

# Catholic Caregivers

*'Caregiving is pro-life!'*

## Saying Good-bye to the Family Home

In the unfolding seasons that are a part of caregiving and care-receiving, many families find themselves saying good-bye to the family home.

It's a special time in the life of a family. It's a time to remember what has been and what is passing away. There will be no more Thanksgiving meals in that dining room, with the parents and grandparents sitting elbow to elbow at the table with its extra leaves, and the kids giggling at their own, fun table. There will be no more placing the Christmas tree (a big one when Mom gets to pick it, a small one when it's Dad's turn) in that corner.

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Sometimes the move can be bittersweet. Mom is leaving—and that's difficult—but she's moving into a lovely smaller home or apartment. She's bought a condominium. She's going to a retirement community that better suits her needs now. She's heading for a warmer climate.

Sometimes sorrow can dominate the move. Dad isn't able to take care of the house anymore. Taxes, insurance, and maintenance on the house take too big a bite from a fixed income. The neighborhood has changed; it's no longer safe.

Mom has passed away and Dad really isn't able to live alone. For the widow or widower, saying good-bye to the family home can feel like having to say good-bye again to that loving spouse. This was their house, from the time they first saw it on the market until long after the paperwork for the mortgage was burned. They were partners here. It's very sad to leave.

If your family is getting ready to say good-bye to the family home, here are a few things you can do:

--*Let your parent choose what comes with her and what goes.* What is junk to you may have a lot of sentimental value to her.

--*Lend a hand.* Dad may need your help sorting and packing; moving takes a lot of work, and there's

always a lot of worry involved. (And you may finally have to do something with those boxes of your stuff you've been storing in his basement or attic.)

--*Preserve the memories.* Take some pictures of the inside and the outside of the house. Of course the family has taken hundreds of snapshots there for years and years, but maybe not of each bedroom, the family room, the basement. This house is part of your family's history. Better still, walk around with a video camera. Let the family join you for a running commentary: "Here's where we kept track of how tall each child was." "This is the window that was broken twice in the same week by the same baseball." "Dad built this bedroom onto the back of the house after Susan was born."

--*Come together for one last meal to say good-bye.* Sometimes families make it a final Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter dinner, or a meal for a parent's birthday. It's an opportunity to share memories, to laugh and to cry.

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--*Don't forget that a house is only a structure.* It's the people and the love they've shared that have made this place so special. Those people, that love, aren't being left behind; they're simply moving to a new address. Remember, the home didn't make the family; the family made the home. And the family is still here.

### A Prayer

*Thank you, my dearest Jesus, for all the precious memories. There have been so many happy times and some sad ones. You have been so good to my family. Continue to watch over us. Amen.*

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**Vol. 6, No. 10**