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## THE SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM

The Spiritual Adoption Program saves the lives of unborn children at risk of abortion. This is accomplished through intercessory prayer. Individuals pledge to pray daily for nine months for the life of an unborn baby to be spared from abortion. Although the child is unknown to the person praying, God knows the identity of the child and protects the unborn child from abortion.

This is a program that can be used in parishes, schools, religious education classes, and individuals who pledge to pray daily for an unborn child. The short prayer used is from the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. *"Dear Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of the unborn child \_\_\_\_\_, that I have spiritually adopted who is in danger of abortion."* According to Archbishop Sheen, those who invoke this prayer for the nine months of a baby's developing life will intercede and save the life of a child who is known only to God.

The purpose of the Spiritual Adoption Program is to save the lives of unborn children but this program also does much more. It raises the awareness of abortion and educates about the developing baby in the womb. It also provides mothers in need with assistance from donated baby items given at a baby shower or birthday party celebration for the spiritually adopted babies at the end of the program.

Spiritual Adoption is powerful. First, and most important, it saves babies through prayer. But secondly, it has a salutary effect on the thoughts and opinions of those exposed to the program. If the program is run well, then it is constantly in the forefront. This can be accomplished by: posters at the church or school, weekly bulletin announcements, developmental updates, weekly prayer intentions, banners, and other available forms of publicity. All this promotion keeps the abortion issue alive and instills in everyone (children as well as adults) the dignity and sacredness of the unborn. It is a reminder that life truly begins at conception. Men, women, and children exposed to this information will be aware of the impact of an abortion decision.

A person praying is such a simple yet powerful act. We have the power to save the lives of the unborn through spiritual adoption even while abortion remains legal. Prayer unleashes that power. Imagine the lives that could be saved by this program!

## **PARISH SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM TIMELINE**

### Pre Planning

1. Get approval from the pastor. Make sure they understand the mechanics of the program. (See Appendix I)
2. Decide when to begin and end. Anytime is possible but some suggestions are:
  - Begin in January and end in October during Respect Life Month.
  - Begin on the feast of the Annunciation on March 25<sup>th</sup> and end on Christmas Day.
  - Begin in August and end in May on Mothers' Day.
  - Begin in October during Respect Life Month and end in July.
  - Begin on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception to September 8, the birth of Mary
3. Order materials: posters, banners, prayer/pledge cards (see Appendix X at end of packet)

### 2 Weeks Before

1. Place an initial announcement in the bulletin inviting the parishioners to participate. (See Appendix IV)
2. Print promotional flyer (Appendix II) to be used in bulletin and parish racks. They may also be distributed among parish ministries a few weeks before.

### One Week Before

1. Repeat the previous week's announcement in the bulletin and have this information announced from the pulpit. (See Appendix IV)

### Week Of

1. Have the first poster displayed in the narthex and the first banner in the entrance to the church parking lot up for Spiritual Adoption Sunday.
2. Print Pledge Cards (Appendix III – 2 options provided) on heavy stock and cut the individual cards to be ready for Sunday.
3. Place prayer/pledge cards and pens in the pews and the basket to receive the pledges at the foot of the altar (if possible) on Spiritual Adoption Sunday.
4. Ideally, during the homily the priest or deacon explains the program and asks parishioners to make a pledge to spiritually adopt an unborn baby at risk of abortion, to fill out their pledge cards, and to bring them up to place in the basket at the foot of the altar. While parishioners fill out their pledge cards and take them up to the altar, appropriate music is sung or played.
5. Place participation instructions in the bulletin. (Appendix V)
6. After all the Masses, collect the pledges and place them in a special place in an attractive container where they will remain until the end of the program. Suggestions are: the Adoration Chapel, in front of the Blessed Mother Shrine, in front of the Holy Family statue, etc...
7. Place additional prayer/pledge cards in the narthex or Adoration Chapel (or other appropriate location) for those who pledge later.

### 1-2 Weeks into the Program

1. Place a thank you note in the bulletin and an announcement of how many pledges were made.

### Weekly throughout the Program

1. Remind people to keep praying in the bulletin. (Appendix VI)

2. During the prayers of the faithful, regularly include a special prayer intention for the spiritually adopted babies (Appendix VII)
3. Display the appropriate developmental poster in the narthex and the corresponding banner in the parking lot.

#### Once a Month

1. Place a description of the development of the babies in the bulletin or information racks (if possible). See Appendix VIII)

#### End of the Program

1. At the conclusion of the program, host some type of parish celebration—a baby shower, or “birth”day party. Invite parishioners who participated in the program to donate a baby item or monetary gift that will be given to the local pregnancy crisis center for women in need of assistance. Working with a woman’s group or ministry like the Council of Catholic Women is helpful. See Appendix IX and X for more detailed instructions and resources.

## SCHOOL SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM TIMELINE

### Pre Planning

1. Get approval from the principal. Make sure they understand the mechanics of the program. (See Appendix I)
2. Begin during the second week of September. This program will run from September to May (Mother's Day). The principal or individual classroom teachers will explain the program briefly to the children as age appropriate.
3. Order materials: posters, banners, prayer/pledge cards (see Appendix X at end of packet)

### One Week Before

A notice in the school's newsletter should be sent to the parents so that they know the program will be going on in the school/religious ed/faith formation class. The parish community may be involved in this program through the Church at the same time.

### Beginning of Program

1. The children are asked as a class to spiritually adopt an unborn baby. It is advisable to have the class name their baby.
2. Each child will be given a prayer card with a prayer that the class will pray together every day. There is a prayer card for children in grades 1-5, 6-8, and high school (See Appendix X).
3. The class will fill out a pledge card which will be left in a special place in the school or church (such as in front of a statue of the Blessed Mother).

### During the Program

1. For the following nine months, one *Little One Sweet* banner may be displayed at the entrance to the school/church parking lot and also a corresponding *Little One* poster could be displayed in a prominent place in the school or in every classroom so that everyone can see how the baby is developing (See Appendix X). These posters are very gentle and appealing full color posters that both depict and describe the baby's development each month (there is no mention of abortion on the posters). There are also posters with all nine months of life in the womb illustrated on one 24x36 poster and brochures with all the *Little One* poster pictures on one brochure that may be used in each classroom. It is suggested that if this poster is used it be cut apart so that only one month of development of introduced each month.

### After the Program

A birthday party may be held at the end of the program in May and the gifts of baby items may be donated to a local Crisis Pregnancy Center in our Life Ministry Alliance.

**APPENDIX I**  
**SAMPLE LETTER**

To:

From: Respect Life Ministry

Re: Spiritual Adoption Program

We are very excited about introducing this program to you. It has been successfully used in parishes and schools throughout the United States in recent years and has been proven to be very educational, informative, and meaningful.

The purpose of the program is two-fold:

1. To help inform and educate children at an early age about the dignity and sacredness of all human life from conception to natural death.
2. To save the life of an unborn baby and ask God to give the parents the courage and grace they need to bring their baby into the world.

Enclosed for your convenience, professional consideration, and enjoyment is:

1. Overview of the Spiritual Adoption Program
2. Directions to start the program in the parish/school/religious ed/faith formation
3. A brochure of the first nine months...Watch me grow! Educational poster series
4. Age appropriate prayers cards (Appendix VIII)
5. Thank you notes for each month (Appendix IX)

Thank you for helping the participants grow in awareness and appreciation for all life that God has so lovingly created. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Life Ministry with questions or for further assistance: 727-344-1611 \*325.

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **SAMPLE BULLETIN AND PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT**

#### **FOR THE TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE PROGRAM BEGINS**

##### **Spiritual Adoption Program to Begin—Pray for an Unborn Baby**

Everyone loves the beauty and innocence of a baby. As an expression of that love, we will begin an adoption program on [insert date]. We will have the opportunity to spiritually adopt a child who is newly conceived this month. Not all newly conceived babies are allowed to be born. In fact, more than 4,000 babies lose their lives to abortion each day. It is these babies you are being asked to “adopt”. You may “adopt” a child individually or as a family by signing up during Spiritual Adoption Sunday on the weekend of [insert date]. You will be asked to name the child for whom you will be praying, thereby giving the baby the humanity he or she deserves. You will be asked to pray for your unborn child daily for a 9 month period, for the power of prayer is great. You will receive monthly reports through the parish bulletin and the posters in the narthex describing your baby’s development. There are millions of unborn babies at risk of abortion who desperately need your prayers. Won’t you please spiritually adopt one and share the love for life that God has given you?

## APPENDIX V

### SAMPLE BULLETIN AND PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT ON SPIRITUAL ADOPTION SUNDAY

*The below may be personalized for the parish.*

My Dear Friends in Christ,

With assaults on human life increasing at an alarming rate, I am asking you today to make a personal commitment to pray daily for one unborn child who is in danger of being aborted. Unfortunately, since the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, the number of abortions has increased to 1.4 million annually. Each of us is being asked to “spiritually adopt” one unknown baby for the next nine months. We will pray for this child that he or she will be carried to term and experience the fullness of life, as God intended.

For just a moment, picture a young woman who just this week discovered that she is seven weeks pregnant. What she may not know is that her baby’s heart has been beating for four weeks, he or she can flex his/her fingers and toes, suck on his or her thumb, and is totally dependent on her. She may not know where to turn. She is considering aborting this baby. She may be under pressure from others and think there is no other option. But many people, like us, do care enough to help her and her baby. All our prayers can make a difference between whether her child will be born or aborted. Our prayers can also be a form of spiritual support for both of the baby’s parents.

Please take a prayer/pledge card available today and pray the short prayer daily for your “adopted child” for a 9 month period. You are encouraged to name your baby and give him or her a personal identity. At the end of the program on [insert date], we will celebrate the ‘birth’ of our spiritually adopted children with a baby shower. In this way we can help, in a very tangible way, mothers in need who bring to term a beautiful gift of life. All gifts collected at the shower will be given to our local pregnancy crisis center [insert name].

Please now take a moment to fill out a prayer/pledge card in the pew. Keep the portion with the prayer with you. Bring the pledge portion up to the foot of the altar and place it in the basket. If you need more time to think about this, please take a prayer/pledge card home with you and return it to church next week. A basket will be provided in the narthex for your pledges.

May God bless you.



## APPENDIX VI

### SAMPLE REMINDER BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Please pray! The babies are counting on us.**

Remember to pray daily for your spiritually adopted child and his/her parents. During your earthly life this spiritually adopted child of yours is known only to God, but in the world to come it is hoped that you will meet this child whose life was spared by your prayers and spend eternal happiness with him/her.

**Spiritual Adoption Program –A reminder**

*“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of the unborn baby that I have spiritually adopted who is in danger of abortion.” Prayer of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.* Please remember to pray daily for your Spiritually Adopted Baby and the baby’s mother and father.

**\*It is recommended that something appears in the bulletin weekly—either a reminder to pray or a description of the development of the baby.**

## **APPENDIX VII**

### **LITURGICAL INTERCESSIONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM**

For the good health and safety of the unborn babies that were spiritually adopted by our parish family, let us pray to the Lord.

That God, who knows and loves us even from the womb, may inspire and sustain us in praying for our spiritually adopted unborn babies in danger of abortion, we pray to the Lord.

That our spiritually adopted unborn babies may be welcomed and protected by the human family, we pray to the Lord.

That the parents of our spiritually adopted babies may be inspired by the image of our Blessed Mother to choose life for the life in their womb, we pray to the Lord.

That the mothers of our spiritually adopted babies who are pregnant and afraid may, with the help of the Church and our prayers, find the courage and strength they need to give life, we pray to the Lord.

That in the spirit of welcome taught by our Lord, the parents of the unborn children we have spiritually adopted will embrace their new gift of life, we pray to the Lord.

That God may bless the mission and resources of the crisis pregnancy centers that will provide alternatives and support for the mothers of our spiritually adopted unborn babies, we pray to the Lord.

In thanksgiving for all our parishioners who spiritually adopted an unborn child and are praying daily to keep their babies safe from abortion, we pray to the Lord.

For our spiritually adopted unborn babies, that our love and prayers for them may keep them safe until the joyous day of their birth, we pray to the Lord.

For every little child and especially for those who live in the womb of the mothers of our spiritually adopted babies that they might grow in the image and likeness of the God who made them, we pray to the Lord.

For every child who lives in the womb and especially those unborn babies that we have spiritually adopted, that God will send his angels to guard and protect all vulnerable children, we pray to the Lord.

In thanksgiving for the many children who have been saved from abortion through the efforts of our parishioners who spiritually adopted them, we pray to the Lord.

## **APPENDIX VIII**

### **MONTHLY INSERTS ON THE DEVELOPING BABY**

#### **One Month:**

Your spiritually adopted baby has been quite active over the past month. Already your baby is 10,000 times bigger than at conception. Your baby has developed the foundations of his brain, spinal cord, and nervous system by the 20<sup>th</sup> day. His heart began to beat on the 21<sup>st</sup> day and is pumping blood through its own circulatory system. The blood type can be different from the mother's. Your baby is most vulnerable during the next month of being aborted. Pray that the Lord of Life might move the heart of his mother to give him the most precious gift of all – the gift of life.

#### **Two Months:**

Your baby is making progress developing all of her external features and internal organs. Her brain is functioning at 40 days. Her mother can hear her heartbeat now on an ultrasonic stethoscope. Her milk teeth buds are present at 6 ½ weeks. And it has been reported that a two-month old baby can suck her thumb. From this moment onward, your spiritually adopted baby grows and refines her body. But everything she needs to survive once she is born is already present by the end of the eighth week.

#### **Three Months:**

Your baby is quite active in the womb now – although his mother won't feel him for another couple of months. If his mother's womb had a window, you could watch your spiritually adopted baby squint, swallow, and move his tongue. He can make a tight fist if you touch his palm. He obtains the oxygen his body needs through the umbilical cord. The baby you are praying for weighs one ounce. What a miracle he is!

#### **Four Months**

Well your little baby now weighs 6 ounces. She has fingernails and eyelashes. She has her own unique fingerprints which will remain unchanged until she dies. Her taste buds are working. Her sense of hearing is present at 14 weeks. There are no major bodily developments anymore. Your spiritually adopted baby is already well-formed, internally and externally. All she needs now is time to gain weight and grow strong.

#### **Five Months**

Your spiritually adopted baby weighs over one pound now. His mother can feel him moving now. Before he was too small for her to feel. Although he swam with ease in his watery world, he needed to be big and strong enough to kick hard against the outside uterine wall and dent it – the inside wall of the uterus has no feeling. We are mid-way through the pregnancy now. Your prayers have helped your baby's mother continue with her pregnancy and seek the help she needs.

#### **Six Months**

Your spiritually adopted baby is growing quite beautifully now. Her weight is approaching 2 pounds. Babies born prematurely at this time have a very good chance of surviving. The medical advances in caring for extremely small newborn infants are extraordinary indeed. Each passing year, we witness medical advances that allow our medical professionals to save younger and younger premature infants.

### **Seven Months**

You're in the home stretch with your spiritually adopted baby. He is completely formed, and has been since 8 weeks. All he is doing now is gaining weight – and making his mother uncomfortable with his size. But she's not worried now. In a short time, her baby will be born. She has planned to bring him home or place him for adoption. Either way, she knows she can receive the assistance she needs from people like you and from the crisis pregnancy centers. Your baby's mother appreciates the prayers you have said for her and her baby throughout the pregnancy. It hasn't been easy, but your prayers have given her grace to seek the help she needs.

### **Weekend Before the Program Ends**

Next weekend we will conclude our spiritual adoption program. We are planning a "baby shower" for our local crisis pregnancy center {NAME}. We will be collecting disposable diapers, formula, layette items, and new baby clothes (up to 24 months size) for mothers who cannot afford these items. Please bring your item to church next weekend and place in the box or crib we will have in the back of church.

### **Happy Birthday Adopted Baby**

Your spiritually adopted baby was born this month – nine months after her mother conceived her. The only change at birth is a change in the external life support system of the baby. She is no different now than she was before birth except that she breathes and eats differently. She is truly a miracle. She began as a 46 chromosome cell and has developed over the past nine months into this unique human baby. Never before in history, nor ever again, will anyone exist who is just like your spiritually adopted baby. You may never meet the mother and baby but your prayers saved his life.

## APPENDIX X

### Diocesan Life Ministry Alliance of Pregnancy Centers

*These pregnancy centers have signed an agreement with the diocese to follow our moral teachings in their ministry. They are all worthy of your generous support.*

#### **Citrus County**

##### **Pregnancy and Family Life Center**

317 W. Tompkins St.

Inverness, FL 34450

352-344-3030

<http://www.pflcenter.com>

#### **Hernando County**

##### **Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center**

Catholic Charities

8370 Forest Oaks Blvd.

Spring Hill, FL 34606

352-686-9897 \*22

[www.foundationsoflife.org](http://www.foundationsoflife.org)

#### **Hillsborough County**

##### **Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center**

Catholic Charities

2021 E. Busch Blvd.

Tampa, FL 33612

813-631-4398

[www.foundationsoflife.org](http://www.foundationsoflife.org)

#### **Pasco County**

##### **LifeChoices Women's Care**

1527 Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 101

Lutz, FL 33548

(813) 948-PREG (7734)

[www.LifeChoicesWomensCare.org](http://www.LifeChoicesWomensCare.org)

**West Pasco Pregnancy Center**

5330 George Street  
New Port Richey, FL 34652  
727-846-9999

[www.PascoPregnancyFriends.com](http://www.PascoPregnancyFriends.com)

**Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center**

Catholic Charities  
37733 Meridian Ave.  
Dade City, FL 33525  
352-521-1218

[www.foundationsoflife.org](http://www.foundationsoflife.org)

***Pinellas County*****Alpha "A Beginning" Community Outreach Maternity Home**

701 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
727-822-8190

[www.alphahousepinellas.org](http://www.alphahousepinellas.org)

**Kimberly Home Pregnancy Resource Center**

1189 N.E. Cleveland St.  
Clearwater, FL 33755  
727-443-0471

[www.kimberlyhome.org](http://www.kimberlyhome.org)

**Mary's Outreach for Women**

4144 Central Ave.  
St. Petersburg, FL 33713  
727-323-5100

**Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center**

Catholic Charities  
Jeff Forbes Center  
1213 16th Street N.  
St. Petersburg, FL 33705  
727-550-4236

[www.foundationsoflife.org](http://www.foundationsoflife.org)

## APPENDIX IX

### SPIRITUAL ADOPTION BABY SHOWER

**Goal:** To replenish the supply of new and used infant clothing and furniture at crisis pregnancy centers so as to assist them in their services to pregnant women.

#### At least 2 months before

1. Set date, time, and location. Obtain proper permissions.
2. Contact the group that will benefit from the gifts. Ask what is most needed. Invite them to come to the shower to receive the gifts. They would probably be happy to speak to your group about their services and activities.
3. *Optional:* Create a 'Gift Tree' or "Giving Cradle" with items written on paper booties that may be displayed for parishioners to take. Gather volunteers to make booties. Hook paper clips or Christmas tree ornament hooks on each bootie so they can be hung on a tree. Make as many as you think will be taken by parishioners.
4. *Optional:* Get a small dead tree without leaves and paint it white. Fill a large plastic bucket with 4 bricks and fill with sand to steady the tree. Hang the pink and blue booties on the tree. Cover the bucket to make it more attractive. Place it in a visible area at the church and set a white bassinet next to the tree. Decorate the bassinet with pink and blue ribbons. Parishioners may take bootie and return it with a gift to the bassinet. (Similar to the Christmas gift giving tree).
5. Plan agenda for the shower (see below for sample).
6. Plan publicity (see below for flyer)
7. Obtain school principals' permission to send the flyer home with the students requesting participation and clothing. Plan for students to bring clothing to school.
8. Request handmade items (sewn, knitted, crocheted, woodwork, etc...)
9. Print statement in the church bulletin or pass out pamphlets on fetal development to encourage a sense of wonder for the newborn.
10. Recruit needed help for publicity, transportation, refreshments, games, and hosts.

#### 6 Weeks Before

1. Publicize event from now until date of shower.
2. Plan decorations, posters, flowers, and music.
3. Prepare shower games, prizes, and/or other entertainment.

#### 3 Weeks Before

1. Ask pastor to address pro-life theme on Sunday if possible and/or to include a pro-life petition in the general intercessions.
2. Make your strongest publicity effort now.
3. Invite disabled persons who would enjoy the activity.

#### 2 Weeks Before

1. Request pulpit announcement of event. Those who cannot attend can bring gifts to the church. (Specify where the gifts can be dropped off.)
2. Send announcement home with children in the faith formation program and schoolchildren. Include request that used baby clothing and equipment in good condition be brought to the school.

### One Week in Advance

1. Confirm arrangements with crisis pregnancy center in the Life Ministry Alliance. Will they arrange transportation for the donated items? Can they give you thank-you cards to send each shower participant?
2. Be prepared to pick up items left at the church and school.
3. Be sure location has adequate chairs, tables, and space for gifts.
4. Have all supplies ready: nametags, marking pens, supplies for refreshments, decorations, games, prizes, or supplies for other entertainment.
5. Plan to take pictures.
6. Plan follow-up publicity.
7. Prepare large sign to be placed outside of church the day of the shower: *Baby Shower for [Crisis Pregnancy Center] Here Today from [time] to [time]. Bring new and used clothing and equipment to [place].*
8. Review final plans and agenda.

### Final Steps

1. Arrange rooms: chairs, tables, etc...
2. Set up nametags, music, entertainment, refreshments, and place for gifts.
3. Set a happy mood as guests arrive. Music can be helpful.
4. Have appropriate pro-life literature available.
5. Take names and addresses of participants and make a list of each donation. Use this list to send individualized thank you notes.
6. Write a thank you note for the bulletin thanking those who donated items for the collection. Tell them how much was collected and where the donated items are being distributed.

### Sample Agenda

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| 30 minutes | Welcome and socialize.  |
| 30 minutes | Introduce representatives from Crisis Pregnancy Center. Allow time for them to show slides and/or talk about their group. |
| 60 minutes | Shower games, opening gifts, or other entertainment.<br>Refreshments and social time.                                     |



## APPENDIX XII

### SPIRITUAL ADOPTION RESOURCES

<http://flrl.org/SpiritualAdoption.htm> (More Information on the Program)

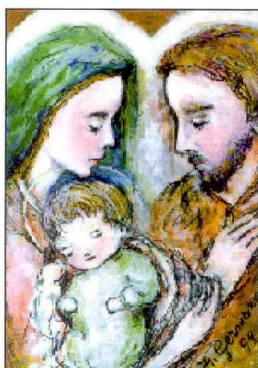
[www.archbalt.org/respect-life/spiritual-adoption/](http://www.archbalt.org/respect-life/spiritual-adoption/) (Additional Information on the Program including prayer cards for grades 1-8)

[www.littleonepublishing.com/insidebrochure.html](http://www.littleonepublishing.com/insidebrochure.html) (Order Developmental Products Here)

[www.prolifebillboards.com/banners.html](http://www.prolifebillboards.com/banners.html) (Developmental Banners)

[www.advocacyjustice.org](http://www.advocacyjustice.org) (Under Sacredness of Life/Beginning of Life, download information packet with pledge cards, and flyer)

*Pray for Unborn Human Life*



*Bundle of Joy, Fr. G. Pegoraro, S.C.  
© 1999 Pious Union of St. Joseph, Inc.*

*Pray for Unborn Human Life*



To order either of these prayer cards  
free of charge (donations suggested),  
send your request to:

Bob Paige  
PO Box 217  
Novi, MI 48376  
[ripaige@msn.com](mailto:ripaige@msn.com)

### Special Thanks

Thank you to Ralph or Yolanda Cory for compiling the Spiritual Adoption program and for implementing it at Holy Family parish in the Diocese of Orlando.

For more information or assistance contact:

The Office of Life Ministry:

[sab@dosp.org](mailto:sab@dosp.org)

727-344-1611 \*325