

This ceremony asks for a wreath decorated with 4 white candles and flowers, or 4 vigil candles and a family bible, to be adapted according to the particular circumstances. A parent, grandparent, sibling or friend may take the role of the presider.

INTRODUCTION

(To be read by a family member)

Our faith assures us that the life of every child, even if it be only for a few days or weeks within the womb, is part of God's plan. He who created us will never forget us. Scripture reminds us, "Can a mother forget her infant, or be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even if she should forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

This naming ceremony allows those who are suffering the loss of this child solemnly to remember the child and to write his/her name in the family book of life.

OPENING PRAYER

PRESIDER:

Father of all consolation,
from whom nothing is hidden,
you know the faith of these parents,
who mourn the death of their child.
May they find comfort in knowing
that he/she is entrusted to your loving care.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

The purpose of the readings at the ceremony is to proclaim the Paschal Mystery, teach the remembrance of the dead and convey a hope for the salvation of all God's children.

FIRST READING

Sirach 39:16-21, 32-35

The works of God are all of them good;
in its own time every need is supplied.
At his word the waters become still as in a flask;
he had but to speak and the reservoirs were made.
He has but to command and his will is done;
nothing can limit his achievement.
The works of all mankind are present to him;
not a thing escapes his eye.
His gaze spans all the ages;
to him there is nothing unexpected.
No cause then to say: "What is the purpose of this?"
Everything is chosen to satisfy a need.
So from the first I took my stand,
and wrote down as my theme:
The works of God are all of them good:
every need when it comes he fills.
No cause then to say: "This is not as good as that";
for each shows its worth at the appropriate time.
So now with full joy of heart proclaim
and bless the name of the Holy One.



GOSPEL READING

Matthew 11:25-30

On one occasion Jesus spoke thus: "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest of children. Father, it is true. You have graciously willed it so. Everything has been given over to me by the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son - and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.
"Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light."

The four candles are lit one at a time during the recitation of the following litany. The litany can be read by one person, or a group of people, in which two sides are formed, alternating stanzas. The name of the child is inscribed in the family bible with the last candle.

LITANY OF LIFE

Psalm 139:1-18

SIDE 1: O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;
you know when I sit and when I stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.

SIDE 2: My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,
with all my ways you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know the whole of it.

SIDE 1: Behind me and before you hem me in
and rest your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
too lofty for me to attain.

Light one candle.

SIDE 1: Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence where can I flee?
If I go up to the heavens you are there;
if I sink to the nether world,
you are present there.

SIDE 2: If I take the wings of dawn,
if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall guide me,
and your right hand hold me fast.

SIDE 1: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall
hide me and night shall be my light"
for you darkness itself is not dark,
and night shines as the day.

Light one candle

SIDE 1: Truly you have formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I give you thanks that I am fearfully,
wonderfully made;
wonderful are all your works.

SIDE 2: My soul also you knew full well;
nor was my frame unknown to you
when I was made in secret,
when I was fashioned in the depths
of the earth.

SIDE 1: Your eyes have seen my actions;
in your book they are all written;
my days were limited before
one of them existed.

ALL: How wondrous are your designs, O God;
how vast the sum of them!
Were I to recount them, they would
outnumber the sands;
were I to reach the end of them,
I should still be with you.

Light one candle.

*The name given to the deceased child is now inscribed in
the family bible.*

The fourth candle is lit.



PRAYER OF BLESSING

*A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of
blessing with hands outstretched over the parents; a lay
minister says the prayer with hands joined.*

PRESIDER:

Lord,
God of all creation
we bless you and thank you for your tender care.
Receive this life you have created in love
and comfort your faithful people in their time
of loss with the assurance of your unfailing mercy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: AMEN



NAMING CEREMONY

This ceremony is a ritual act to help those who are mourning the loss of a child, to express their sorrow and to find strength and consolation through the gift of faith in Christ and his resurrection to eternal life. Our faith tells us that every human person is created in the image of God. From the very moment of conception God wills us into being and desires that we should spend eternal life with him. We are made for immortality. Our soul does not perish when it separates from the body at death, but will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 366).

The Church teaches us that with "regards to children who have died without Baptism, [she] can only entrust them to the mercy of God. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness towards children which caused him to say: 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them' (Mark 10:14), allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1261). We, the living faithful, can acknowledge this hope by actively participating in a ceremony which gives dignity and recognition to a deceased child.