

# Early Infant Loss, a time to grieve

Fargo Diocese Respect Life Office ~ Life Issues Series ~ Number 2

## Early Infant Loss, a time to grieve...

Oftentimes, families who have experienced the loss of an unborn child to miscarriage or stillbirth do not have the opportunity to grieve their loss with their faith community. Yet the Church desires to provide a means for mourning and support through either the Funeral Rites of the Church, Blessing of a Couple after Miscarriage, or a Naming Ceremony.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church assures parents that while a child who died in utero cannot be baptized, their child is in the hands of God:

*“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 towards 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.”*

Parents are encouraged to contact their parish priest who can provide them with the Funeral Rites of the Church and assist with arrangements for the remains of their child to be buried.

The Respect Life Office hosts a **Mass for God’s Children** annually in order to provide a spiritual means of recognizing the dignity of the unborn child who has died, and allowing parents and family members the occasion to express sorrow in their loss. The **Mass for God’s Children** schedule can be found at: [www.fargodiocese.org/RespectLife](http://www.fargodiocese.org/RespectLife)

## When a friend or family member experience an early infant loss:

- ◆ Treat the situation as a real death.
- ◆ Create a spiritual bouquet – a bouquet with spiritual intentions.
- ◆ Call or e-mail; let them know you are there.
- ◆ Send a sympathy card, or perhaps a card offering a Mass.
- ◆ Make a meal or send a gift card to a restaurant so they do not have to worry about cooking.
- ◆ Offer to make calls for them to let others know what has happened.
- ◆ Offer to listen, if they want to talk.
- ◆ Remember the anniversary of the baby’s death and when the baby was supposed to



## Mourning the loss of an unborn child...

The loss of a child is a unique experience of mourning. Miscarriage and stillbirth are not something you get over or recover from; it changes you and you will never be the same. During this difficult time, it can be helpful for parents who have lost a child to know they will go through stages of grief:

1. Denial - it may take some time to assimilate what has happened. You may be in disbelief for a period.
2. Anger - you may get angry with yourself, your spouse, or even God.
3. Bargaining or guilt - you may wonder if the situation could have been avoided in some way. You may feel you did something to cause the miscarriage or stillbirth.
4. Depression - deep sadness may even lead to clinical depression.
5. Acceptance - you come to a place where you have peace.

## Helpful resources for parents experiencing an early infant loss:

- ◆ *Finding Hope Ministries* offers support to families who are struggling with the loss of a child. Located in the Fargo area, they provide grief baskets, intercessory prayer and one-on-one support. For more information contact: [findinghopeafterloss@gmail.com](mailto:findinghopeafterloss@gmail.com) or go to: [www.facebook.com/findinghopem](http://www.facebook.com/findinghopem)
- ◆ *Elizabeth Ministry International*. On line resources for burial (caskets), prayer and remembrance items: [www.elizabethministry.com/Miscarriage\\_Stillbirth.htm](http://www.elizabethministry.com/Miscarriage_Stillbirth.htm)
- ◆ *Faces of Loss, Faces of Hope*. Website where people can post their stories of miscarriage, stillbirth and infant loss: <http://facesofloss.com>
- ◆ *Naming Ceremony*. Ritual act to help those who are mourning the loss of a child to express their sorrow: [www.fargodiocese.org/infantloss](http://www.fargodiocese.org/infantloss)
- ◆ *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*. Offers free professional remembrance photography for families experiencing an infant loss as a step in the healing process. To locate a local photographer, go to: [www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/locate\\_photographer/](http://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/locate_photographer/)

*Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.*

*We do know that when it is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2*

Excerpts on this handout taken in part from: *The Infertility Companion for Catholics* by Angelique Ruhi-Lopez and Carmen Santamaria.