



“He has given to you the life of a child; and even from the moment of conception, it is an abundant grace,” Bishop Kagan said. “Through the child, we see the face of the goodness of God.” He explained, “The sorrow at our loss, expands our faith, because it is from the Lord; and in the depths of our sorrow, he finds us and leads us out of it.”

All Life Deserves Honor

Estimates of pregnancies ending in miscarriage range from 10% to possibly as high as 31%. A generation ago, mourning such a loss was discouraged; and even today, a miscarriage is frequently brushed aside. “We often fail to realize that these lives left an impression in their parents’ hearts, never to be forgotten,” per Jeannie Hannemann, founder and director of [Elizabeth Ministry International](#).

She founded the ministry along with her husband, Bruce, and Father Kurt Gessner (now deceased) in 1991 to support marriage and family life. There are now more than 700 chapters around the world, and many churches, hospitals and other ministries link to the website. The Hannemanns had at least three miscarriages but now have two grown children and five grandchildren.

In her book, [Pastoral Guide: Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Newborn Loss](#), Hannemann helps pastors, hospital personnel and parents to address this loss. “Not only does a lack of response often lead to unresolved grief, it denies our belief that life begins at conception.”

Elizabeth Ministries held its first memorial service 23 years ago on Nov. 1, All Saints’ Day, at St. Bernard Parish in Appleton, Wis. It was a Catholic service — but not a Mass — that drew a large crowd from across denominational lines. One elderly man walked by her on his way out with a rose sticking out of his jacket. “I have waited 60 years to have something to hold,” he told Hannemann. “My wife carried the baby with her, but I never had anything to hold before.”

The annual service has drawn people to the Church. “Many people have been so touched by the respect shown to their babies and the idea of them being in heaven with the angels and saints that they ended up entering RCIA and joining the Church,” Hannemann said.

Need for Healing

The recognition that the Church can play a powerful role in the healing of grief over babies’ deaths before they were born is growing.

One of the early places to play an active role in this was the Archdiocese of St. Louis. In 1988, the archdiocese began holding “naming and commendation” ceremonies, usually (but not always) as part of a Catholic Mass. The ceremonies are offered at various churches six to eight times a year and include a prayer in which the child is recognized by name and commended to God.

Two mothers —Cathy Clyde and Amy Kuebelbeck—who both lost very young children and understood the value of a Catholic service to bring healing began the ministry. “Cathy and I had the comfort of a full Catholic funeral, so we knew how much it means to have the Church recognize our babies, said Kuebelbeck, the author of *Waiting With Gabriel*: and *A Gift of Time*.

“Every year people thank us for putting the Mass on. Even after 12 years, I still cry every year. During Mass when that curtain between heaven and earth is lowered, I feel particular consolation from Our Lord.” ✨



Grieving with Great Hope

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Grieving with Great Hope

Dear St. John Vianney Parishioner,

Please accept issue three of *Grieving with Great Hope*. During the spring of your grief, our hope is that you are beginning to experience something new, something opening up--you!

The decision to live again may seem to come from a place outside of you; like an opportunity or gift presented to you. It’s something you are given and accept; not a force but someone you trust that encourages healing. This is no mere accident.

Something larger than you is at work within you. Someone wiser than you has a word to speak, and that word is *Yes*. For the loving God of all creation is the Guide of each changing season of your grief. He smiles as you embrace your best self; it’s on its way back. Like the first buds of spring, you realize a reawakening, a forgotten energy. You are being drawn to the future again. May this budding awareness bring you peace and hope.

In this issue of *Grieving with Great Hope*, we present other types of grief, which many of us will experience at some point during our lives. Because grieving comes in many different forms, the origin of grieving can have many causes, some of which do not involve a death. The reality of grief is every bit as real as it is with the death of a loved one. Miscarriage, divorce, or a degenerative disease are just a few of the life events that can bring about chaos and sorrow. Embrace your grief knowing that what you are feeling is real. Give yourself permission to grieve, take your time, be gentle with yourself. We pray for you as you move through grief with great hope.

Blessings,

The SJV Grief Ministry Team

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The Seasons of Grief: Spring

Life may seem like constant **waiting**. Your struggle is over but your zest has not returned. You’re in limbo, exhausted, uncertain and life seems flat. But somewhere inside, you struggle to believe you will get better--you keep hope alive. The good days begin to out-balance the bad.

You never stop **missing** your loved one. Particular days, places and activities can bring back the pain as intensely as ever.

But you are able to make a commitment to life. You recognize that healing is a choice and you decide to actively begin building a new life for yourself.

This means taking the initiative to seek involvement in spite of feeling you can’t possibly do things on your own. Some days you hang on to your grief; it is familiar and it keeps you close to your loved one. Letting go seems like forgetting so you are reluctant to do so. But you begin to let go gradually. ✨

Special thanks to Hospice for *The Seasons of Grief: Spring*



4 Types of Grief Nobody Told You About
by Sarah Epstein, LMFT
And why it’s important that we call them grief.

The word **grief** has come to be understood solely as a reaction to a death. But that narrow understanding fails to encompass the range of human experiences that create and trigger grief. Here are four types of grief that we experience which have nothing to do with death:

1. Loss of identity: A lost role or affiliation.

A person going through a Divorce who feels the loss of no longer being a “spouse.”

A breast cancer survivor who grieves the lost sense of femininity after a double mastectomy.

An empty nester who mourns the lost identity of parenthood in its most direct form.

A person who loses their job or switches careers grieves a lost identity.

Whenever a person loses a primary identity, they mourn a lost sense of self. They’re tasked with grieving who they thought they were and eventually creating a new story that integrates the loss into their personal narrative. In some instances, the identity feels stolen, as in the cases of the person who feels blindsided by divorce and the breast cancer survivor. For those individuals, the grief may feel compounded by the lack of control they had in the decision. Others choose to shed an identity, as in the case of switching careers. Though this may sound easier, those individuals may feel their grief compounded by the ambivalence of choosing to leave something they will also mourn. They may feel less entitled to their grief and lost sense of self, because the decision was self-imposed.

2. Loss of safety: The lost sense of physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Survivors of physical, emotional, or **sexual** trauma who struggle to feel safe in everyday life.

Families experiencing eviction and housing instability who feel unprotected and unstable.

Children of divorce who grieve the loss of safety in the “intact” family (though they may not articulate it this way).

On a basic level, we expect to feel safe in our homes, our communities, and our relationships.

The lost sense of safety, be it physical (after a break-in) or emotional (after an affair), can make a person’s world feel distinctly unsafe. Symptoms of lost safety may include a sense of hypervigilance even in the absence of danger or numbness. For many, especially those suffering from post-**traumatic stress** disorder, numbness and hypervigilance occur intermittently. For survivors of trauma, violence, and instability, that feeling of internal safety may feel hard to restore, even if circumstances stabilize. In addition to healing from the trauma, the individual is tasked with grieving the lost sense of safety and learning to rebuild it.

3. Loss of autonomy: The lost ability to manage one’s own life and affairs.

A person with a degenerative illness who grieves the loss of physical or cognitive abilities.

An older adult no longer able to care for themselves who grieves their decline (this may also tie to a lost sense of identity as a contributing member of society).

A person experiencing a financial setback who feels a lost sense of autonomy as they rely on others’ help.

This type of grief cuts to the core of every person’s need to manage their body and their life. Loss of autonomy triggers grief over the lost sense of control and the struggle to maintain a sense of self. In cases of illness and disability, lost autonomy (and often lost identity) marks every step they take. New forms of decline invite grief for their lost independence and ability to function. A person suffering from a profound financial setback may experience this same feeling of loss, manifested as feeling their options shrinking, along with a sense of failure or despair. They are tasked with grieving those losses and reconceptualizing who they are in the face of these limitations.

4. Loss of dreams or expectations: Dealing with hopes and dreams going unfulfilled.

A person or couple who struggle with the loss of a child due to **miscarriage** or infertility.

An overachieving student who struggles to find their place in “real world.”

A **career** trajectory doesn’t reflect a person’s expectations.

This type of grief is marked by a deep sense of disorientation.

Most of us walk around with a vision of how our lives will play out and how we expect the world to operate. When life events violate our expectations, a person can experience a deep sense of grief and unfairness. An individual or couple struggling to conceive and the student who struggles to make their way in the world may experience a sense of failure that compounds the grief process. They may find themselves comparing their process and outcomes to others. Unexpected political shifts can lead to a lost sense of the assumptive reality and the sense of stability from believing they understand how the world operates.

Restoring the word "grief" to its proper place

Loss of identity, safety, autonomy, and expectations are all losses that warrant a sense of grief. Grief and mourning as a framework can help each of us work through a moment or chapter of chaos with the gentleness we give a mourner. The mourner receives compassion and is entitled to **anger**, sadness, numbness, disorientation, and nonlinear healing. The word grief both accurately characterizes the internal reality of the process and legitimizes and concretizes the process to ourselves and others.

While many experience the setbacks and tragedies of life with grief and mourning, many feel they are not entitled to the word, Grief.

So I give you permission. **You may grieve.** You may mourn. Your loss is real. ✨

Honoring Short-Lived Lives -
Memorial Masses for Lost Children Console
Parents
By Patti Armstrong, Register correspondent

Holding onto a single red carnation, my husband and I processed up the aisle at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck, N.D., on Nov. 5. We were there for the inaugural “Mass for God’s Children,” dedicated to babies lost before they were born and for any child who died before adulthood.

Eleven years earlier, our son Matthew was lost through miscarriage. Eye contact with others in the procession silently communicated a shared surprise —

oh, you too. We placed the flower, representative of Matthew, in a vase with others before a statue of the Blessed Mother with the Infant Jesus.

I scanned the church; at least 200 people, young and old.

Taking our seats, Bishop David Kagan, four priests and a deacon began the Mass.

If I was not asked to write about this event, my husband and I might not have been there. Neither of us felt any residual grief over Matthew’s loss, and the busyness of raising 10 children crowded out feelings of loss. But we were comforted in a way that we did not know we needed: spending time with fellow Catholics who shared the same loss during a Mass dedicated to our missing children.

Children lost in the womb are not usually grieved publicly, yet the dozens of babies listed by 47 families on the program testified to the desire to recognize those lives.

“I looked at it as a celebration,” said Don Mastel, who was there with his wife, Sarah, and 3-year-old daughter Abigail. They had lost two babies to miscarriage. “It was also a comfort to realize how many others that I knew also lost babies,” he said.

Sarah said all the people she recognized surprised her. “I felt a solidarity with them,” she said. “I was comforted by the celebration, but I was sad, too. It reminded me of the void in our family. We are really a family of five, not three.”

Shellie Rusch had three carnations to place in a vase. “I was surprised that I cried the entire time,” she said. “I didn’t realize that I had so much grief in me, but it was good; it was healing. I felt like this was a funeral that I never had for my children.”

During his homily, Bishop Kagan acknowledged that every life is a gift. “We live and die belonging to God,” he said. “That life may be a day, a week, a month or many years. However long it is, that life is a gift, not just to the one who lives, but to all of us.”

Although a child dying before a parent seems out of order, he said that we must consider the mysterious will of God.