From the USCCB…Rite of Blessing of a Child in the Womb

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. 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!