

Heart of My Heart

Miscarriage & Infant Loss Support Guide **FOR CLERGY**

Diocese of Colorado Springs



*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive
mercy.” Matthew 5:7*

Table of Contents

PAGE 3

A Letter to Clergy

PAGE 4

PART 1: Assisting Families through the Physical Miscarriage

PAGE 5

*PART 2: Burying the Dead: A Corporal Work of Mercy
Caskets, Vessels & Urns*

PAGE 6

Liturgical Rites, Blessings & Commendations

PAGE 7

Burial & Cremation Options

PAGE 8

The Holy Mass & Ideas for Hosting a Memorial Mass

PAGE 9

PART 3: Counseling, Healing & Support Resources

PART 4: Resources from the Church

✧ A Letter to Clergy ✧

It is an unfortunate reality of our broken world that infant loss is a common source of suffering for families. As members of the clergy, you are undoubtedly aware of the ubiquity of miscarriage, stillbirth and infant loss. It is likely that as many as 1 in 4 pregnancies will end in loss, because miscarriages can happen so early in a pregnancy, and at times in absence of the woman's knowledge that she is pregnant.

It is not that you *might* have parishioners, but rather that you *do* have parishioners, who have endured the pain, grief and loss of miscarriage and infant loss. It is our desire to equip you to navigate this common, yet notoriously unspoken loss, to better serve the faithful in their hour of need.

The stories of clergy who acted as humble, compassionate, merciful servants of God to families enduring this loss are numerous. They have made all the difference in the world to hurting families:

There was the priest who came to the hospital during the labor and delivery of a known stillborn child, to offer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, to pray and to be with the family.

Then there was the priest who wore the most beautiful Marian vestments for the funeral mass for one family's miscarried child, with the knowledge of their deep devotion to Our Lady. It was a small personal touch that spoke volumes to them.

Finally, there was the priest who a full year later, remembered a family's loss and sent a card to them, acknowledging that the pain of miscarriage and stillbirth is not over and done within a matter of mere weeks.

And we cannot forget the deacons who have drank this cup of suffering during their own wives' miscarriages and who share their empathy and compassion for the grief stricken.

Please be that priest or deacon to the heartbroken families, enduring the pain of miscarriage and infant loss. They need you.

PART I: Assisting Families through the Physical Miscarriage

REALITIES OF THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Tragically, we live in a world where many of our medical professionals lack the bedside manner that they would have, if they had a truly correct pro-life worldview. We have pro-life doctors within our Diocese, but families don't always get to choose their doctors, due to health insurance plans and other restrictions. Families may find that their doctor does not share their pro-life worldview and may dehumanize their child once they discover "the pregnancy is not viable." Please be prepared to help cloud out the cold and clinical air with love and compassion.

MISCARRIAGE COLLECTION KITS

In cases of early pregnancy loss, it may be difficult to preserve the remains of a child, but if a family is able to do so, Miscarriage Delivery Aids are available through the **Respect Life Apostolate, at no cost to families**. Please instruct families to contact Ashley Slack at 719-960-7197, or to pick up a kit at the front desk of any Colorado Springs Pregnancy Center (CSPC). The CSPCs will provide a kit, no questions asked, and have three locations across our diocese: <https://www.elifenetwork.com/contact-us/>

A Miscarriage Collection Kit includes a delivery aid that allows the baby's remains to be recovered and then respectfully placed in a vessel and a velvet pouch for burial or cremation. They are available in different sizes based on the needs of the family and how far along in the pregnancy the mother is.



Pictured: Heart of My Heart miscarriage delivery aid, available in our Diocese

PART II: Burying the Dead: A Corporal Work of Mercy

FUNERAL & MEMORIAL MASSES

The Church understands that burying the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy (CCC 2447). The Church also affirms, “**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**” (CCC 1261).

Miscarried and stillborn babies are children who have died without Baptism. This may also be the case with children who die soon after birth. Families have a right to bury their miscarried or stillborn child like any other family member. They also have a right to a Funeral or Memorial Mass for their child, no matter how early they miscarried.

Families are encouraged to speak to their local parish and priest about their options for a Funeral or Memorial Mass or another appropriate liturgical rite. Not only is this a vital corporal work of mercy, but the opportunity to seek healing in our Lord is invaluable.

CASKETS, VESSELS & URNS

*The Respect Life Apostolate now has **caskets available for miscarriage losses specifically, at no cost to families.** [Please contact us if you are in need of one.](#)*

Additional resources include:

<https://heavensgain.org/>

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

<https://trappistcaskets.com/infant/>

(A NO COST option for families of stillborn & infant loss)

DignityMemorial.com

Urns are available for very low cost to families in our Diocese. **Children’s casket-vault combinations** are also available, at a discounted rate for families in our Diocese.

BABY RESTING GOWNS

For the burial of stillborn children and full-term losses, we have available at no cost to families, baby resting gowns, handmade out of the generous donations of wedding gowns that have been converted into resting gowns for our tiny saints.

Additional Rites, Blessings & Commendations

- Order for the Naming and Commendation of an Infant Who Died before Birth, Diocese of Colorado Springs, CO
- [Naming and Commendation of an Infant Who Died Before Birth - Diocese of Wichita](#)
 - This guide is very similar to the one created by the Diocese of Colorado Springs, but it is in a format that lends itself to be a keepsake for the parents of the deceased child.
- [Archdiocese of Dubuque, Behold Your Child Ministry](#)
 - This website has many resources for both clergy and families
- [Policy for Burial of Fetal Remains - Diocese of Colorado Springs, CO](#)

Liturgical Rites Chart for Infant Loss

(used with permission from the Behold Your Child ministry)

Liturgical Rite	Minister	Notes
Rite of Baptism for Children in Danger of Death When No Priest or Deacon is Available, <i>Rite of Baptism for Children</i> , #157-164	Any suitable member of the Church	In case of extreme emergency, any person, even non-Christians, may validly baptize a child
Order for Blessing of Parents after Miscarriage, <i>Book of Blessings</i> , p. 86	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	For use in hospital, home, or church
Prayers after Death, <i>Order of Christian Funerals</i> , (OCF) #101 - 108	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	To be adapted for children
Gathering in the Presence of the Body OCF, #109 - 118	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	To be adapted for children
Vigil for A Deceased Child, OCF, #243 - 263	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	Prayers and Scripture may be selected. For use in church, hospital, home, or funeral home.
E. For the Funeral of a Baptized Child; <i>Roman Missal</i> , Masses for the Dead	Priest	
F. For the Funeral of a Child who Died Before Baptism; <i>Roman Missal</i> , Masses for the Dead	Priest	
Funeral Liturgy, OCF, #264-294	Priest	Prayers and Scriptures may be selected. For the unbaptized, the rites are adapted. See OCF rubrics.
Funeral Liturgy outside Mass OCF, #295 - 315	Priest or Deacon or Lay Minister in the absence of a Priest or Deacon	Prayers and Scripture may be selected. For the unbaptized, the rites are adapted. For use in church, funeral home, or hospital chapel.
Rite of Committal, OCF, #316 - 326	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	At cemetery after Funeral Liturgy
Rite of Committal with Final Commendation, OCF, #327 - 336	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	At cemetery when Funeral Liturgy has not been celebrated
Rite of Final Commendation for an Infant, OCF, #337 - 342	Priest, Deacon, or Lay Minister	For use at cemetery, in a home or hospital
Masses for the Dead II. On the Anniversary (<i>Roman Missal</i>)	Priest	On the anniversary of the death of a child.
Masses for the Dead III. Various Commemorations (<i>Roman Missal</i>)	Priest	For use on various commemorations for the dead.
Rite of Blessing of the Child in the Womb, USCCB	Priest or Deacon	For use anywhere while child is in the womb
Sample petitions for liturgies OCF, General Intercessions and litanies, #s 6-7	Priest, Deacon, lay minister	For use during liturgies or prayer services

BURIAL & CREMATION

COLORADO SPRINGS

Mount Saint Francis Columbarium offers a Holy Innocents niche for the ashes of preborn children at no charge to families. The outside of the niche is engraved “Holy Innocents.”

Contact information: (719) 955-3810 or msfcolumbarium@stfrancis.org

Dignity Memorial owns multiple funeral homes and cemeteries within the Diocese of Colorado Springs. While this is not a Catholic organization, **Memorial Gardens Funeral, Cremation & Cemetery** offers a Catholic section in Memorial Gardens. They will also accept, prepare and bury remains of preborn to 1-year-old babies, at no cost to families. These children are buried in the Garden of Angels portion of the cemetery with a temporary grave marker. Families may purchase a permanent headstone if they desire.

Contact information: Lisa Carter or Kailah Rose-Metzbower at 719-390-4906, lisa.carter@DignityMemorial.com and kailah.rose@DignityMemorial.com.

OUTSIDE OF COLORADO SPRINGS

Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery is located at 34201 Country Road 33, Kiowa, CO 80117, on the Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Church’s 60-acres. They offer a special section called **Holy Innocents Hill**, for the respectful burial of fetal remains due to pregnancy loss. Holy Innocents Hill has unmarked, individual graves available at no cost to families. Families also have the option of purchasing a plot if that is their desire. **Contact: (303) 646-4964.**

Calvary Catholic Cemetery is owned and operated by the St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Stratton, CO. They offer an unmarked section of the cemetery with unmarked graves for the burial of preborn children, at no cost to families. **Contact information: (719) 348-5336**

Catholic Funeral and Cemetery Services (CFCS) of Northern Colorado includes **Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery, St. Simeon Catholic Cemetery** and **Archdiocese of Denver Mortuary**.

Mt. Olivet Cemetery is located at 12801 W. 44th Avenue, Wheat Ridge, Colorado 80033 and offers the **Precious Lives Burial ministry**. All families, no matter their faith are welcome to place their miscarried and stillborn children into care with this ministry. They will bury infant losses, at no cost to families. They also offer monthly memorial Masses. **Contact information: (303) 502-9666**

A Word About Hospital Disposition

****It is important to know that both major hospital systems in our Diocese offer ecumenical memorial services with mass cremation of fetal remains for families who have miscarried in their care. While there is good intention from these medical organizations, treatment of the human body in this way is actually in opposition to our Catholic faith.****

THE HOLY MASS

Help from Parishes Needed!

We are always in need of parishes to host monthly Memorial Masses for Miscarriage and Infant Loss. If your parish is interested in serving the mission of Heart of my Heart in this way, please contact us.

For the **most up-to-date offerings** of Memorial Masses in the Diocese **please visit our main website.**

Monthly Memorial Masses are available through the [Precious Lives Burial](#) ministry at Mt Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.



IDEAS FOR HOSTING A MEMORIAL MASS

Have tissues available. It does not matter how long ago a miscarriage or infant loss occurred; these Memorial Masses often stir up a lot of emotion for families.

Consider offering light refreshments, even just coffee, water and a package of cookies after the Mass. **Set out some appropriate literature** with the refreshments, so that families have the opportunity to learn about resources for healing, etc. Both afford families the opportunity to experience fellowship and find solace amongst those who have shared in this kind of loss. This can be enormously healing for all.

If it is possible, **try to have someone available during this reception time to listen to those bereft with grief.** This person can offer them the gift of time and compassion, and possibly refer them to resources as needed. This can be clergy, dedicated laity, or a Stephen Minister.

Be considerate of the time of day when the Mass is celebrated. Many families touched by miscarriage and infant loss may have other young children. A Mass in the middle of school and business hours or too late in the evening could create a barrier to them attending.

PART III: Counseling, Healing & Support Resources

Colorado Springs Miscarriage & Infant Loss Support Group

A new miscarriage and infant loss support group session is about to start in Fall 2022. These sessions, led by a professional counselor, will run for 6-8 weeks and will culminate in a private Memorial Mass for the group and their families. If a family is interested in joining this support group please have them complete the **Interest Form** on our website.

One-on-one support is also available from those who have walked through miscarriage and infant loss.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers are lay counselors who have received extensive training on a variety of needs including grief counseling. **Contact Melissa Smith at (719) 481-3511, ext. 1105** to be connected with a Stephen Minister near you.

Diocesan Approved Counselors can be found on the Diocese website.

Catholic Charities

Colorado Springs: <https://www.ccharitiescc.org/health-well-being/counseling-services/>
Denver: <https://straphaelcounseling.com/>

PART IV: Resources from the Church

FROM THE USCCB AND VATICAN

[USCCB: Solace and Strength in the Sorrow of Miscarriage](#)

[USCCB: Loving Parents After Miscarriage](#)

[ITC: The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptised](#)

The Diocese of Colorado Springs, Miscarriage Support Ministry:

Diocs.org > Pastoral Services > Respect Life Apostolate > [Miscarriage Support Ministry](#)

[Colorado Catholic Herald](#) series by Ashley and Bill Slack on supporting families through miscarriage and infant loss

This resource guide is available to download and for printing additional copies at <https://www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Respect-Life/Miscarriage-Support-Ministry>