

SAMPLE ACTIVITY

Blessing of a Child in the Womb

The Solemnity of the Annunciation is a perfect occasion to offer the *Blessing of a Child in the Womb* to expectant parents in your parish community. The celebration of the Annunciation commemorates the visit of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to inform her that she was to be the mother of our Savior. After giving her consent to God's word, Mary conceives Jesus in her womb and becomes the mother of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In modern times, this feast day has taken on special meaning in Respect Life ministry. Scientific advances have allowed us to confirm that life begins at conception. This solemnity helps us to recognize the gift of new life from its very beginning. It calls us to reflect on how we are to care for, protect, and welcome new life, as the Blessed Mother did for the Christ child.

Because the solemnity often falls during the week, we recommend that parishes offer this blessing during Sunday Masses the weekend prior in anticipation of this important feast of the Church.

This blessing may take place within Mass (after the Prayer of the Faithful), as an additional solemn blessing at the end of Mass, or within the context of a brief celebration of the Word of God, by a priest or deacon.

A free downloadable PDF version of the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*, ordering information for a bound copy, and supplemental information can also be found online at usccb.org/blessing-in-the-womb.

Materials

- ◆ Copy of the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*

Directions

1. Contact your pastor, and ask if he would consider offering the *Blessing of a Child in the Womb* near the Solemnity of the Annunciation. We recommend including it within the Sunday Masses on the weekend prior in anticipation of the solemnity. This allows the greatest number of parishioners to participate and highlights the humanity of all unborn children. You could also consider suggesting just one Mass at which to offer the blessing. However, your pastor may have reasons to offer the blessing at another time to best suit the needs of your particular community.
2. If your pastor agrees to offer the blessing, ask whether he needs you to order or download a copy of the Rite of Blessing. Make sure that he receives any needed materials well in advance. Perhaps he would appreciate you downloading and sending him the PDF version while he waits for the booklet to be delivered.
3. Once a date and time for the blessing have been confirmed, plan to announce the opportunity to receive the blessing to parishioners one to two weeks in advance. Use the sample announcements to include an invitation in the bulletin and share it in any announcements before or after Mass. If your parish utilizes social media, share the news on any relevant social media accounts.
4. You may want to consider providing an email address or phone number for RSVPs, so you have some sense for parishioner participation. If the blessing will be offered at multiple Masses, consider asking expectant parents who would like to receive the blessing to let you know which Mass they plan to attend. You may want to confirm that at least one expectant mother will be present for any Mass in which you plan for the blessing to be offered (especially in parishes without many expectant parents).
5. During the week in which the blessing is planned, touch base with your pastor once more. *Ask if there is anything you can do to help.*

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