

# REFLECTION FOR COUPLES AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



The trial you are going through was not what you expected. Joy has turned to sorrow. The anticipation of having a healthy baby has been lost. You may be feeling confused and alone on this journey.

Receiving a prenatal diagnosis indicating your child has a life-limiting illness brings with it many difficult challenges. Your child is still alive but you are likely already grieving the potential loss of your child and the limitations the child will face in life if they live. This is a heavy burden to carry. The pressures and opinions from others of what you should do with this information can be overwhelming and even though often well-intentioned, can seem cruel, lacking compassion, and/or disrespectful to you and your child.

Relying on one another for support is important to help you process your pain individually and as a couple. It is a sad truth that a prenatal diagnosis of a life-limiting illness can have a detrimental impact on your relationship with one another.

Remember that everyone grieves in their own way. Your partner may have different ways of processing their grief than you do. Expecting your partner to feel the same way you do or find comfort in the same things that you do can lead to disagreement and added strain. You should not expect your partner to take the same length of time to grieve that you do. It is helpful to have open discussions to better understand how your partner grieves and what they are feeling. Being patient and honest with one another in this difficult time can help to avoid many of the added strains of the complex grief you are experiencing.

There are likely other couples in your parish or community that have had their own experience with receiving a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis. You are certainly not alone. While your experience will be unique from theirs it can be helpful to connect with other couples to discuss things that helped them or challenges they faced as they processed their grief and planned the rest of the pregnancy.

Remember, the parish has *Behold Your Child* ministers available to assist you and be present to your needs as a couple through this time as well.

## Prayer:

*Christ, our Lord,*

*Be with us as we travel together as a couple along the path of a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis.*

*Grant us abundant grace so that we may be present and open to each other,*

*Through understanding, patience, and peace.*

*Help us through this difficult time to grow closer to one another,*

*And help us make the most of the life our child has yet to live, no matter how short that may be.*

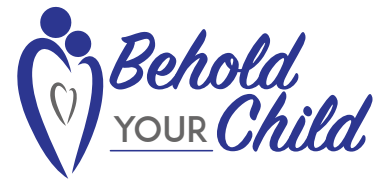
*In your name,*

*Amen.*



ARCHDIOCESE  
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# REFLECTION FOR GRANDPARENTS AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



As grandparents of a child who has been given a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis your grief may seem two-fold. The grief at the risks such a diagnosis poses to your grandchild but also the grief that comes with seeing your own child suffer the pain of receiving this diagnosis for their child. Many grandparents feel their main role is to be supportive of their adult-child as they make their way through this journey.

As a parent, you yourself may have experienced a prenatal diagnosis of a child years ago. Such an experience may be helpful in understanding your adult-child's pain. Your child may find comfort in the things that you found comfort in when you experienced the pain and fear when you received such a diagnosis; or they may not. Remember that your child will grieve in a unique way and may not grieve the same way you did. What is important is to be present to them, letting them know you are there for them and that you care.

It is also important that you care for yourself. Caretakers need care as well. If you experienced a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis of a child, this may also bring back memories of the grief you experienced years ago. If this is the case, even if it was many years ago, the *Behold Your Child* ministers are available for you too.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with this new reality. Know that you are not alone.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

Take time for yourself. Don't ignore your own grief, whether it is new or from years past. God knows your struggle, knows your pain. God's love, compassion, and mercy are ever-present to all of us especially when we openly receive them from him by turning to Him for guidance and support.

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus,*

*Be with my family as we face this trial together. As I fear for my grandchild, help me also with the support of my child through this difficult time.*

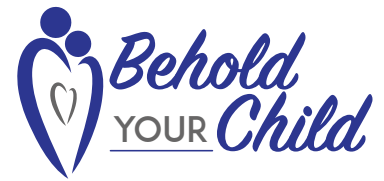
*We trust in your love and mercy even if we do not understand why this child should have to face this trial. Let us not despair but be reassured by our hope in you. We entrust our grandchild to you and pray for your will to be done. If our grandchild passes away, welcome him/her into your loving embrace for eternity.*

*In your name we pray,*

*Amen.*



# REFLECTION FOR OLDER SIBLINGS AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.*

~ Psalm 34:19 ~

There are likely many emotions you have experienced since you first learned of your brother/sister's diagnosis. Those emotions—anger, sadness, fear, hopelessness, emptiness, guilt, numbness, peace—are all normal. You may experience some of these or none of them.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and maybe even years as you continue to live with this news about your brother/sister. Know that you are not alone. Not only is God watching over you but you also have a community around you ready to listen, to be there with you in this difficult time.

Do you have someone you can talk to about this? In addition to family members, there are *Behold Your Child* ministers at your parish available to listen and be there for you. Jesus reminds us of the need for one another. Though he was the Son of God, the first thing he did when he started his ministry was to gather people around him to walk together and have support from one another. Even as Jesus was going through his trial and the way of the cross the women and John were there with him through the pain.

Just as the disciples may have felt hopeless as Christ lay in the tomb—not knowing what was to come next, burdened by their grief of the loss of Jesus—you may be feeling hopeless. But remember that Jesus rose from the dead and gave us hope of salvation and revealed the love God has for us. There is joy to be found even in the midst of a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis. There is hope to be found in the resurrection.

Take time to grieve. However long or short you need. And reach out to others, especially your family and your parish community for support. You are not alone.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

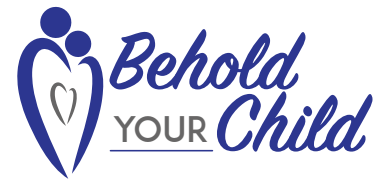
*Watch over me and my family as we face my brother/sister's life-limiting prenatal diagnosis.*

*Help us in our sadness to find comfort in one another. May we be able to be support for one another. Help us to remember that we do not have to face this trial alone. Give us the grace to have peace. May we be reminded of your love and mercy each and every day. And give my brother/sister your abundant grace.*

*Amen.*



# REFLECTION FOR YOUNG SIBLINGS AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



*To be read by an adult to the child*

It is hard to hear sad or scary news about a family member. When we are looking forward to having a new baby brother or sister it is not easy to understand why they are sick.

How are you feeling?

Are you sad?

Are you scared?

Are you angry?

What questions do you have?

You are loved. God loves you; I love you; and your entire family loves you.

It's okay to cry and be sad.

Jesus loves you and your baby brother/sister who is sick.

Many people are here for you.

## Prayer

*God, thank you for this family.*

*Bless this whole family and especially the brother(s)/sister(s) of this baby who is sick.*

*We believe that you are watching over us. Grant us peace.*

*Please watch over and be with this baby who is sick.*

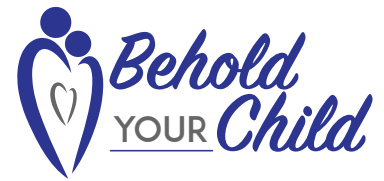
*Provide all of us, and especially the doctors, with wisdom.*

*Amen.*



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# REFLECTION FOR FATHERS AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



*When you pass through waters, I will be with you;  
through rivers, you shall not be swept away.  
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned,  
nor will flames consume you.  
~ Isaiah 43:2 ~*

How are you doing? You may not have had anyone ask you this question and listen for your response. Have you had time to reflect on it yourself?

Our society often focuses on mothers' grief and fathers like yourself can seem to be an afterthought. Maybe you have felt you need to be strong for your child's mother. The expectation of society is that men are strong and must "hold it together" for the sake of others, forcing them to never have the opportunity to openly grieve and to openly share how they are feeling. It is okay for you to grieve and share too.

There are any number of emotions you have experienced since you first learned of your child's diagnosis. Those emotions—anger, sadness, fear, hopelessness, emptiness, guilt, numbness, peace—are all normal. You may experience some of them or none of them mentioned above.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with this new reality. Know that you are not alone.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

It is not always easy to find someone you can feel comfortable sharing the things you are experiencing. You may have a strong support system that has allowed you the opportunities to grieve openly. Or you may feel all alone in your grief. The parish community is here for you—here to listen and walk with you—through this trial. You are not alone.

## Prayer

*Gracious and ever-loving God,*

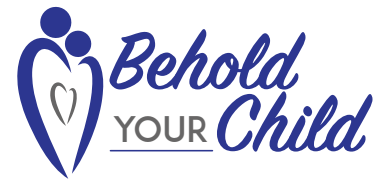
*Watch over me and my loved ones as we go through this time of trial. Help us to grow in love for one another and guide us through our grief. Give me strength and grant me peace, especially on difficult days ahead. Help me daily to see the goodness around me. On days I may feel alone, help me to realize the community around me and seek them out. Help me be the man you desire me to be so that I may serve you, grow closer to my family, and care for myself.*

*In your name,*

*Amen.*



# REFLECTION FOR MOTHERS AFTER LIFE-LIMITING PRENATAL DIAGNOSIS



You are carrying your child in your womb and nourishing your child with your own body. But now you face the reality that your child is sick and may not survive. What words are there to comfort you in this time of trial? So many people may already be giving you advice on how to cope. You may have heard well-intentioned, but unhelpful comments. These responses seem to ignore your pain, your sorrow, your struggle, your struggle which is unique to you because your experience and your child are unique.

Whatever you are feeling right now, your feelings are yours. No one else can tell you how you should feel, how you should act, how you should be right now in this moment, or how long you have to grieve. You may be angry—angry at God, angry at others, angry at yourself. You may be in severe pain—emotionally and spiritually. You may be numb—in a fog, unable to grasp what has happened. You may even be at peace—peace in knowing that you love your child and you can entrust your child to the mercy and love of God. Maybe you feel all of these emotions at once or not at all.

We each grieve in our own way. There is no single right way to grieve. There will be challenges in the coming days, weeks, months, and even years as you continue to live with this new reality. Know that you are not alone.

Have you spent time caring for yourself through this time? It can be helpful to do things that help you relieve stress or allow you time for reflection. That can come in the form of prayer, socializing, working on a hobby, eating a nice meal, reading, or any number of things. It can also be helpful to talk to others about what you are experiencing.

Though you may sometimes feel alone, know that you have not been abandoned by God, or by the community around you. God knows your sorrow, as does Mary, the mother of our Savior. Cry out to them in this time and your words will be heard.

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.*

~ Psalm 34:19 ~

Your parish community is also here for you to listen and walk with you through this trial. You are not alone. Your pain is real; your child still matters.

## Prayer

*God of love and mercy,*

*I ask for your grace in my time of trial. I seek comfort from you and desire to know that my child is cared for by you. Strengthen me when I feel weak. Guide me when I feel lost. Be with me and the father of my child, our whole family, and our community as we try to make sense of this news. Give us wisdom to see the good in our lives and the gift it is to care for our child, no matter how short, and the hope that our child will be loved by us and you for all of eternity*

*Amen.*

