I am very sorry for your loss.
- + Is there a family pastor or familiar member of the clergy I can contact for you?

And here are some things that are **not** helpful and should be avoided:

- Don't cry.
- It was his / her time.
- It must have been for the best.
- He / she is in a better place.
- I would *die* if I were you.
- God never gives us more than we can handle.
- Don't worry, things will be OK.
- Time is a great healer.
- Hang in there.
- God must have needed another angel in heaven.
- I know how you're feeling. (The only time you might use this is if you have personally experienced what they are going through and are comfortable sharing with them.)

You'll notice the "Don't say" list is a lot longer than the "Do say" list. That's because when in doubt, saying nothing at all will prove more beneficial than making a trite, overused or insensitive statement.

Your silent presence speaks volumes. Trust me, in my years of public ministry I have learned this the hard way...on a few occasions wanting to place my foot in someone's mouth, even my own!

When leaving, if you're comfortable with it, something like this might be appreciated: "Again, I'm very sorry. I will keep your family in my prayers." (If you use this one, then please be sure to make good on it in your personal prayers!)

While perhaps you're not ministers, and you have a job to do in short time with limited resources, it never hurts to show some compassion when dealing with grieving families. For more tips, please visit the "Resources and Outreaches" page on our website.

God bless you and your most noble work!

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