

EXPECTANT JOY

*A Prayer of the Domestic Church
Celebrating the Gift of Life*

SECOND EDITION

Mike and Evie Day

Second Edition (2026):

Permission to Publish

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✠ Erik T. Pohlmeier
Bishop of St. Augustine
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*For Faustina Estelle, Anthony Michael,
and Eden Elizabeth Day*

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! The gift of new life is a joyous occasion for not only your family, whose loving union has called this child into existence, but for the entire Church. As a family, you are a “domestic church,” a communion of life and love in the image of God which is a visible witness of unity to the world and the foundation of the larger Church. *Expectant Joy* has been created for you as a celebration of this gift and an opportunity to prepare for the arrival of your child through prayerful reflection on the mystery of creation.

The structure of *Expectant Joy* is modelled after the Liturgy of the Hours, the universal prayer of the Church, and has been divided according to trimesters during your pregnancy, with each person of the Trinity as a focal point of meditation. The first trimester reflects on God the Father as Creator, the beginning and end of all that exists, contemplating the awe and mystery of this invitation to participate in the act of co-creation with Him; the second on the Holy Spirit and His work throughout salvation history in building up the people of God, from the creation of Adam and Eve up to this very moment; and the third on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His redemptive suffering that brought forth eternal life for mankind.

Before beginning this prayer you are encouraged to contact your parish priest or deacon to celebrate the Rite of Blessing for a Child in the Womb provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The Blessing can be found on the USCCB website under Pro-Life Activities:

<https://www.usccb.org/blessing-in-the-womb>

When to Pray

Whether the test results have just come back positive or the due date is a week away, you can use *Expectant Joy* at any time during the pregnancy. Your prayer journey will begin with an Opening Dedication to be recited as your first “week” regardless of which week of pregnancy you start. This initial prayer includes a blessing of a wreath (if you should choose to include one as part of the journey but is entirely optional) and a blessing for all members of the

family. Your prayer journey then continues the following week by jumping ahead to your current week of pregnancy. For example, if a mother begins *Expectant Joy* during her 15th week of pregnancy, she would start with the Opening Dedication as the prayer for that week and then she would continue the following week with Week 16.

The prayers in *Expectant Joy* are meant to be recited on the first day of each new week of pregnancy, but they can be repeated as frequently throughout the week as desired. Crossing into a new trimester is a significant milestone and each is a transition point for the prayers. The start of a new trimester begins with a special opening prayer that precedes the usual prayers, then continues with the standard format for each subsequent week leading up to the next trimester.

Expectant Joy was originally accompanied by a wreath with 3 candles that we had created in the home. The circular shape is a traditional symbol of time in eternity, possessing both finite dimensions with endless movement – like the wedding rings – and the floral arrangements used for the construction of a wreath, even if artificial, are a symbol of life. The candles represented the trimesters of pregnancy and we would light one candle per trimester at the beginning of each prayer. In our household, having this wreath displayed was how a new pregnancy came to be announced and it would remain in a prominent place in the living room. But this is an entirely optional accessory and the prayers can be said without it.

Structure of the Prayers

Weekly prayers begin with the opening and an optional lighting of the candle(s) if a wreath is used. The antiphon (a short refrain) for the psalmody is said by the leader, followed by a recitation of the psalm by the family. It is common when praying the Liturgy of the Hours to divide participants into groups and have them alternate recitation of the stanzas (or strophes) of the psalm. This practice is encouraged in a family or group setting. For example, if the father is leading the family in prayer, the father would recite the opening antiphon, then proceed to recite the first strophe of the psalm along with one or more of the children. Then the mother and the other children could continue reciting the next strophe together, and they would continue to alternate until the psalm has been recited in its entirety. The psalmody concludes with the whole group saying the antiphon all together.

A reading from Scripture, which continues the focus of meditation for the trimester, as well as a response to the recited word of God, follows the

psalmody. Anyone in the family can be assigned to do the reading and this reader would also lead the responsory that follows, reciting the first line and the rest of the family reciting the second line, marked by a dash, all together.

A canticle from the book of Revelation is said with the leader reciting the opening antiphon then everyone together reciting the canticle itself and closing antiphon.

The leader then concludes with the closing prayer and acclamation. An antiphon in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary is also provided for recitation by the group, praising her example of motherhood and invoking her intercession to assist you on this journey.

When that exciting moment of birth comes, the USCCB provides a blessing for couples that can be performed by a priest, deacon, or layperson:

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/persons/blessing-parents-before-childbirth>.

Thank you for your love and commitment in the sacrament of marriage that are such a powerful witness of God's love for the world!

OPENING DEDICATION

Expectant Joy begins with an Opening Dedication which offers praise to God for the gift of this moment and provides special blessings for the family. You'll continue your journey next week by jumping ahead to the prayers for your current week of pregnancy.

In + the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

Heavenly Father, our adored Creator,

From the most brilliant star in the sky to the smallest particle on earth, you brought forth into existence the whole of the cosmos with a single word. By your awesome power all life was created and through your infinite love all things are sustained in their being. And yet, among such glory around us, here we stand, dust and ash, as the pinnacle of your creation. Who are we, Lord, that you are mindful of us? What is mortal man that you should care for him?

Today we begin a celebration of this divine mystery. We rejoice in your marvelous work and the beginning of a new life created in love. You have called another human being into the world and through them you will reveal unto the world a greater joy. Let us take this opportunity to remember not only our own humble beginnings as your children but also to understand more deeply the divine mystery of your love for us.

Blessing of the wreath (sprinkle with holy water if available).

Lord, pour forth your blessings upon us as we light the candles of this wreath in preparation for the birth of our new child. May we who meditate upon this gift of life come into a deeper love for you who created us, your Son who redeemed us, and your Holy Spirit who sustains us. Let us be ever mindful of you, Lord, and praise your glorious name forever!
- Amen.

The first candle is lit.

Ant. We will bless the Lord forever.

Not to us, LORD, not to us
but to your name give glory
because of your mercy and faithfulness.

Why should the nations say,
“Where is their God?”
Our God is in heaven
and does whatever he wills.

The house of Israel trusts in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
The house of Aaron trusts in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.

Those who fear the LORD trust in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
The LORD remembers us and will bless us,
will bless the house of Israel,
will bless the house of Aaron,

Will bless those who fear the LORD,
small and great alike.
May the LORD increase your number,
yours and your descendants.

May you be blessed by the LORD,
maker of heaven and earth.
The heavens belong to the LORD,
but he has given the earth to the children of Adam.

The dead do not praise the LORD,
not all those go down into silence.
It is we who bless the LORD,
both now and forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Ant. We will bless the Lord forever

READING

Genesis 1:26-31a

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.

Pause for a moment of silence, receiving the Word of God into your heart as the Blessed Mother did, letting it dwell within you and come alive.

RESPONSORY

You set your majesty above the heavens.

- How awesome is your name through all the earth.

I praise you when I see your heavens, the work of your hands,

- Through all the earth.

Glory be to the Father...

- How awesome is your name through all the earth.

REVELATION CANTICLE

Revelation 4:8b, 11

Ant. Those who fear the Lord trust in the Lord, who is their help and shield.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty
who was, and who is, and who is to come.

Worthy are you, Lord our God,

to receive glory and honor and power,

for you created all things;

because of your will they came to be and were created.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Ant. Those who fear the Lord trust in the Lord, who is their help and shield.

CLOSING BLESSINGS/PRAYER

Lord of heaven and earth, of every people and nation, before we were formed in the womb you knew us and here we stand today as your humble servants. We invoke your blessing upon us to continue in faith, hope, and love, the mission of your Kingdom here on earth.

[Blessing of the new child]

May Almighty God bless you and keep you safe during this early stage of your life. You are truly a gift and it is with great joy that we welcome you into this world. May you grow to love and know the Lord, your God, even before you see the light of day - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

[Blessing of the mother]

May Almighty God bless you and grant you His strength as you have been entrusted with a great calling; to nurture and care for this new life given to us. In your trials, may you be united to the sufferings of Christ, bearing all things for His glory. In your joys, may you encounter His delight in creation. And in all things, may you be renewed in your sacred vocation as mother. May you find inspiration and consolation in the example of our Blessed Mother, who possessed and kept such an intimate love of her child, Jesus, close to her immaculate heart - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

[Blessing of the father - by the mother]

May Almighty God bless you and grant you the graces needed to persevere in leadership of this family, that our children may come to know the love He has for them as their heavenly Father. In your service to our domestic church, may God fill you with the same spirit of humility and sacrifice as Christ, who leads the Church here on earth - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Amen.

[Blessing of children]

May Almighty God bless you and grant you the graces needed to be loving brothers and sisters to this new life. As you continue to grow in faith and love, may you always be a loyal companion and guide to your new sibling. Let your witness be an inspiration and source of consolation through their own growth - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- Amen.

ACCLAMATION

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

- Amen.

ANTIPHON IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Loving mother of the Redeemer,
gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again.
To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator,
yet remained a virgin after as before.
You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting,
have pity on us poor sinners.

PSALMODY OF THE FIRST TRIMESTER

Psalm 115:1-3, 9-18a

Not to us, LORD, not to us
but to your name give glory
because of your mercy and faithfulness.

Why should the nations say,
“Where is their God?”
Our God is in heaven
and does whatever he wills.

The house of Israel trusts in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
The house of Aaron trusts in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.

Those who fear the LORD trust in the LORD,
who is their help and shield.
The LORD remembers us and will bless us,
will bless the house of Israel,
will bless the house of Aaron,

Will bless those who fear the LORD,
small and great alike.
May the LORD increase your number,
yours and your descendants.

May you be blessed by the LORD,
maker of heaven and earth.
The heavens belong to the LORD,
but he has given the earth to the children of Adam.

The dead do not praise the LORD,
not all those go down into silence.
It is we who bless the LORD,
both now and forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

❧ WEEK 4 ❧

OPENING

In + the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

How great is the Lord, exalted above all forever.
- He is glorious and worthy of all praise.
May the love of God burn within our hearts.
- Both now and forever.

The first candle is lit.

PSALMODY OF THE FIRST TRIMESTER (Psalm on page 6)

Ant. We will bless the Lord forever.

READING

Genesis 2:4-7, 22-24

This is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the ground, but a stream was welling up out of the earth and watering all the surface of the ground— then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, the man said:

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called ‘woman,’
for out of man this one has been taken.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.

Pause for a moment of silence, receiving the Word of God into your heart as the Blessed Mother did, letting it dwell within you and come alive.

RESPONSORY

You set your majesty above the heavens.

- How awesome is your name through all the earth.

I praise you when I see your heavens, the work of your hands,

- Through all the earth.

Glory be to the Father...

- How awesome is your name through all the earth.

REVELATION CANTICLE

Revelation 4:8b, 11

Ant. Those who fear the Lord trust in the Lord, who is their help and shield.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty
who was, and who is, and who is to come.

Worthy are you, Lord our God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things;
because of your will they came to be and were created.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Ant. Those who fear the Lord trust in the Lord, who is their help and shield.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord,

Send your blessings upon our family, most especially upon this new life we have received. May we always be faithful stewards of your many gifts, open to the great work you are accomplishing through us. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

- Amen.

ACCLAMATION

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

- Amen.

ANTIPHON IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Loving mother of the Redeemer,
gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again.
To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator,
yet remained a virgin after as before.
You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting,
have pity on us poor sinners.

❧ WEEK 5 ❧

OPENING

In + the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- Amen.

How great is the Lord, exalted above all forever.
- He is glorious and worthy of all praise.
May the love of God burn within our hearts.
- Both now and forever.

The first candle is lit.

PSALMODY OF THE FIRST TRIMESTER (Psalm on page 6)

Ant. We will bless the Lord forever.

READING

Acts 17:24-28

The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything. Rather it is he who gives to everyone life and breath and everything. He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one