



Sisters of the Holy Family

Ministry . . . Reflecting Our Charism in Our Work

“And I saw the river which must be passed in order to reach the Kingdom of Heaven, and the name of that river was Suffering. And I saw the boat which takes so many souls across that river, and the name of that boat was Love!”

Mother Dolores, SHF
Foundress



Sister Margarite Apostolo

Because of health issues, I retired from full-time work a few years ago. However, I found out that did not mean that I had to retire from ministry. Now I do bereavement work and give classes to help people deal with grief.

My last full-time job was as a Chaplain at Seton Medical Center. Every day I was visiting people and helping them cope with emotional and spiritual issues. When I would meet with someone in the hospital, typically they would tell me their story. I didn't experience it as if I were giving to them. After all, they were doing most of the talking and sharing their life with me. I felt as if I received as much as I gave. It was a moving experience to share so intimately with people.

Many of the patients with whom I met recovered but, of course, some did not. Although my work was not all about working with the dying, that was part of the work and I

saw the strain on families as they dealt with the death of a loved one. I worked with other Seton Chaplains to develop a series of classes to help people cope with grief.

When I moved back to the Motherhouse, I knew that the bereavement classes were something I could continue on my own, in my own time, if it was needed. Very soon after I moved in, someone asked me to give a class and I have been doing it ever since. The participants come from neighboring parishes and frequently have been referred by someone who took the class previously. The class meets once a week for eight weeks and we start a new session every few months. The classes are part support group, part education and part workshop.

Grief is a natural process which all of us, at one time or another, will experience. But few people know what to expect when grief comes into their lives. There are both physical and emotional aspects of grieving. It is a process with natural progressions, it is not a permanent condition. My goal is to help people accept their loss and learn to live again.