



My Lord, the baby is dead!

Why, my Lord—dare I ask why? It will not hear the whisper of the wind or see the beauty of its parents' face—it 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.

Your child, born or unborn, big or small, whatever his or her age, is a child of God.

Her size or level of development in no way diminishes her humanity.

His life was lived with purpose, for the greater glory of God.

Please come to the Church for healing and hope. Pray. Receive the Sacraments. Depend on your parish community for love and support in this time of pain.



Miscarriage

By Maureen Otremba, M.A. and Jim Otremba, M.Div, M.S., LICSW

The Rite of Marriage includes three direct questions posed to the couple. The third of these is “Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” While couples answer “yes” to this question every day, it probably doesn’t occur to most that perhaps children may not be a part of the future. The Rite almost implies that children will be a part of the couple’s lives. Yet 15% of all recognized pregnancies end in miscarriage, and it is estimated that as many as 50% of all pregnancies result in miscarriage, since most miscarriages happen before a woman even knows that she is pregnant.

The Catholic Church rightly insists on the sanctity of life from the moment of conception, but we need to do a better job of ritualizing the loss of life when a miscarriage does occur. Couples often bear this grief in silence and confusion. The world seems to be telling them that a life was not lost, that a tragedy has not happened. And yet, parents know otherwise. Their hearts and minds cope with grief and sorrow that is no less real for going unaffirmed.

When a couple experiences the pain of miscarriage people may try to be helpful and supportive, but often their words are more of an obstacle than an aid to healing. Here is some wisdom that has helped others through this silent sorrow:

It is right to grieve. People may say things like, “It’s just as well; there was probably something wrong with the baby,” or “Well, at least you know you can get pregnant.” Such comments can lead us to think that there’s really no reason to feel sad. But remember: a life has been lost, along with the many dreams you had for this baby. Take the time to grieve and be gentle with yourself as you are grieving. Treat yourself like a best friend and give yourself permission to be good to yourself during this difficult time.

Surround yourself with people who understand, and avoid people who don’t. Even your best friend may not know how to support you. If necessary, avoid her or him for a while, and seek out others who have been through this sad experience and can validate your feelings. Give yourself permission to share with some people and not with others.

Name your baby. This simple yet profound action is a concrete way of affirming that this life was and is a unique person. It can even be helpful to put the child’s name on a Christmas ornament, a stone in your garden, or some other place where you will see it.

Pray even when words won’t come. God is indescribably near to the broken-hearted, although it may seem like God is very far away. Speak words from your heart, even if they are words of anger, rage, disappointment, frustration or hopelessness. God has heard it all (even from His beloved Son) and is big enough to handle your grief. You are carrying a special sorrow and are united to the sufferings of Christ in a unique way.

Men and women grieve miscarriage differently. Some women find the site “Hannah’s Prayer Ministries” particularly helpful as they grieve miscarriage. Some local Catholic hospitals have a support group for those experiencing pregnancy loss. Some spouses may want to be alone. While others may want to meet with a spiritual director or friend to share the burden. Some spouses discover that exercise can be healing, while other spouses find that just puttering around can be helpful. Find out what works for you and be gentle with yourself.

Ask your local parish to begin a yearly Mass for Hope and Healing. We began this in our parish seven years ago as a way to give voice to our grief and to pray for comfort and strength. Each year, this liturgy attracts people from the area, some who experienced pregnancy loss years, even decades, ago.

You are not alone: ask for help if you need it. We are all members of the Body of Christ and are never alone in our pain. God desires to bring healing in our lives and frequently uses others as instruments of healing. If your grief turns to depression or anxiety, seek professional help. Call your local parish for a referral to a therapist or Catholic Charities.