

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

Rite of Final Commendation for an Infant

- 143 This rite may be used when a baby is stillborn or a newborn infant dies shortly after birth. You may also adapt it for use with parents who have suffered a miscarriage.
- 144 This brief rite is provided to offer the parents comfort and to commend and entrust the infant to God. You may use it in the hospital or place of birth, or at the committal of the body. It is a model and you should adapt it carefully according to the needs of the family. For instance, it may be appropriate to have a more extended liturgy incorporating a longer reading from scripture, a litany of intercession, gestures and symbols, and music. Mementoes of the child's short life can provide a useful focus.
- 145 Further expansion of this model will be required if you are to lead a service in a larger setting: with a group of parents, for instance; in an ecumenical group in hospital; or an occasional service to honour the lives of those infants whose parents did not wish to have a funeral. In such circumstances you will be helped in your ministry by one of the specialist agencies; useful addresses are given in the planning guide, *Into Your Hands*.

OUTLINE OF THE RITE

Brief Address

Scripture Verse

Blessing of the Body

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Commendation

Blessing

The Rite of Final Commendation of an Infant is taken from *In sure and certain hope: Rites and Prayers from the Order of Christian Funerals for use of Lay Leaders*. It is closely based on the Rite in the *Order of Christian Funerals* (cross-reference is made in the right hand margin).

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Rite of Final Commendation for an Infant

BRIEF ADDRESS

- 146 The leader speaks informally to those who are present, offering them sympathy and the consolation of faith. At an appropriate moment, the leader addresses those who have gathered in the following or similar words.

Dear friends,
in the face of death all human wisdom fails.
Yet the Lord Jesus teaches us,
by the three days he spent in the tomb,
that death has no hold over us.
Christ has conquered death;
his dying and rising have redeemed us.
Even in our sorrow for the loss of this little child,
we believe that, one short sleep past,
he/she will wake eternally.

F504

SCRIPTURE VERSE

- 147 The leader then introduces the Scripture verse.

The Lord speaks to us now of our hope for this child in these words of consolation.

F505

A member of the family or another of those present reads one of the following verses, or a longer passage from the collection of funeral texts, *Into Your Hands*.

- A Romans 5:5
Hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.
- B 1 John 3:2
My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been re-vealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

BLESSING OF THE BODY

- 148 If the body of the child is present, the leader says the following.

Trusting in Jesus, the loving Saviour,
who gathered children into his arms
and blessed the little ones,
we now commend this infant [N.]
to that same embrace of love,
in the hope that he/she will rejoice
and be happy in the presence of Christ.

Then the leader says the following prayer, in which others may join so far as they are able.

May the angels and saints lead him/her
to the place of light and peace
where one day
we will be brought together again.

The leader continues:

Lord Jesus,
lovingly receive this little child;
bless him/her
and take him/her to your Father.
We ask this in hope,
and we pray:

Lord, have mercy.

℟. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

℟. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

℟. Lord, have mercy.

F506

THE LORD'S PRAYER

149 Using one of the following invitations, or in similar words, the leader invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer together.

A Now let us pray as Christ the Lord has taught us:

B With longing for the coming of God's kingdom, let us offer our prayer to the Father:

C As sons and daughters of a loving God, we pray in the confident words of his Son:

D When Jesus gathered his disciples around him, he taught them to pray:

F507

All:

Our Father...

PRAYER OF COMMENDATION

150 The leader then says one of the following prayers.

A Tender Shepherd of the flock,
N. now lies cradled in your love.
Soothe the hearts of his/her parents
and bring peace to their lives.
Enlighten their faith
and give hope to their hearts.

Loving God,
grant mercy to your entire family in this time of suffering.
Comfort us with the hope that this infant/baby [N.]
lives with you and your Son, Jesus Christ,
and the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

℟. Amen.

F508A

- B Where parents wish to name the child, the section in brackets is included. This prayer is particularly suitable following a miscarriage.

Lord God,
ever-caring and gentle,
we commit to your love this little one,
who brought joy to our lives for so short a time.
Enfold him/her in eternal life.

[Lord, you formed this child in the womb;
you have known it by name before time began.
We now wish to name this little one N.:
a name we shall treasure in our hearts for ever.]

We pray for these parents
who are saddened by the loss of their baby.
Give them courage
and help them in their pain and grief.
May they all meet one day
in the joy and peace of your kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

℟️ Amen.

F508B

BLESSING

- 151 Using one of the following blessings, the minister blesses those present.

- A The minister who is a priest or deacon says:

May the God of all consolation
bring you comfort and peace,
in the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

℟️ Amen.

- B A lay minister invokes God's blessing and signs himself or herself with the sign of the cross, saying:

May the God of all consolation
bring us comfort and peace,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

℟️ Amen.

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