

Insightful book explores how to say goodbye

Praying Our Goodbyes, by Joyce Rupp, OSM, Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, Ind., 1989); 179 pages, \$5.95.

By Father Benedict A. Ehmann
Guest contributor

If my wallet allowed, I'd like to give a copy of this book to everyone who reads this review.

In six short chapters, Sister Rupp probes thoroughly and lucidly our experiences of loss, while skillfully showing the therapy which can convert them into gain.

Chapter 3 is especially luminous, showing the many goodbyes in Jesus'

life and how they were transformed into redeeming grace. He was not spared the ache of having to let go. He never used his divinity to anesthetize his humanity from pain. Fully human he felt the misery of goodbye.

When he left Nazareth's humble security, itinerant and always on the go, "he had no place to lay his head." Yet he never refused deep friendships, in spite of the pain of many departures. St. Paul put it graphically in his *Philippians 2*: "He emptied himself, accepting even death, death on a cross."

The Last Supper is seen as the greatest farewell meal in history, with

its so poignant goodbye speech (John 13-17). However, this praying of Jesus' goodbye is but one side of his paschal mystery. The other is the resurrection, "the greatest hello that anyone has ever proclaimed."

Sister Rupp takes pains, however, to caution us about the darkness and desolation which often recur even after our goodbyes. When the grieving continues and we lose the desire to pray, she assures us "it does not mean that we have lost our faith or that we are being unfaithful to God or that God has forsaken us." This is but a turn in the road; we simply must wait in faith

and find God around the turn.

Although a brief review cannot compress this book's many excellences, take these two as good examples:

- The frequent times when we need to let go and say goodbye — to a certain person, to disappointed expectations, to dreams and goals, to old injuries of the heart, to our old securities, to health and strength;

- the actions that help to cope with grief and goodbye, such as sharing a meal with a friend; looking at photo albums; letter-writing to reaffirm our relationships; searching Scriptures, especially the Psalms, for texts which pray goodbye.

Two unusual features make Sister Rupp's book very useful:

- Each chapter closes with five questions to stimulate reflection and discussion, deepening the reader's perception;

- the last third of the book offers a series of 24 structured prayers to serve as support in many situations of anxiety and distress. Each one is a substantial prayer service, with an appropriate image, Bible reading, reflection and petition.

All kinds of goodbyes are accommodated in these masterful prayer settings.

We are in great debt to Sister Rupp for the riches of this sensitive but often neglected area of Christian experience.

Father Ehmann is "semi-retired" and lives in residence at Holy Apostles Church in Rochester.

Diocesan appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments, effective June 30, 1992, unless otherwise noted.

Father David L. Bonin to spiritual director for Cursillo, concurrent with his present position as pastor of St. Mary's of the Lake Church in Watkins Glen, effective immediately.

Father James E. Boyle, from pastor of St. Mary's Church in Elmira, to pastor of St. John of Rochester Church in Fairport.

Father Donald J. Curtiss to chaplain at Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary, concurrent with his

present position as chaplain at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital, effective immediately.

Father Daniel F. Holland, from pastor (currently on sabbatical) of St. Patrick's Church in Elmira, to pastor of St. Theodore's Church in Rochester.

Father Thomas F. Nellis, from pastor (currently on sabbatical) of St. John the Evangelist Church in Clyde and St. Patrick's Church in Savannah, to pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Webster.

Father Leo J. Reinhardt, from parochial vicar of St. Stephen's Church in Geneva, to pastor of St.

John the Evangelist Church in Clyde and St. Patrick's Church in Savannah.

Father Robert J. Schrader, from diocesan director of Priests' Personnel (currently on sabbatical), to pastor of St. Mary's Church in Auburn.

Father Eugene P. Sweeney, from pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls, to pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Elmira.

Father Robert T. Werth, from pastor of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester, to pastor of St. Augustine/St. Monica/Our Lady of Good Counsel churches in Rochester.



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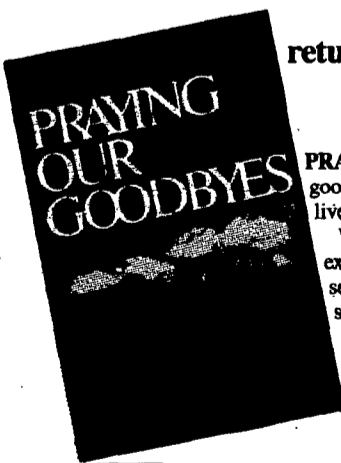


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PRAYING OUR GOODBYES — We all have our own unique goodbyes—times when we lose someone or something that has given our lives meaning and value.

With the touch of a poet, Joyce Rupp has written a book about "these experiences of leaving behind and moving on, the stories of union and separation that are written in all our hearts." *Praying Our Goodbyes*, she says, is about the "spirituality of change."

It is a book for anyone who has experienced loss, whether it be a job change, the end of a friendship, the death of a loved one, a financial struggle, a mid-life crisis or an extended illness. It is designed to help the reader recognize, ritualize, reflect on and re-orient themselves — to help heal the hurts caused by goodbyes and the anxieties encountered by change. —AVE MARIA PRESS



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