

Re:UPDATE: Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb

Dear Directors:

The “Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb” has been approved for use in the dioceses of the United States in both English and Spanish since May. The blessing is posted online as a color PDF at www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/prayers/pro-life-blessings.cfm and is now available in a booklet form (English and Spanish). Eventually it will be included in future editions of the Book of Blessings/Bendicional. A complimentary copy of the “Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb” will be mailed to you soon and additional copies may be ordered through USCCB Publishing (Item no. 7-316) at www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=7-316.

The blessing celebrates the gift of the child in the womb and includes prayers for the child, the mother, the father, the family and the broader community. The blessing originated when then-Bishop Joseph Kurtz of Knoxville (now Archbishop of Louisville), at the request of one of his parish priests, asked the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities whether a blessing existed for a child in the womb. When none was found, the committee prepared a text and submitted it to the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship in March of 2008. It was approved by the full body of bishops in November 2008, and then sent to Rome for editing and final approval.

Use

The blessing can be offered by priests (or deacons) within the context of the Mass as well as outside of Mass. A shortened and adapted prayer card for family use at home will be released shortly. We hope that you will encourage parishes to make use of the blessing more than once a year so that all expectant parents might benefit. Possible dates to consider could include: Respect Life Sunday, during Respect Life Month, during Advent, near the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), near the celebrations of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12), during the Christmas Season, near the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, during May, on Mother’s Day, and other suitable times.

Pastoral Considerations

1. While the Church celebrates and prays for the protection of children in the womb, she also reaches out in love to those couples who have lost children, as well as couples who struggle in hope for a child or who have received an adverse prenatal diagnosis. In a special way, we recognize that no matter how short their time in this world, each child is a gift to be loved and cherished. As you promote the use of the blessing, please be sensitive to those who have recently lost a child through abortion, miscarriage, or other infant loss. Prayers for couples who are hoping for the gift of a child, who have lost a child, or those waiting to adopt can be included during the prayers of the faithful or in the homily.

2. While the rite includes a special blessing for mothers, fathers and siblings, sensitivity needs to be exercised in cases where the expectant mother has been abandoned by the father.
3. Those promoting events surrounding the blessing have found it helpful to advertise the blessing using images, photos or sonograms. Please be aware that some may view the use of sonograms as private medical information rather than as images of loved ones.
4. When the bishops created the rite for the blessing, they intentionally restricted its use to priests and deacons. Directors should make clear to enthusiastic lay people that the blessing should never be used outside of abortion facilities, where some might attempt to bless unborn children and their mothers as they head into the abortion facility.

Resources

We are attaching a [sample bulletin announcement](#) and prayers of the faithful which can be modified as needed.

Feedback

We look forward to hearing how the blessing and prayers have been used. Please send us videos or photos that you would allow us to highlight or distribute to prolife@usccb.org. May God bless you in your efforts to promote respect for human life!

Sincerely in Christ,

Tom Grenchik

(Sample Bulletin Announcement)

Celebrating the Rite of the Blessing of the Child in the Womb

Join us in celebrating and praying for mothers, fathers, and families, and for children in the womb. On Sunday, _____, the ___ Mass will include a special blessing for unborn children and their expectant parents. We will also pray for couples who are hoping for the gift of a child and for couples who have suffered the loss of a child.

Please RSVP to _____ at _____ if you wish to receive the blessing.

(Sample Prayers of the Faithful)

Celebrant:

Let us present our prayers through Jesus, our Light and our Life, who calls us his brothers and sisters, as we respond, "Lord, hear our prayer."

Lector:

1. For the Church commissioned to preach the gospel: may its response to the Gospel call always echo Mary's "yes," *we pray to the Lord...*
2. For leaders of nations working for peaceful solutions to global conflict, and for our elected officials entrusted with serving the common good: may they serve with respect and understanding and bring God's justice to all, *we pray to the Lord...*
3. For all mothers and fathers who await the birth of a child, especially those present here today, and may the Lord protect all unborn sons and daughters and bring them to a safe delivery, *we pray to the Lord...*
4. For all married couples who are struggling to conceive a child, may the Lord grant them peace as they trust in his will, *we pray to the Lord...*
5. For all of us gathered here in worship: may we find inspiration in Mary's trust to surrender our lives to Christ, *we pray to the Lord...*
6. For those who have died, and those who grieve and mourn, especially parents who have lost a child: may they find consolation in God's promise of life, *we pray to the Lord...*

Celebrant:

O God of mercy,
who raised up the lowly and filled the hungry with good things,
be with us in our need,
so that in all that we do we may proclaim your goodness
and offer ourselves for your service.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*