

Awaiting the Birth of Your Child

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“The Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). Congratulations! You are parents! You have said “yes” to God’s creative love in your lives. You have said “yes” to life. You are having a baby! Through your love a new and eternal life is being made flesh!

“You knit me together in my mother’s womb,” says Psalm 139. Right now, God is knitting this child in your womb. God has called your

child into being and loves your child in a deeply personal way. And God has invited you as mother and father to participate in this divine work of Creation! You responded first by loving each other, and out of this love God has made a new life! With God you will nurture, protect, and love this miracle of Creation. Your child is literally a work of love! You are living in a special time, a time of waiting and preparing. So much will happen in the womb,



hidden from your sight. Often the baby has begun the journey toward birth even before the parents are aware of his or her existence. Within the first three months all of the baby's major organs will develop. In the following month, the mother will usually have her first sensation of the baby's movement within her. At this time the baby can hiccup, cry, and react to outside noises. In the latter months of life in the womb, the baby even dreams! By 37 weeks your baby will have matured enough to survive outside the womb with relative ease. In this time of waiting and preparation, how can you participate in your child's miraculous journey toward birth? Of course, your doctor or midwife will provide medical care for mother and child, and will advise exercise, childbirth classes, a nutritious diet, and rest. He or she will also monitor the baby's development and answer your questions and concerns. Beyond this care, however, you have numerous other opportunities to be involved with your baby during his or her life in the womb. Your relationship with your baby does not begin at birth. It is already going on! Your developing baby is capable of moving, sensing, hearing, and remembering. He or she is coming to know and love the sound of your voices. The Gospel according to Luke records that John the Baptist leaped with joy in his mother's womb when Mary greeted Elizabeth (1:41). Both mother and father—and the baby's brothers or sisters, if there are any—can begin to communicate their love for this baby. Perhaps you know now whether your baby is a boy or a girl and have already chosen a name—call your baby by name. Pray aloud with your baby, with simple words such as "Alleluia" or "Glory to God," or with a line from the psalms. Sing to your baby: nursery rhymes,



lullabies or hymns sung at Mass. A wonderful way to relax together is to listen to gentle music with your baby. You can even read a short children's story to your baby during the later months. It is possible to observe your baby's moods and movement patterns.

Your baby can communicate with you through turning, rhythmic movements, and gentle or sharp kicks. When does he sleep? When is she most active? What kind of music does your baby respond to? Which of your activities stimulates him? Watching TV? Driving in the car? Walking? By the time your baby is born, you will have already created a loving bond and established a strong relationship with each other. Pregnancy is a special time for parents (and the rest of the family) to deepen their love for each other as they wonder at their baby's growth in the womb. Pregnancy will offer you a challenge: to slow down, relax, and reflect on the miracle of life and its effect on your life together.

This is the time to communicate your fears, hopes, and expectations to each other. It is a time that calls for patience and understanding; this new life presents a tremendous change for you. It is an occasion of great grace. What an immense privilege it is to bring a new life into the world! Through this experience we are given a fuller sense of what it means to call God the Creator and Father. And when on that wonderful day you finally hold your baby in your arms, your joy will be immense. And, perhaps surprised by the strength of your love for this child, you will also have a new sense of how much the Father loves you!

For Further Reading
Infant Baptism: A Parish Celebration. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994.

