

*Order for the Naming and
Commendation of an Infant
Who Died before Birth*



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

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Order for the Naming and
Commemoration of an Infant
Who Died before Birth

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Introduction

1. It often happens among the people of God that a child dies prior to their birth due to miscarriage, an accident, or for some other reason. If an infant is alive, he/she should be baptized if this is possible (CIC, Can. 871). However, when the baby is dead, baptism is not administered, since the sacraments of the Church are for the living.

2. In times of death and grief the Christian turns to the Lord for consolation and strength. In the *Order of Christian Funerals* the Church provides liturgical resources to assist the parents and other family members with their grief and help them deepen their faith and trust in the Lord. Accordingly, the *Order of Christian Funerals* contains adapted forms of the Vigil, the Funeral Liturgy and the Rite of Committal, which can be used for both baptized and unbaptized children and infants. In addition, a brief Rite of Final Commendation for an Infant is provided for use in the hospital, funeral home, or at the cemetery when the body is present.

The *Book of Blessings* contains an *Order for the Blessing of Parents After a Miscarriage* which is also found in a simplified form in *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. This rite is intended to assist the parents in their grief and console them with the blessing of God. It may be used by a priest or a deacon, and also by a layperson, who follows the rite and prayers designated for a lay minister.

These rites are the primary liturgical sources which the minister will use in the pastoral care of the parents and family of an infant who has died before birth.

3. However, these rites and prayers do not always respond to the need of many parents to name their child and commend it in faith to the loving mercy of God, when it is not possible to celebrate the funeral liturgy or the rite of committal. The following rite is provided for use as a means of responding to these parental needs.

4. *The Order for the Naming and Commendation of an Infant Who Died Before Birth* seeks to set the death of an infant within the context of faith, and to unite the grieving parents and family members to the merciful God, whose love was revealed to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The rite is not intended to offer certainty to the parents, but to provide them with a celebration based on Christian faith and hope.

5. This rite is primarily used when the baptism of an infant is neither possible or permitted (see no. 1. above), and when it is not possible or desirable to celebrate the funeral liturgy or rite of committal. It may be used in addition to or in place of the rites mentioned in no. 2., above.

Nos. 13, 19, and 20, may be used by a minister who is called to baptize an infant, but finds the infant is already dead and no members of the family are present.

6. If the body of the infant is not present during the service, some other reminder of the child may be present during the celebration.

7. The term "minister" is used in this rite to refer to priests, deacons, or lay ministers. When a particular prayer is reserved to a priest or deacon, the words "priest" or "deacon" are used. The rites and prayers proper to a lay person are so indicated in the rite.

Introductory Rites

8. When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung.

The minister says:

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

All make the sign of the cross and reply:

Amen.

9. A minister who is a priest or deacon greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from Sacred Scripture.

**May the peace and consolation of the Lord
be with you.**

And all reply:

And with your Spirit.

10. A lay minister greets those present in the following words:

**Let us praise the God of peace and
consolation. Blessed be God Forever.**

R. Blessed be God for ever.

11. In the following or similar words, which should always be adapted to suit the particular situation, the minister prepares the parents and others present for the celebration.

**For those who trust in God,
in the pain of sorrow there is consolation
in the face of despair there is hope,
in the midst of death there is life.**

**N. and N., as we mourn the death of your
child we place ourselves in the hands of God
and ask for strength, for healing and for
love.**

Naming of the Child

12. The minister then asks the parents to name their child.

What name do you give your child?

The parents respond:

N.

13. If the body of the infant is present, the minister may then trace the sign of the cross on or over the body of the infant, and, if appropriate, may also invite the parents and others present to do the same. The minister first says:

**In the name of the Christian community
I sign N. (or this child) with the sign of
the cross [and I invite his/her parents (and
those who are present) to do the same]**

Reading of the Word of God

14. A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of Sacred Scripture.

**Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of
the Gospel of Mark:**

Mark 10: 13-16

People were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked the people. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to the disciples, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, who ever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced the children and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Or:

Isaiah 49: 8-13

In a time of favor I answer you, on the day of salvation I help you.

Romans 8: 18-27

In hope we were saved.

Romans 8: 26-31

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Colossians 1: 9-12

We have been praying for you unceasingly.

15. As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.

16. If desired, the minister may bless the parents of the infant using the following blessing taken from the *Book of Blessing: Order for the Blessing of Parents After a Miscarriage*.

The minister invites all to pray using these or similar words:

Let us pray to God who throughout the ages has heard the cries of parents.

Blessing of the Body

17. Using the following words, the minister blesses the body of the deceased child.

**Trusting in Jesus, the loving Savior,
who gathered children into his arms
and blessed the little ones,
we now commend this infant [N.]
to that same embrace of love,
in the hope that he/she will rejoice
and be happy in the presence of Christ.**

Then all join the minister saying:

**May the angels and saints lead him/her
to the place of light and peace
where one day
we will be brought together again.**

The minister continues:

**Lord Jesus,
lovingly receive this little child;
bless him/her
and take him/her to your Father.
We ask this in hope, and we pray:**

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

After a brief pause for silent prayer, a minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched over the parents; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

Compassionate God,
soothe the hearts of N. and N.,
and grant that through the prayers of Mary,
who grieved by the cross of her Son,
you may enlighten their faith,
give hope to their hearts,
and peace to their lives.

Lord,
grant mercy to all the members of this family
and comfort them with the hope
that one day we will all live with you,
with your Son Jesus Christ,
and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Or:

Lord,
God of all creation
we bless and thank you for your tender care.
Receive this life you created in love
and comfort your people
in their time of loss
with the assurance of your unfailing mercy.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

18. Using the following or similar words, the minister invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer.

When Jesus gathered his disciples around him, he taught them to pray:

All say:

Our Father...

Prayer of Commendation

19. The minister then says the following prayer.

**Tender Shepherd of the flock,
N. now lies cradled in your love.
Soothe the hearts of his/her parents
and bring peace to their lives.
Enlighten their faith
and give hope to their hearts.**

**Loving God,
grant mercy to your entire family
in this time of suffering.
Comfort us with the hope that this child [N].
lives with you and your Son, Jesus Christ,
and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.**

R. Amen.

Blessing

20. Using one of the following blessings, the minister blesses those present.

[A] A minister who is a priest or deacon says:

✓ **May the God of all consolation
bring you comfort and peace,
in the name of the Father, + and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

R. Amen.

[B] A lay minister invokes God's blessing and signs himself or herself with the sign of the cross, saying:

**May the God of all consolation
bring us comfort and peace,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

R. Amen.

21. The celebration may end with a suitable song.