

A Funeral Blessing and Thanksgiving

PASTORAL CARE SERVICES



Introduction

Final goodbyes are never easy, especially when there hasn't been a time for 'hello', however, it is another important step we have to take in this journey towards healing.

Today as we gather you will no doubt be experiencing a range of conflicting emotions. You may experience feelings of grief, loss and injustice at the death of your baby.

But you have come to a safe and sacred space where we can mourn together as we say goodbye and complete the tasks of separation.

At times like these, we are challenged by the reality of living in the shadow of the mystery of death. This service is not about providing answers to what has happened, nor to attempt to take away the pain of grief, but to share together in a most significant event in your lives.

We are also here to give thanks for the gift of your baby and the rich though sad experience that is yours.

This service also provides opportunity for family and friends to offer support through their presence, involvement and other expressions of care, while at the same time allowing them to grieve with you.

Sometimes mystery is wrapped in silence and the most compelling and remembered moments of our lives are those of deepest sadness.

Lighting the Candle of Remembrance

We begin this service by lighting this candle in remembrance of a child who is loved and as a reminder that God is our light in the darkness of sorrow.

The candle is lit with the following words:

Loving God, as we gather in memory of this special child,
your mysterious silence and presence touches us.

We hold before you and each other the hopes and dreams that we held,
as we thank you for the gift of this short life.

Words cannot express all that we feel at this time; be with us as we give
expression to the pain of grief shared as we say goodbye.

We ask you to bless this candle. May it signify the love and memory in which
this child is held and be a light of hope for the future.

Amen

Readings for Reflection:

From biblical tradition:

'The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.'

(Isaiah 49:1,15-16)

'The Lord says - Fear not, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by name: you are mine. You are precious in my eyes and I love you.'

(Isaiah 43:1-4)

'The spirit of the Lord God goes out to heal the broken hearted, and to comfort all who mourn.'

(Isaiah 61: 1-2)

In his book 'The Prophet', contemporary spiritual writer - Kahlil Gibran reflects on the paradox of the emotions of joy and sorrow, grief and love.

Then a woman said,

Speak to us of joy and sorrow.

And he answered;

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can this be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potters oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again into your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Gibran K, 'The Prophet' Pub. KNOPF 1923]

Family Reflection

The family may wish to speak and/or a homily may be given. Family and friends may wish to come forward to say goodbye. They may leave flowers, gifts or cards placed around the baby, the casket or on the altar as signs of love.

The Prayers

Loving God, hold us in our loss, hear our prayers for this child who lives beyond our touch yet within your closeness.

Be known to us as we grieve.

In this child we experience love and vulnerability, paradox, tears, anguish and also mystery. We have experienced both a premature ending and a new beginning. This child has lived in our presence and now lives in our memory.

May he/she continue to live in your presence today and every day.

We pray for all who have cared for (name) and (name) and their family, that they will continue to be patient, supportive and understanding.

Be their strength and comfort.

May this family emerge from the pain of grief and incorporate these memories into their lives. May their hurt be tempered by rich memories of their child and of every moment they have shared together.

May they find peace and hope.

Amen

Saying Goodbye

Into God's loving care and compassion, into the arms of God's infinite mercy we commend this precious child.

Welcomed in hope and love and in death given back to the mystery of God's eternal love.

The Committal

'Thus says the Lord who created you:

Do not fear for I have redeemed you:

I have called you by name you are mine.'

Together with one heart, one mind and one spirit,
we entrust this precious child to God.

We now commit this body to be cremated/buried in the ground.

God our beginning and our end, receive in love this child in the true hope of eternal life. May he/she remain cradled in your love for all time.

Amen

Final Blessing

Blessing for a Baby

Go gently on your voyage beloved,

Slip away with the ebb tide.

Rejoice in the new sunrise

May the moon make a path across the sea for you

May the sun provide a welcome

May the earth receive you and the fire cleanse you

As you go from our love into the presence of love's completeness.

Blessing for Parents

May the God who walks beside you reach out and take your hand.

May you hear God's loving voice and feel God's gentle touch.

May God fill you with peace and comfort you in the presence of the Holy Spirit

May every tear you shed, every word you share and every memory you
treasure bring you deeper healing.

In all these ways may the blessing of God hold you close, day by day.

Amen

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