

October 21, 2016

It was one week ago today that I buried my son, Joseph Harold, in the blessed ground of Gate of Heaven cemetery of the Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington (http://www.ccaaw.org/cemeteries_gateheaven.html). We were so lucky to be referred in early May to A.J. Cole (<http://www.colefuneral.com/>) by our pastor and A. J. made sure Joseph would have a plot in the infant section if and when we needed one. Yes, we literally had to plan our son's funeral before we were even able to plan his birth properly which is how "fun" this pregnancy was for us. As a matter of fact, I remember telling one team of doctors sometime in mid-summer that, "I have already planned my son's funeral I would now like to plan his birth", I said with my baby planner open to A.J.'s brochure and my notes from our meeting with him. Well, we did have an amazing birth as I tell everyone that he is the only one of our three children who came out of me crying and had the highest Apgar scores of all our sons! Go Joseph – you were such a fighter!

Yesterday, Brian and I were able to sign off on our final design of his bronze flat marker for Joseph's gravesite. It is driving me crazy to not have a marker on his grave. Patrick, my first born, and I went to the cemetery last Saturday and put a beautiful wreath with a slate marker hanging in the middle with Joseph's name and dates of birth and passing. It put me at some ease, but the cemetery only allows flat markers so I was anxious about getting one made ASAP. Again, God has put so many good people in our path along the way since we found out about Joseph's diagnosis at 10 weeks of pregnancy. A. J. referred us to Niv (<http://www.frammonument.com/>) and he has worked with our family on two different days to get everything that was important to us all to fit on such a small infant marker. We are very happy and trust that during a process that is inevitably slow, Niv will be sure to move it along as quick as he can so Joseph will have his first Christmas present! We are so thankful to all who sent memorials that helped to secure this special marker.

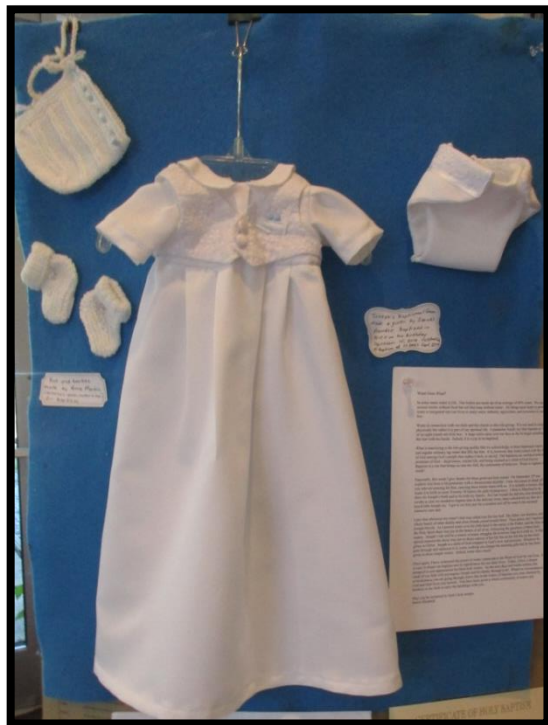
Cards! The cards dear friends and family have sent have been so touching, up lifting, and tear welling. We just got three more today and I do not tire of any – thank you dear friends and family! I look forward to getting the mail and seeing how our precious baby boy is remembered.

Today, my mother and I finished up 54 flannel and polar fleece blankets for the Holy Cross NICU. I picked up Patrick from school and all four of us went to the hospital to deliver the blankets and some newborn and preemie boy baby clothes. It was very cathartic. It was so nice how the nurses took time to dress Joseph (and other babies of course) in actual clothing after his 2nd day in the NICU. They wrapped him and his bassinet pad in a freshly

cleaned homemade blanket every day and night. Oh, and the hats – he got a new one to wear every day which is such a nice change from the blue and pink hospital issued baby hat that all babies are given including his big brother Theodore who had to wear his hat for all of his 6 days in the Shady Grove NICU. Mom and I hope to make and give NICU blankets an annual event especially since it will be so near Joseph's birthday. It will be a nice remembrance for both she and I.



Isaiah's Promise continues to offer their support and prayers – Brian and I marvel at how much they have given us and how they have influenced the major epocs of Joseph's life – their volunteers sent Brian and I gifts on Mother's day and Father's day this year when I was pregnant. Gifts that will be ever so important when we celebrate our first Mother and Father's day after our child's birth with no new child to smile upon. It is their volunteers who knitted his first blanket and made his baptimal gown and his burial gown both so perfect and gorgeous. We have nothing but gratitude for their organization (<http://www.isaiahspromise.net/>)



Baptismal gown and diaper cover, Isaiah's Promise



Burial Gown, Isaiah's Promise

Hat and booties Ann Martin



Joseph with Mommy October 6, 2016