



DIOCESE OF LANSING M I C H I G A N

Office of Worship

Prayers and Funeral Rites After Miscarriage or Stillbirth

Many members of the faithful are unaware that, liturgically speaking, situations involving miscarriages (at any gestational age) or stillbirths should be treated the same as those involving other children who die before baptism. There are various prayers and rites available to draw from, and it is important to help the family identify which rites would fit their pastoral needs.

It is important to note that most of these rites can be employed (with appropriate adaptations) even if the body of the infant is not present. In that case, some other suitable reminder of the child may be present during the rites.

Prayers after Death, and Blessing of Parents

The “Prayers after Death” and the other “Related Rites and Prayers” in the *Order of Christian Funerals (OCF)* Part I may be employed in the home or hospital soon after the death of the child, with the wording adapted according to the circumstances. The *OCF* recommends several Scripture readings as well (such as 1 John 3:1–2; Psalm 23; Matthew 11:25–30; and Mark 10:13–16).

In addition, there is an “Order for the Blessing of Parents after a Miscarriage,” found in the *Book of Blessings*, no. 279.

Funeral Rites

In the norms for the Diocese of Lansing, the Diocesan Bishop grants ecclesiastical funeral rites to a child who died before baptism and whose parents, even if non-Catholic, intended to have the child baptized Catholic (cf. Canon 1183, §2). Nevertheless, proper care is to be taken that the doctrine of the necessity of Baptism is not obscured in the minds of the faithful.

A “Vigil for a Deceased Child” can be celebrated with the options for a child who died before baptism (see *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 247–263). The Mass formulary for these funeral

rites (included below) is taken from the Roman Missal. If a funeral Mass is not opportune, a Liturgy of the Word (OCF 295–315) may take place at the parish church or even in the funeral home. Readings for the Liturgy of the Word may be found in the Order of Christian Funerals, Chapter 15, “Funerals for Children Who Died Before Baptism” (cf. Lectionary for Mass, nos. 1023–1026).

If the family chooses not to have a funeral Mass, the “Rite of Committal with Final Commendation” may be used and similarly adapted (see Order of Christian Funerals, nos. 327–336). The Rite of Final Commendation for an Infant starting at *OCF* 337 is particularly appropriate in the case of a stillborn baby or for an infant who dies shortly after birth.

There are also special prayers found in *OCF* Part V – two for “a child who died before baptism” (no. 399, 13 and 14), and one for a miscarried or stillborn child (no. 399, 15). They can be used as the Opening Prayer/Collect in the vigil or in any form of the funeral liturgy.

Other Funeral Liturgy Adaptations

As noted in the *Order of Christian Funerals*, for unbaptized children the sprinkling with holy water, use of a pall, and incensation of the body are omitted.

If the body cannot be present at the funeral, then the reception of the body and final commendation would be omitted, and prayers referencing the presence of the body would not be used.

Questions

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact the Office of Worship.

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In Christ,
Jeremy J. Priest, STL

Chair, Department of Discipleship Formation
Director, Office of Worship
Catholic Diocese of Lansing
228 North Walnut Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1122
Office: 517-342-2476
jpriest@dioceseoflansing.org

THE ROMAN MISSAL

F. For the Funeral of a Child Who Died before Baptism

In funerals of this kind there should ordinarily be a Liturgy of the Word, as described in the Roman Ritual. Nevertheless, if at times the celebration of Mass is judged opportune, the following texts should be used.

In catechesis, however, proper care is to be taken that the doctrine of the necessity of Baptism is not obscured in the minds of the faithful.

Entrance Antiphon [Rev 21:4]

God will wipe every tear from their eyes,
and there shall be no more death
or mourning, crying or pain,
for former things have passed away.

Collect

**Receive the prayers of your faithful, Lord,
and grant that those you allow to be weighed down
by their longing for the child taken from them
may be raised up by faith to hope in your compassion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.**

Or:

**O God, searcher of hearts and most loving consoler,
who know the faith of these parents,
grant that, as they mourn their child,
now departed from this life,
they may be assured
that he (she) has been entrusted to your divine compassion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.**

Prayer over the Offerings

**Graciously accept this offering, O God,
as a sign of our devotion,
so that, trusting in the designs of your providence,
we may be raised up by your gentle and fatherly care.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Preface for the Dead, pp. 622–631.

Communion Antiphon [Is 25:8]

The Lord God will destroy death for ever.
He will wipe away the tears from every cheek.

Prayer after Communion

**Having received the Communion
of your Son's Body and Blood, O Lord,
we ask you faithfully
to comfort amid the sorrows of this life
those whom you have graciously nourished
by these sacred mysteries,
so as to strengthen their hope of life eternal.
Through Christ our Lord.**

LECTIONARY FOR MASS

FUNERALS FOR CHILDREN WHO DIED BEFORE BAPTISM

1023. READING I FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

1.

He will destroy death forever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (25:6a, 7-8)

On this mountain the LORD of hosts
will provide for all peoples.
On this mountain he will destroy
the veil that veils all peoples,
The web that is woven over all nations;
he will destroy death forever.
The Lord GOD will wipe away
the tears from all faces.

The word of the Lord.

2.

It is good to hope in silence for the saving help of the Lord.

A reading from the Book of Lamentations (3:22-26)

The favors of the LORD are not exhausted,
his mercies are not spent;
They are renewed each morning,
so great is his faithfulness.
My portion is the LORD, says my soul;
therefore will I hope in him.

Good is the LORD to one who waits for him,
to the soul that seeks him;
It is good to hope in silence

for the saving help of the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

1024. RESPONSORIAL PSALM (25:4–5ab, 6 and 7b, 17 and 20)

R. (1) To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Your way, O Lord, make known to me;
teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your kindness are from of old.

In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Relieve the troubles of my heart;
bring me out of my distress.

Preserve my life and rescue me;
let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

1025. ALLELUIA VERSE AND VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

1. 2 Corinthians 1:3b–4a

Blessed be the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement,
who encourages us in our every affliction.

2. Revelation 1:5a, 6b

Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead;
glory and kingship be his forever and ever. Amen.

1026. GOSPEL

1.

You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and have revealed them to the childlike.

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (11:25–30)

At that time Jesus answered:

“I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
for although you have hidden these things

from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to the childlike.
Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.
All things have been handed over to me by my Father.
No one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.”

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

2.

Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark (15:33–46)

At noon darkness came over the whole land
until three in the afternoon.
And at three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*”
which is translated,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Some of the bystanders who heard it said,
“Look, he is calling Elijah.”
One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed,
and gave it to him to drink, saying,
“Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.”
Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.
The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.
When the centurion who stood facing him
saw how he breathed his last he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
There were also women looking on from a distance.
Among them were Mary Magdalene,
Mary the mother of the younger James, and of Joses, and Salome.
These women had followed him when he was in Galilee
and ministered to him.
There were also many other women
who had come up with him to Jerusalem.
When it was already evening,
since it was the day of preparation,

the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea,
a distinguished member of the council,
who was himself awaiting the Kingdom of God,
came and courageously went to Pilate
and asked for the Body of Jesus.

Pilate was amazed that he was already dead.

He summoned the centurion
and asked him if Jesus had already died.

And when he learned of it from the centurion,
he gave the Body to Joseph.

Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down,
wrapped him in the linen cloth,
and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.
Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

The Gospel of the Lord.

3.

Behold, your mother.

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (19:25–30)

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother
and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,
and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved
he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son."

Then he said to the disciple,
"Behold, your mother."

And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

After this, aware that everything was now finished,
in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled,
Jesus said, "I thirst."

There was a vessel filled with common wine.

So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop
and put it up to his mouth.

When Jesus had taken the wine, he said,
"It is finished."

And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

The Gospel of the Lord.