

FAITH AT WORK

BABIES MADE FOR HEAVEN - SUPPORTING PARENTS WHO MISCARRY

NAMES HAVE BEEN WITHHELD TO PROTECT FAMILIES



The picture shows the tiny casket, containing the remains presented before the side-altar at Church. Special prayers were said before burial.

Years ago, returning from a beautiful holiday walking the Welsh mountains, it became clear that we would miscarry. We popped into a church in Cirencester and we prayed, our hearts heavy with the sadness brought on by this loss. As we left Church, three little children ran down the path ahead of us and we remembered to cherish what we already had. With time, we were given more children so we had much to be thankful for. When we got home, we buried the remains of our tiny 6 week conceptus in the front garden. A deep red rose now flowers each summer marking the spot where our little Anthony (was it Antonia) lies.

So it was beautiful to share with friends prayers for their miscarried baby in Church. The remains had been brought home after removal of the products of conception, and were in the tiniest of all caskets in black cloth with a tiny cross. Prayers, so beautiful, were said, and love was given to a tiny soul now departed.

Later in our married life, burial of our week old daughter also brought great grace to her family. For us, bringing the body of our daughter home so that her brother and sister could hold her while she was still fresh and warm, was a huge blessing.

The Bible tells us that

“ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying: A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. .” (Matthew 2, 16-17)

And yet Jeremiah goes onto tell us that

“Thus saith the Lord: Let thy voice cease from weeping, and thy eyes tears: for there is a reward for thy work, saith the Lord: and they shall return out of the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy last end, faith the Lord: and the children shall return to their own borders.” (Jeremiah 30, 16-17).

So our faith tells us that the Holy Innocents were truly saved and are saints. These tiny children are precious and it is good for parents to cherish the lives lost.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WHO UNDERGO EARLY PREGNANCY LOSSES?.

We were recently asked by couple who wanted to bring the remains of their baby home so that they could be buried. Below, there is a practical response, based within national guidance.

1. Allow parents to bring remains home for burial. The RCN and also SAND's recognise that there are no good reasons not to allow this and there is some sensible advice on how to do this.
2. Allow parents, if they wish to take their newly deceased babies home. Forms and tools to provide adequate legal safeguards are available from SANDs. You may wish to support parents and make sure they do not keep the baby at home too long etc, but this can be a very good opportunity to support grieving.
3. Use the prayers of the Church. They are utterly beautiful. They recognise the humanity of even the tiniest baby. And they bring great comfort. Both Baptised and unbaptized babies can have funerals, although the rites are slightly different depending upon whether or not the baby was baptised.
4. And if possible, support baptism of babies who are born alive.
5. With support, parents may be able to know, far more fully, that someone beautiful is with God.

One day, I look forward to meeting my tiny daughter in Heaven and living there with her for evermore.

REFERENCES

Royal College of Nursing. Sensitive disposal of all foetal remains 2007.
http://www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/78500/001248.pdf

SANDS Stillbirth and neonatal death charity. Resources for health professionals; forms and certificates to download.

<http://www.uk-sands.org/Improving-Care/Resources-for-health-professionals/Forms-and-certificates-to-download.html>

Mathew 2. 17

Jeremiah 31 16-17