

REFLECTION FOR COUPLES AFTER STILLBIRTH



The trial you are going through was not what you probably expected. Joy has turned to sorrow. You may be feeling as if you are lost and find yourselves alone in your grief.

Losing a child is never easy and losing a child to stillbirth brings its own challenges. Relying on one another for support is important to help you process your pain individually and as a couple. It is a sad truth that losing a child can have a detrimental impact on your relationship with one another. Even so, this does not mean that your relationship is destined to break apart.

Some of the reasons why relationships become more strained and even fall apart is connected to the way that couples communicate with one another, with expectations they have for one another, and the feelings that arise from grief.

Remember that everyone grieves in their own way. Your partner may have different ways of processing their grief than you do. Expecting your partner to feel the same way you do or find comfort in the same things that you do can lead to disagreement and added strain. You should not expect your partner to take the same length of time to grieve that you do. It is helpful to have open discussions to better understand how your partner grieves and what they are feeling.

There is hope after losing a child. Couples are not doomed to remain in grief or in shattered relationships. In fact, many couples report growing closer to one another through the process of grieving for their child.

There are likely other couples in your parish or community that have experienced the loss of a child to stillbirth. You are certainly not alone. While your experience will be unique from theirs it can be helpful to connect with other couples to discuss things that helped them or challenges they faced as they processed their grief.

Remember, the parish has *Behold Your Child* ministers available to assist you and be present to your needs as a couple through this time as well.

Prayer

Christ, our Lord,

Be with us as we travel along the path of loss and sorrow together as a couple.

Grant us abundant grace so that we may be present and open to each other,

Through understanding, patience, and peace.

Help us through this difficult time to grow closer to one another,

And give us hope of a future where our grief has gone away,

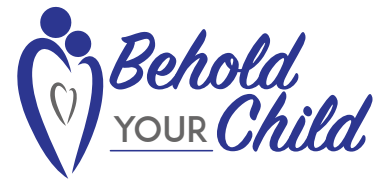
And our memory of our child remains.

In your name,

Amen.



REFLECTION FOR GRANDPARENTS AFTER STILLBIRTH



As grandparents of a child lost to stillbirth your grief may seem two-fold. The grief at the loss of a grandchild but also the grief that comes with seeing your own child suffer the pain of losing their child. Many grandparents feel their main role is to be supportive of their adult-child as they make their way through this loss.

As a parent, you yourself may have experienced stillbirth. Such an experience may be helpful in understanding your adult-child's pain. Your child may find comfort in the things that you found comfort in when you experienced the loss of a child; or they may not. Remember that your child will grieve in a unique way and may not grieve the same way you did. What is important is to be present to them, letting them know you are there for them and that you care.

It is also important that you care for yourself. Caretakers need care as well. If you experienced stillbirth, this may also bring back memories of the grief you experienced years ago. If this is the case, even if it was many years ago, the *Behold Your Child* ministers are available for you too.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with the loss of your grandchild. Know that you are not alone.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

Take time for yourself. Don't ignore your own grief, whether it is new or from years past. God knows your struggle, knows your pain. God's love, compassion, and mercy are ever-present to all of us especially when we openly receive them from him by turning to him for guidance and support.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Be with my family as we face this trial together. As I grieve my grandchild, help me also with the support of my child through this difficult time.

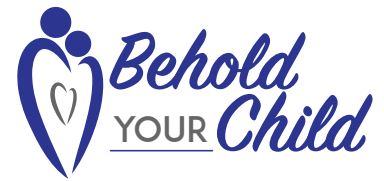
We trust in your love and mercy even if we do not understand why this child is no longer with us. Let us not despair but be reassured by our hope in you. We entrust our grandchild to you and pray you welcome our little grandchild into your loving embrace for eternity.

In your name we pray,

Amen.



REFLECTION FOR OLDER SIBLINGS AFTER STILLBIRTH



The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.

~ Psalm 34:19 ~

There are likely many emotions you have experienced since you first learned of your brother/sister's passing. Those emotions—anger, sadness, fear, hopelessness, emptiness, guilt, numbness, peace—are all normal. You may experience some of these or none of them.

It is never easy to say goodbye to someone. It is even harder when it is someone so young like your baby sister/brother, especially when you may have been so happy with anticipation to meet them and you never got that chance.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and maybe even years as you continue to live with the loss of your brother/sister. Know that you are not alone. Not only is God watching over you but you also have a community around you ready to listen, to be there with you in this difficult time.

Do you have someone you can talk to about this? In addition to family members, there are *Behold Your Child* ministers at your parish available to listen and be there for you. Jesus reminds us of the need for one another. Though he was the Son of God, the first thing he did when he started his ministry was to gather people around him to walk together and have support from one another. Even as Jesus was going through his trial and the way of the cross the women and John were there with him through the pain.

Just as the disciples may have felt hopeless as Christ lay in the tomb—not knowing what was to come next, burdened by their grief of the loss of Jesus—you may be feeling hopeless. But remember that Jesus rose from the dead and gave us hope of salvation and revealed the love God has for us. There is joy to be found even after losing a loved one. There is hope to be found in the resurrection.

Take time to grieve. However long or short you need. And reach out to others, especially your family and your parish community for support. You are not alone.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

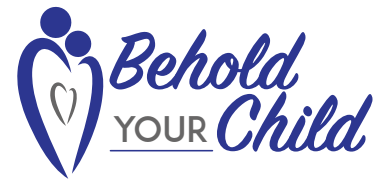
Watch over me and my family as we grieve the loss of my brother/sister. Help us in our sadness to find comfort in one another. May we be able to be support for one another. Help us to remember that we do not have to face this alone. Give us the grace to heal. May we be reminded of your love and mercy each and every day. And welcome my brother/sister into your loving embrace as we hope to meet again one day in paradise.

Amen.



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REFLECTION FOR YOUNG SIBLINGS AFTER STILLBIRTH



To be read by an adult to the child

It is hard to lose a family member. When you are excited about having a new baby brother/sister, it is not easy to understand why they are gone.

How are you feeling?

Are you sad?

Are you scared?

Are you angry?

What questions do you have?

You are loved. God loves you; I love you; and your entire family loves you.

Even though your baby brother/sister is not with us, it does not mean they are gone completely.

Our memory of them will stay in our hearts

And we trust that their soul is in the hands of God.

It is okay to cry and be sad.

Jesus loves you and your baby brother/sister who has died.

Many people are here for you.

Prayer

God, thank you for this family.

Bless this whole family and especially the brother(s)/sister(s) of this baby who has died.

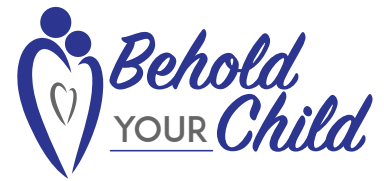
We are sad, but we believe that you are watching over us.

Please welcome _____'s (name of sibling/s) baby brother/sister into your arms and watch over him/her.

Amen.



REFLECTION FOR FATHERS AFTER STILLBIRTH



*When you pass through waters, I will be with you;
through rivers, you shall not be swept away.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned,
nor will flames consume you.
~ Isaiah 43:2 ~*

How are you doing? You may not have had anyone ask you this question and listen for your response. Have you had time to reflect on it yourself?

Our society often focuses on mothers' grief, while fathers like yourself can seem to be an afterthought. Maybe you have felt you need to be strong for your child's mother. The expectation of society is that men are strong and must "hold it together" for the sake of others, forcing them to never have the opportunity to openly grieve and to openly share how they are feeling. It is okay for you to grieve and share too.

There are any number of emotions you have experienced since you first learned of the stillbirth. Those emotions—anger, sadness, fear, hopelessness, emptiness, guilt, numbness, peace—are all normal. You may experience some of them or none of them mentioned above.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with the loss of your child. You are not alone in your grief.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

It is not always easy to find someone you can feel comfortable sharing the things you are experiencing. You may have a strong support system that has allowed you the opportunities to grieve openly. Or you may feel all alone in your grief. The parish community is here for you—here to listen and walk with you—through this trial. You are not alone. It is likely there are others who have also experienced stillbirth who can journey with you.

Prayer

Gracious and ever-loving God,

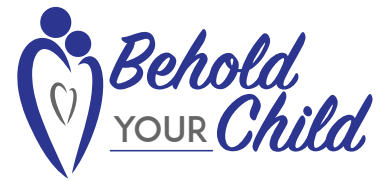
Watch over me and my loved ones as we go through this time of trial. Help us to grow in love for one another and guide us through our grief. Give me strength and grant me peace, especially on difficult days ahead. Help me daily to see the goodness around me. On days I may feel alone, help me to realize the community around me and seek them out. Help me be the man you desire me to be so that I may serve you, grow closer to my family, and care for myself.

In your name,

Amen.



REFLECTION FOR MOTHERS AFTER STILLBIRTH



You carried your child in your womb and you nourished your child with your body. What words are there to comfort you in this time of the loss of your child? So many people may already be giving you advice on how to cope. You may have heard well-intentioned but unhelpful comments. These responses may seem to ignore your pain, your sorrow, your struggle which is unique to you because your experience and your child are unique.

Whatever you are feeling right now, your feelings are yours. No one else can tell you how you should feel, how you should act, how you should be right now in this moment, or how long you should grieve. You may be angry—angry at God, angry at others, angry at yourself. You may be in severe pain—emotionally, spiritually, physically. You may be numb—in a fog, unable to grasp what has happened. You may even be at peace—peace in knowing that no matter how short, you loved your child and you can entrust your child to the mercy of God. Maybe you feel all of these emotions at once or not at all.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with the loss of your child. Know that you are not alone.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

Though you may sometimes feel alone, know that you have not been abandoned by God, or by the community around you. God knows your sorrow, as does Mary, the mother of our Savior. Cry out to them in this time and your words will be heard.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.

~ Psalm 34:19 ~

Your pain is real; your child still matters. Your parish community is here for you to listen and walk with you through this trial. You are not alone.

Prayer

God of love and mercy,

I ask for your grace in my time of trial. I seek comfort from you and desire to know that my child is cared for by you. Strengthen me when I feel weak. Guide me when I feel lost. Be with me and the father of my child, our whole family, and our community as we try to make sense of our loss. Give us wisdom to see the good in our lives and the gift it was to care for our child, no matter how short, and the hope that our child is with you for all of eternity.

Amen.

