

A Quick, Catholic Guide to Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss

If suspecting:	If early:	If stillborn:	If born in danger:	For help:	Where to bury:	What to offer:	How to honor:
<p>Consult your doctor. Have your husband with you.</p> <p>Your doctor will evaluate your hormone levels with blood labs and your baby's size and heartbeat by ultrasound. Ask for pictures.</p> <p><i>If decisions must be made or mother's life is also at risk, seek the guidance of a good and holy priest.</i></p>	<p>At home, collect what you can - this means clots. Place a strainer in the toilet to catch tissue. Use gauze to rinse out blood. Find the membranous sac and break it open. Give conditional baptism in a bowl while moving the water with your finger. Parents can and should do this. Place in saline solution and preserve in a refrigerator until burial.</p>	<p>If able, take time to say good-bye and talk to your baby that has died. Prepare for labor, arrange other childcare, and decide the funeral details.</p> <p>Baptism is only for the living, but you should be prepared to conditionally baptize if there is any reasonable doubt as to whether the moment of death has already occurred.</p>	<p>Baptize your child immediately - <i>before</i> being transferred into intensive care where ready access is limited. One person must say the <u>exact</u> words while pouring water on the baby's forehead at the <u>same</u> time. (see back)</p> <p>Call a priest and request the sacrament of Confirmation. These are two indelible marks on the soul for eternity.</p>	<p>Name your baby.</p> <p>This will give him/her a formal place in your family's prayers and actions. You can guess the gender, act on a hunch or a hope, honor the day's Saint, or give your baby a neutral name. Say your baby's name when talking with others.</p>	<p>A Catholic hospital might have special burial arrangements to consider. If you have chosen a funeral home, the hospital will call for your baby to respectfully be picked up. After 20 weeks a fetal death certificate is often required. There might be additional paperwork to release your baby's body for private burial.</p>	<p>Requiem Mass, Mass of Christian Burial, Mass of Angels, Funeral Rite for Infant, Vigil for the Deceased or a graveside committal. Talk to your priest.</p> <p><i>"The local ordinary can permit children whom the parents intended to baptize but who died before baptism to be given ecclesiastical funerals."</i> Code of Canon Law 1183.2</p>	<p>Keep a journal and write letters to your child, dedicate a box for mementos, or consider a visible tribute for your home or to wear. Talk about your child and use his/her name. Do something special on the anniversary of death – visit the cemetery, attend Mass, sing a song, light a candle, thank God for his/her short life.</p>
<p>Pray for a miracle. Seek the sacraments. Ask for the intercessory prayers of the saints and your loved ones.</p> <p>Tell God you have the explicit desire and intention to baptize this child.</p>	<p>If in a hospital, ask your child's remains be returned to you. Tell every medical professional you meet. Stand your ground: this will be a rare request. All tissues will be reviewed in a lab. Sign paperwork needed to release for burial. A funeral director can help if resistance.</p>	<p>For the labor: How will you be induced? Do you want to hold your baby? What will comfort you as you wait? Who else do you want there to say hello and goodbye? How would you like pictures taken? What are the burial arrangements? Inform the medical staff.</p>	<p>Implore God for a miracle. Seek intercession from the saints and your loved ones. Talk to his/her guardian angel.</p> <p>Ask God to guide you and to give your family special graces for this journey.</p>	<p>Rely on your husband. Accept help from others and balance your need for privacy and support. Designate someone to provide updates and answer questions. Be in contact with your priest, doctor, spiritual advisor, funeral director and other mothers who have miscarried.</p>	<p>To purchase a plot, ask your parish's cemetery manager. For burial details, be clear about fetal remains or infant. Build a wood box, buy one at a craft store, or secure a casket. A funeral home might provide one at no charge. Baby can share a headstone with parents or siblings.</p>	<p>If there are no remains, consider asking for a Memorial Mass and the Churching ritual, or a <i>Blessing of Parents After Miscarriage</i>. Talk to your priest. The dioceses of St. Louis and Wichita have an <i>Order for the Naming and Commendation of an Infant Who Died before Birth</i> accessible online.</p>	<p>Truly take the time to grieve and acknowledge your loss. Unite your pain to Christ's passion and Mary's sorrows.</p> <p>Offer suffering to God and it can become 'an instrument of salvation,' a path to holiness, that helps us reach Heaven.</p>
<p>It can take days or weeks for the miscarriage to complete naturally. A doctor might suggest a medicine or a procedure to assist. Be <u>absolutely</u> certain of death before taking action.</p>	<p>Early miscarriage can feel like labor with contractions or like a menstrual cycle. Go to the hospital if you have excessive bleeding and are changing your pad more than once an hour.</p>	<p>Know that your baby's body will be extremely fragile and deteriorate quickly. A special blanket to hold him/her intact or a Cuddle Cot might be available to allow for longer preservation.</p>	<p>Ask to hold your baby. Be near your baby. Talk to your baby. If possible, allow skin-to-skin contact. Let your baby know your love while in your care. Ask someone to take a picture of you together.</p>	<p>Take care of yourself. Rest. Pray for your health and healing. Be aware that infection can occur if the miscarriage is incomplete.</p>	<p>Some parishes have a place in the cemetery for the unborn and have monthly Masses said for their souls. If not, look for somewhere that does. (Ex: Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wisconsin)</p>	<p>If a home burial, perhaps your priest can be present. If not, the father should lead the prayers in this setting. Bless the ground with holy water.</p>	<p>Ask your baby to intercede for you daily in your family prayers. Have one person say his or her name, and all respond <i>"Pray for us,"</i> or in Latin <i>"Ora pro nobis."</i></p>
<p>The loss of a child is a terrible suffering. Know that you are not alone and have done nothing wrong. Miscarriages are unfortunately common and often offer no explanation.</p>	<p>It is appropriate to prepare your baby for burial yourself at this stage. Take a picture, if possible.</p> <p>If you've been unable to save remains for whatever reason, it is okay: your child is loved. You can still honor your baby and have Mass offered.</p>	<p>Take ALL the time you need to say goodbye to your baby. Do NOT be rushed. Consider keeping a lock of hair, making finger prints and using items you'd like to keep as tangible reminders of your dear child.</p>	<p>Husband: Man up.</p> <p>Your leadership is imperative. Be prepared to make many decisions for your family during this difficult time. Invoke St. Joseph for help.</p> <p>Mother will be emotionally and physically exhausted. Protect her - your bride, the heart of your home.</p>	<p>Know that the pain of losing your child might not fully hit you until weeks later. Seeing pregnant mothers and babies might cause you to cry. This is normal and it's okay to not be around them as you heal.</p> <p>Father will grieve his child, too – likely in a different way.</p>	<p>While consecrated ground is recommended, a home burial can be appropriate - especially when unsure of remains. Treat this area with visible respect. Check with the local health department about regulations and consider what would be done if you relocated.</p>	<p>To have Holy Mass offered, submit your child's name, "special intention," or "for the unborn" along with the monetary stipend to the person who schedules Mass intentions in your parish.</p> <p>To enroll in a Triduum, Novena or Gregorian Mass series, look online or ask a retired priest.</p>	<p>If unbaptized, pray for the repose of your child's soul. Be hopeful, trust in God's goodness, and ask our Blessed Mother to care for your child as her own. Read Philippians 4:6-7, and ask God for the peace of His presence.</p> <p>Your baby has committed no mortal sin, and is happy.</p>

Jesus, I trust in You.

Parents and Emergency Baptism

“An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay.”

Canon Law 867 §2

“An infant shall not be baptized while still enclosed in the mother’s womb, as long as there is probable hope that it can be baptized when born. ... If the fetus was baptized in the mother’s womb, the child shall, when born, be baptized again conditionally.” Code of Canon Law, 1917, para. 589, c. 746

“Care should be taken that every fetus born prematurely, no matter at what stage of pregnancy, be baptized absolutely, if life is certain, but conditionally if life is doubtful.” Code of Canon Law, 1917, para. 590, c. 747

“In case of necessity, any person can baptize provided that he have the intention of doing that which the Church does and provided that he pours water on the candidate’s head while saying: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” CCC, no. 1284

“If the baptism was not administered by the pastor or in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever it is, must inform the pastor of the parish in which it was administered of the conferral of the baptism, so that he records the baptism ...” Canon Law 878

Unbaptized Babies and the Church

“God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but He himself is not bound by His sacraments.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), no. 1257

“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,’ allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism.” CCC, no. 1261

To add to that, there is also an understanding of “baptism by desire” (CCC no. 1259-60) in which it is taught that people who die while unbaptized are supposed to have been baptized by their “explicit desire” to receive this sacrament. This may also apply to children whose parents intended to baptize their child after birth.

What to have in case of emergency:

- Your priest’s phone number
- A plan for burial
- Holy water (or water)
- Be in a state of grace
- The words of (conditional) Baptism:

**(“If you are living...)
I baptize you in the
(pour water) Name of the Father,
(pour water) and of the Son,
(pour water) and of the Holy Ghost.”**

A sample of the support available:

Catholic Miscarriage Support - practical and spiritual:

<http://www.catholicmiscarriagesupport.com/>

A comprehensive book for during and after:

[Grieving Together: A Couple’s Journey through Miscarriage](#) by Laura and Franco David Fanucci

Help for managing a prenatal diagnosis:

Be Not Afraid <http://www.benotafraid.net/>

For finding and burying your baby:

Heaven’s Gain <https://heavensgain.org/>

Offering their gift of photography and remembrance:

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

<https://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/>

An informative article by an experienced mother:

“Baptizing Miscarried and Stillborn Babies: The Other Unborn.” Anonymous. Posted February 19, 2020.

<https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/>

To request or gift a Holy Mass intention:

Seraphic Mass Assoc: <https://mymassrequest.org/>

Resource for priests:

Archdiocese of Philadelphia. “Providing Pastoral Support When a Child Dies Shortly Before or Just After Birth.”

<http://www.odwphiladelphia.org/sacred-liturgy/>

In honor of Eli Jonathan (1-8-20)
and all whose smiles are known by God alone.

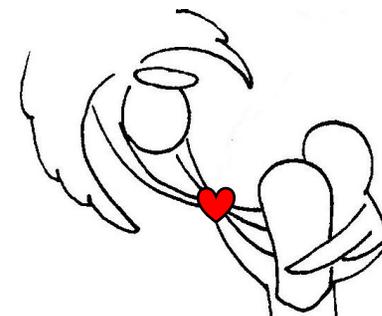
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Please copy and distribute to parishes, hospitals, young adults, newlyweds, parents and priests. Searchable online.
Being pro-life means celebrating and grieving life in all its forms.

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Be Confident. Have Peace.

Caring for your child with dignity and navigating the logistics of a miscarriage, according to the Church.



“Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.”
Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2319

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.” Jeremiah 1:5