

Pastoral Care Cross Guidelines
The Archdiocese of Baltimore
Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Blessed by Cardinal Keeler at the BYCC in November of 2000, parishes and schools ask for the cross most often when a young person dies or is struggling with a life threatening situation. The cross is placed in where young people have access to it and it becomes the focal point of prayers. Because it is hollow with a glass front and back, young people are often invited to write prayers or notes and place them in the cross. The cross has become a powerful tool to help young people cope in times of grieving and crisis.

The cross was constructed by a young man, Stephen St. Amant, who was a student at Maryland Institute of Art at the time. It stands about 5' high including the base, which is 24 inches square. The base is on rollers and houses a light that illuminates the cross in darker spaces. The blonde wood and glass come together for a very modern, clean look and the very top panel of the cross is removable for easy access for those notes and prayers that young people place in the cross.

In times of grief and crisis, most of us find some consolation in doing some activity. The Pastoral Care Response Cross gives young people an activity, which helps them focus on their sense of loss and/or the disruption in their lives. Of course the act of placing your prayers and notes in this beautifully crafted symbol of the resurrection of Jesus is a humbling reminder that all our healing and hope have Jesus as source.

The Pastoral Care Cross is permanently stored at the Catholic Center for the Archdiocese of Baltimore under the management of the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (DYYAM).

Guidelines:

- ❑ To request the Pastoral Care Response Cross in a time of loss or crisis, call the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at 410.547.5372. To request the Archdiocesan Response Team contact D. Scott Miller at 410.547.5371.
- ❑ At that time, please indicate the situation on site for our records. AS the cross often is used by sites that are overwhelmed, the DYYAM will often arrange to have the cross brought to the site. The return of the cross to the Catholic Center, however, is the responsibility of the borrower.
- ❑ No later than one week after the cross arrives, it must be returned to the DYYAM.
- ❑ The cross and stand were created to be utilized as a set. Please do not use the cross and prop it up on any other object. This could cause damage or warp the base.
- ❑ Always read the notes and messages left within the cross. **ESPECIALLY AFTER A SUICIDE.** The messages left inside may contain a cry for help or the desire to join a deceased friend or loved one.
- ❑ Please report any problems with the Pastoral Care Cross immediately, as well as any improvements you would suggest.

Pastoral Care Cross Safe Room Ideas:

Location: Recommended placement in a room adjoining either the repast or the church

Staffing: Room should be supervised at all times by at least two adults (preferably not affiliated/affected by the loss) who can assist children in:

- * Writing letters or poems,
- * Decorating a page of a scrapbook,
- * Having conversation and more importantly LISTENING to children as they draw and write messages,
- * Placing messages into the cross as it should not have a great deal of weight placed on it;
- * Extracting and reading the messages placed in the cross for content (It MUST be examined by an adult for appropriate content that will not disturb the family)
- * Optional: placing the message into a decorated box to be presented to the family as “Children’s prayers and messages for _____”

Supplies: (The following would be ideal – markers and paper are minimal)

- * Colored paper cut into halves
- * Markers
- * Stickers (Assorted)
- * Radio with CD’s of soft music
- * Decorated Box for messages upon completion

Message Book

Have young people sign a book placed next to the Pastoral Care Cross on a small table with a brief message for the family or prayer. It may be wise to have the book disassembled so that multiple pages can be written on at a time preventing bottleneck. Presented to the family after funeral (after it is examined by an adult for appropriate content that will not disturb the family).

Memory Scrapbook - (Very popular with Teenagers)

Scrapbook can be placed next to the Pastoral Care Cross in the back of church during a funeral.

Supply Preparation: Multiple pages of Construction or Scrapbooking paper with holes pre-cut into them. A long ribbon to bind the pages upon return of the pages.

Distribution: Hand out the pages to young people who show interest in participating, “best friends” are not the only ones who often need to mourn the loss and are hit hard by the death of a child or young person. (for elementary school – each member of their class should probably receive a page). Remind the young people that they can bring the pages to class, wake, or funeral services.