



Unseen, yet Loved

GRIEVING MISCARRIAGE

“Each child has a place in God’s heart from all eternity; once he or she is conceived, the Creator’s eternal dream comes true.”¹

Losing a child – at any stage of their life – is deeply painful.

They are uniquely a part of you, your own flesh and blood, a person co-created with your spouse - a new life given by God. Their very existence and presence, at every stage of life, is a sign of the life-giving love of the conjugal bond between you and your spouse. Every child – every new life – is a gift from God, a truly unique gift intended to live for all eternity.

How are we to understand, or even comprehend, the loss of our child? How are we to come to terms with the loss of a life so vulnerable, so new, so small; a person – our own – who we did not even have the chance to hold, kiss, caress, nurture or even see? A life so worth loving – from the first moment we knew they existed

– can be over before we even had the chance to know them. And amidst all our pain from this loss, how are we to understand why God – Who gifted us with this precious life – could allow this little one of ours to be gone so suddenly, so soon? How are we to ever move beyond this heartache, the loss of our precious child?

Grieving Together - as Parents

Grieving is an important part of facing any type of loss. It is the process of allowing ourselves to accept the reality of the loss and walk through the pain and the heartache to a place where life can be lived again – when the memories of our child are no longer deeply painful.² As parents, when we lose a child, it is important that we allow ourselves to grieve both individually and together as a couple. Your child is a unique combination of both you and your spouse, and it is important that you allow this time of grieving to include, but not be limited to, a time of shared grief. It is important for each spouse individually, as a father, and as a mother, to grieve this deep loss along with and beside one another.

“Though husbands and wives may grieve differently, we must believe that our spouse is grieving without making him or her express it the same way we do. Fathers are often overlooked... Just because men and women grieve differently does not mean that either spouse is not in grief. It is also important that grieving parents allow their children to express grief, so that the family can share the loss together. People in grief can have good days and bad days; it can be an emotional roller coaster. Try not to figure out a timetable for them to be better. Much grief comes in waves, triggered by due date or death date anniversaries, holidays, and special songs.”³

“Though it is agony for those of us who remain, the truth is our children are better off with the Lord. They have been spared the pain, suffering, and sin in this world. Though our plans were awesome for this child, God had a better plan. ‘We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose’ (Rom 8:28).”⁴

ALL OUR CHILDREN HAVE A PURPOSE – BOTH IN LIFE AND IN DEATH:

“There were purposes for the child’s life, as short as it was, and there are purposes in his or her death. Furthermore, this is not all there is. He or she will continue to live for all eternity, and God has a plan for that phase of his or her life as well.”⁵

JOURNALING, AS A COUPLE OR INDIVIDUALLY, CAN BE ESPECIALLY HEALING:

“Journaling helps a couple individually or together to record their thoughts, feelings, and any meaningful poems, sentiments, or psalms that helped them walk through their grief. It may be hard to imagine, but the pain will fade, and with it the memories of specific ways the Lord brought comfort and strength. It is such a blessing to be able to reread a journal and get a clear sense of God’s guiding hand.”⁶ The grace we receive from being able to reflect upon a deeply sad time, overflowing with God’s gracious mercy, is both humbling and special for we see how God carried us through the darkness of grief and brought us to a place of great healing.

It is important to remember that grief is not the final station of your journey. “Bitter weeping, however necessary to deal with the emotions God gave us, is not an end. It is the means to an end. Grief is necessary, and our children deserve the dignity of our mourning, the recognition of their infinite worth, the respect that is manifest in our grieving their passing. Yet the Lord doesn’t want us to live in the dwelling place of affliction forever.”⁷



Healing

The importance of healing from loss and in response to grief is paramount. Healing can only take place once we allow ourselves to go through the grieving process. One mother speaks of her experience: "Healing is a much slower process than I thought it would be. Once people are loved, they are missed. The wound left behind is never fully healed. We never fall completely out of love with anyone. When we love, we give of ourselves sacrificially; what is given can be responded to in kind but never returned."⁸

Christ, too, has borne our sufferings in His own agony: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Is 53:4) Through the Incarnation, Jesus has entered into the pain of our suffering to the same extent by which He bore our sins.⁹ Our Blessed Mother, Mary, lost a son too; she knows how it feels to lose a child.

God wants to walk with us in our time of grief and throughout our healing from this loss, but we need to also be open to grieving before healing can take place. No matter how hard the grief may be, it is always worth it, because healing is always possible. "...time does not heal. But God does use time to help lessen the intensity of the pain. Unless we deal with our grief, time will not do anything more than dull the pain. To be healthy spouses and parents we will have to grieve. And, in time, God can heal the ache in our hearts."¹⁰

Church Teaching on Miscarriage

Many parents wonder about the fate of their miscarried or stillborn unbaptised children. Do not worry that you were unable to baptise your baby before he or she died. "As the Church teaches, our God is good and merciful. He loves our babies even more than we are able, and the best thing we can do is to place all our trust and hope in Him. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: 'God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments' (CCC, no. 1257)."¹³

"As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them," (Mk 10:14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4) allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism."¹⁴

*"In light and in shadow, in sunshine and in rain...
in heartbreak...
in sorrow...
in pain...
God is good. Blessed be God forever."*¹⁵

The Gift of Surrendering

"EVERYTHING IS YOURS"

Everything in life is God's. Our relationships, marriages, children, life - it is all a gift from our Heavenly Father, first and foremost. We are entrusted with our children – individual and unique gifts from God – and we are called to love them! And we do....from the very first moment we know we are pregnant...we love them! And that is all God asks of us.

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
— JOHN 10:10

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God."
— 1 JOHN 4:7

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."
— 1 JOHN 4:18

We can find comfort in the knowledge that our child will exist for all eternity, regardless of how brief his or her earthly life. And we will meet them in Heaven.

A story from a grieving mother:

"Still trying to decipher what to do next...I was at a healing retreat, and in the confessional Fr. F. told me to simply consecrate my fertility to Jesus. 'In about an hour,' he said, 'we will be at Holy Mass. At the moment of the Consecration, hand your fertility over to Jesus. Picture it as a precious gift you can hold in your hand. Place it gently on the paten with the bread that will become His body. Trust Him. Give it to Him. Completely. Then let it go. He'll make the rest clear.'"¹¹

"...my baby did have life, the Life we all long for and hope to share in one day."¹²

*"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."*
— ISAIAH 42:16, 43:1-3



MEMORIAL TO UNBORN CHILDREN

A place of remembrance and healing. Located at the intersection of Lawns 5, 6 and 7 (between Courtney and Sheehy Aves) in the Catholic section of Rookwood Cemetery, Hawthorne Ave, Rookwood, NSW. Various locations also around Australia.

HOW THE CHURCH HELPS US TO GRIEVE AND HEAL AFTER LOSING A CHILD

- Ask your priest to offer a Mass for your child or to pray a special prayer from the Order for the Blessing of Parents After a Miscarriage.
- Our beloved children are part of the Communion of Saints:
 - Ask your child to pray for you, your spouse and your family.
“Our children are powerful intercessors in heaven!”¹⁶
- Spend time in Eucharistic Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Here Jesus is present – sit in His Presence, speak with Him about your child, pray to Him and ask for healing. Through the intimacy of prayer, we discover that “*the darkness of death is confronted with a more intense work of love*”.^{17,18}

MOMENTS OF GRIEVING AND REMEMBERING

- Giving your child a name
 - “A name affirms the uniqueness and dignity of the child you lost. It is a small but very real gift you can give to the baby you were not able to see or embrace.”¹⁹
- Memorial Mass
 - Having a Mass offered in memory of the child you lost.
- Mementos
 - Make a list of healing moments – gifts, sympathy cards, phone calls, meaningful prayers, caring words, acts of kindness, shoulders to cry on. All of these can help you to recall God’s presence amidst this time of grief and recall that for which you are grateful.



IMAGE: THE MEMORIAL TO UNBORN CHILDREN IN ROOKWOOD CEMETERY, NSW

A Reflection

My Lord, the baby is dead!

Why, my Lord—dare I ask why? He will not hear the whisper of the wind or see the beauty of his parents’ face—he will not see the beauty of Your creation or the flame of a sunrise. Why, my Lord?

“Why, My child—do you ask ‘why’? Well, I will tell you why.

“You see, the child lives. Instead of the wind he hears the sound of angels singing before My throne. Instead of the beauty that passes he sees everlasting Beauty—he sees My face. He was created and lived a short time so the image of his parents imprinted on his face may stand before Me as their personal intercessor. He knows secrets of heaven unknown to men on earth. He laughs with a special joy that only the innocent possess. My ways are not the ways of man. I create for My Kingdom and each creature fills a place in that Kingdom that could not be filled by another. He was created for My joy and his parents’ merits. He has never seen pain or sin. He has never felt hunger or pain. I breathed a soul into a seed, made it grow and called it forth.”

I am humbled before you, my Lord, for questioning Your wisdom, goodness, and love. I speak as a fool—forgive me. I acknowledge Your sovereign rights over life and death. I thank You for the life that began for so short a time to enjoy so long an Eternity.

- MOTHER M. ANGELICA

RECOMMENDED READING

Karen Edmisten, *After Miscarriage: A Catholic Woman’s Companion to Healing and Hope*.

Life is Changed, Not Ended: Bereavement & Grief in the Catholic Tradition brochure, Life, Marriage & Family Centre, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

Kimberly Hahn, “Chapter Ten: Miscarriage & Stillbirth”, *Life-Giving Love: Embracing God’s Beautiful Design for Marriage*.

Kathe Wunnenberg, *Grieving the Child I Never Knew: A Devotional for Comfort in the Loss of Your Unborn or Newly Born Child*.



¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), 168. ² Cf., *Life is Changed, Not Ended*, Life, Marriage & Family Centre, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, 2015. ³ Kimberly Hahn, *Life-Giving Love: Embracing God’s Beautiful Design for Marriage* (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger Press, 2001), 242-243. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 244. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 245. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 250-251. ⁷ Karen Edmisten, *After Miscarriage: A Catholic Woman’s Companion to Healing & Hope* (Cincinnati: Servant Books, 2012), 4. ⁸ *Ibid.*, 41. ⁹ Cf. Hahn, 248. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 269. ¹¹ Edmisten, 105-106. ¹² *Ibid.*, 117. ¹³ *Ibid.*, 24. ¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1261. ¹⁵ Edmisten, 12-13. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21. ¹⁷ Pope Francis, General Audience 17 June 2015, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/general-audience-on-mourning-the-loss-of-a-loved-one> ¹⁸ Cf., *Life is Changed, Not Ended*. ¹⁹ Edmisten, 58.