

A rite
for use at the cremation of unborn children

1 *A candle may be lit to symbolise the presence of the God of life.*

2 *The minister greets those present.*

In the Name of God.

Amen

My Sisters & Brothers, *we* come here today to commit these unborn children to the love of God which has neither beginning nor end.

From the Christian Tradition we understand this love to be beyond anything we can imagine in its compassion for the human race and its concern for the whole created order.

In a first century letter to Christian believers these words occur:

“may you ... be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge.” [Ephesians 3 v.18]

while in a tract to readers who’d endured great suffering, Jesus Christ is described as:

“the radiance of God’s glory, the stamp of God’s very being, (who) sustains the universe by his word of power.” [Hebrews 1 v.3]

The most profound bible-centred theologian of Western Europe, Meister Eckhart — writing in the late 13th century — offered many startling insights. Perhaps two are especially relevant on this day and in this place.

“Everything praises God.

Darkness, privations, defects, evil too —
(all) praise God and bless God.”

and

“Remember this: All suffering comes to an end,
And whatever you suffer authentically,
God has suffered first.”

3 The psalm.

I invite you to join me in some poetry from the Book of Psalms.

- 1. Like a doe panting
for running water,
I too am panting
for you, my God.**

- 2. I am thirsty for God,
the God of life:
how soon can I
be seen before God?**

- 3. I live on tears
day and night:
all day they are taunting me:
‘Where is your God?’**

- 7. Waterfall after waterfall
reminds me of your cloudbursts,
of how your waves and breakers
have rolled over me.**

- 11. Why so downhearted?
Why so alarmed?
Trust God! I shall praise him yet,
my saviour, my God!**

**Glory to God:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
As in the beginning so now:
and for ever. Amen**

4 The New Testament reading.

Now part of a very well-known story from Matthew's biography of Jesus.

“ Jesus went out and sat by the lakeside ... and all the people stood on the shore. He told them many things in parables.

He said: ‘A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some of the seed fell along the footpath; and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil, and it sprouted quickly because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun rose it was scorched, and as it had no root it withered away. Some fell among thistles; and the thistles grew up and choked it. ...

If you have ears, then hear.’ ^[13 vvs 1, 2b, 3 - 7, 9]

5 *A period of silence may be kept.*

6 *One or more of these prayers is offered .*

6.1 *Thanksgiving for creation.*

Lord of all life,

thank you for your prodigality,
for your abundance in creation,
for nourishing life in the womb.

Thank you for the strength of your love,
embracing the human family,
embracing all families,

embracing this family / these families,

Thank you for your presence in our sorrow,
your constancy as our life goes on.

Receive our sadness, and fill us with your Spirit
for the task ahead.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

6.2 *Remembrance of one who has died before birth.*

Heavenly Father,
your love for all children is strong and enduring.
We were not able to know Baby as we hoped.
Yet you knew *him*.
In the midst of our sadness,
we thank you that *he* is with you now.
Amen

6.3 *For the mother.*

Lord Jesus, your Mother Mary was close by
when you were dying.
Be near to this mother,
Be to her a strong and loving friend.
Give her healing for hurt, and hope in place of desperation,
for you alone can show us how to triumph over death.
Amen

6.4 *For the father.*

Man of Sorrows — Jesus of Nazareth,
make your presence known to in his time of grief.
Give him strength to stand by
to share his deepest feelings,
to follow your example of caring,
and to receive your comfort.
Amen

6.5.1 *For both parents.*

God of loving kindness,
comfort and in their distress.
May they hold to you and to one another
through good and ill,
and always trust in your unfailing love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

6.5.2

It does not make sense, O God.
Why allow us to prepare for a birth
only to receive a death?
Help us to trust your goodness and wisdom
when our understanding fails.
We ask you this day for courage
and growing discernment of your loving purposes.
Amen

7 *The Lord's Prayer .*

Let us join together in the prayer Jesus gave us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial**

and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen

8 *The following hymn may be said or sung.*

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth from darkness came,
from everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone;
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all its bairns* away;
they pass forgotten, as a dream
dies with the dawning day.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come:
be our defence while life shall last,
And our eternal home!

[bairn: Scottish for "a child"]*

9 *The committal.*

And so we commit these unborn children to be cremated.
Earth to earth,
Ashes to ashes,
Dust to dust,
confident that, in God, nothing is rejected or wasted,
but that Christ is all and in all. [1 Corinthians 15 v.28]

10 *The minister may conclude the Service with this blessing.*

May the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up
the light of his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

Amen

11 *The candle is extinguished and the minister departs.*