



ACTION GUIDE

MOTHER'S DAY: MAY 10, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Mother's Day is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the beautiful vocation of motherhood and the gift of life. It calls us to cherish the gift of life that we receive from our mothers and to pray for all women to whom God has entrusted life in a very special way. As we pray in thanksgiving for the gift of all mothers, we also specifically remember mothers experiencing difficult pregnancies and pray they may find support and encouragement in choosing life for their children.

While Mother's Day is not a liturgical or Catholic observance, many parishes still take advantage of this holiday to honor and pray for mothers. The month of May has traditionally been dedicated to Mary, Mother of Jesus. Mother's Day provides an opportunity to pray for mothers while honoring and seeking the intercession of Our Blessed

Mother. It is a fitting day to ask God's special blessing on all mothers. (The *Book of Blessings* contains various options.) If expectant mothers are present in the congregation, Mother's Day is also an opportune time to make use of the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*, which offers blessings for the mother and her unborn child. (See the action guide for the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord for sample announcements and other ideas for using the rite.)

Free downloads and additional electronic resources can be found at respectlifeprogram.org/may.

In our efforts to celebrate the vocation of motherhood, it is also important to remember that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many people: couples struggling with infertility; parents who have lost a child; those who have lost their own mothers; couples longing to welcome a child through adoption; and women and men who have been wounded by participating in abortion. The included homily notes provide considerations for honoring mothers while showing sensitivity and compassion to all who find this holiday particularly challenging.

A sample timeline, announcements, activity, and more are provided to help you observe Mother's Day. You are encouraged to adapt the following resources as needed to fit the needs of your specific parish, school, or ministry. Free downloads and additional electronic resources can be found at respectlifeprogram.org/may.

SIMPLE STEPS

Here is a list of simple steps that you can use in your parish, school, ministry, or home to help celebrate Mother's Day. These steps offer ideas on how to use the provided resources. Each step may not apply to your specific circumstance, but most can be adapted to suit your needs.

1. Consider how your parish can observe Mother's Day.

Many parishes already have some observance of Mother's Day. It may be a special blessing, a reception after Mass, or a May Crowning of Our Blessed Mother. Find out whether your parish already has any plans or regular traditions. Review the Respect Life resources available for Mother's Day such as the *Spiritual Bouquet to Our Blessed Mother* activity that appears later in this action guide and the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb* (available by visiting respectlifeprogram.org/blessing-in-womb). Prayerfully consider which activities may work best in your parish, and if there is a way to complement or integrate with your parish's regular observances.

2. Meet with your pastor.

Schedule a time to meet with your pastor to discuss possibilities for observing Mother's Day in your parish. Express your desire to use this holiday to highlight the gift of life and the beauty of the vocation of motherhood. Explain what ideas you have prayerfully considered, and ask what may be most appropriate for your parish. Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and your pastor throughout your conversation.

3. Make necessary preparations.

Once you have determined how your parish will celebrate Mother's Day, begin making the appropriate plans and preparations. This could include scheduling bulletin announcements, gathering materials, assembling a team of volunteers, and more. See the following *Sample Timeline* for more detailed steps.

4. Pray for all mothers and all those who find Mother's Day challenging.

No matter how your parish has decided to observe Mother's Day, prayer should be the basis of everything we do. As you plan and prepare, remember to lift up in prayer all mothers and to offer thanksgiving for the gift of human life. We also know that Mother's Day is often a difficult holiday for many, including those who have lost a child, those who have lost or are estranged from their own mothers, and those who are struggling or unable to have a child. Pray that they may be filled with the Lord's peace and comforted by His love on what is often a challenging day.

In addition to being a time to celebrate the gift of fatherhood, Father's Day (June 21, 2020) is another important opportunity to highlight respect for human life.

Supplementary resources will be made available to help you celebrate this holiday in your parish, school, or ministry. Sample intercessions, a bulletin reflection, and more will be posted at respectlifeprogram.org/fathers-day.



SAMPLE TIMELINE

We have provided a sample timeline to help you prepare for the celebration of Mother's Day. While these steps apply most directly to a parish coordinator for Respect Life ministry, whatever your role serving the Church, they can help you think about key steps for planning ahead.



FEBRUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

MARCH

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Early to mid-February, 2019

- ◆ Meet with your pastor to discuss options for highlighting the precious gift of life as part of the observance of Mother's Day. Let him know what resources are available, such as the homily helps and sample intercessions that follow later in this guide. Ask him to consider offering the *Blessing of a Child in the Womb* in addition to other special Mother's Day blessings. Share with him your ideas for offering a spiritual bouquet to Our Blessed Mother (sample activity at the end of this Mother's Day action guide). Request permission for any bulletin submissions you have in mind, as well as permission to set up a table in the vestibule or other gathering area. Most importantly, *ask what you can do to help* and whether there's any other information he would like you to provide.
- ◆ Following your conversation with your pastor, contact your parish office to open the lines of communication. Share the results of the conversation with your pastor and what you are requesting for the observance of Mother's Day. Find out bulletin submission guidelines and deadlines; what the parish hours will be during Holy Week (April 5-11) and Easter Week (April 12-18); and when the bulletin for the weekend of April 25-26 will be assembled. This information will help you determine the best date to follow up with your bulletin submissions. Many parishes need content several weeks in advance to be able to include it in the weekly bulletin. Find out what else the parish staff needs from you and when they need it.

Early March, 2020

Once you have received the appropriate approvals and permissions, begin gathering materials for the spiritual bouquet. Research what options you may have for purchasing flowers at an affordable price, and compare the information against your budget. Keep in mind that flower options and prices may change based on the season.

Mid-March

Begin to recruit volunteers to help you facilitate the spiritual bouquet. Volunteers will be needed to staff the table after each Mass the weekend of Mother's Day, May 10. Other volunteer tasks might include picking up or transferring flowers to the parish or preparing materials.



Late March

Send the bulletin and pulpit announcement submissions you hope to have featured. This will help your parish plan and allot the necessary space.

Friday, April 10: *Good Friday of the Lord's Passion, beginning of the Divine Mercy Novena*

Sunday, April 12: *Easter Sunday, The Resurrection of the Lord*

Tuesday, April 14 (subject to change, depending on parish office hours during Easter Week)

Reconnect with appropriate parish staff regarding your bulletin and pulpit submissions, and make sure they have received all the materials needed, including the spiritual bouquet announcements and the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life*. If you have obtained permission from the pastor, make arrangements to set up a table in the vestibule or other gathering area on Mother's Day weekend.

Wednesday, April 15 (subject to change, depending on parish office hours during Easter Week)

Touch base with your pastor to offer further assistance and to confirm any plans you may have made, such as the spiritual bouquet or the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*. Make sure he has everything he needs, such as pulpit announcements or a copy of the rite.

Sunday, April 19: *Sunday of Divine Mercy*

Late April

With your volunteers, prepare all the spiritual bouquet materials except for the flowers.

Saturday, May 9

Gather with your volunteers to set up the table prior to the vigil Mass. Keep the flowers in a safe area. Consider allotting a certain number of flowers for each Mass, and setting out each allotment just prior to each Mass. This will help ensure that you don't run out of flowers before the final weekend Mass. Remember that some Masses have higher attendance than others, and plan accordingly.

Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10

Help participants complete the spiritual bouquet following each Mass. Depending on how you have

planned to complete and/or adapt this activity for your parish, specific logistical steps will vary. (See the sample activity at the end of this Mother's Day action guide for various options for doing this activity.) After the final Sunday Mass, break down the table, and clean up any leftover materials. The spiritual bouquet can remain in place for the next 1–2 weeks.

Sunday, May 24

Clear away the spiritual bouquet, and remove any leftover vases.

BULLETIN & PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you are using the Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb, see the action guide for the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord for sample announcements and other ideas.

◆ Bulletin Announcements

(Suggested Weekends: April 25–26 & May 2–3, 2020)

On Mother's Day weekend, please join us in offering a Spiritual Bouquet to Our Blessed Mother. Following each Mass, parishioners will be invited to write down their prayer intentions and offer them to Our Lady along with flowers of thanksgiving for her motherly love and intercession. *[To cut the cost of providing flowers, consider adding: "If you would like to participate, please bring a flower with you to Mass that/next weekend."]*

As we celebrate the gift of mothers and honor Our Blessed Mother, we also recognize that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many. We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions brought to your heart by Mother's Day.

◆ Pulpit Announcements

(Suggested Weekend: May 2–3, 2020)
Option 1

Next weekend after each Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to Our Blessed Mother. All are invited to write down a prayer intention and offer it to Our Lady with a flower of thanksgiving for her maternal care. Please see the bulletin for more information.

Option 2 (if you are *not* providing flowers)

(Suggested Weekend: May 9-10, 2020)

After Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to Our Blessed Mother. All are invited to *[insert location of the table with the supplies]*, where there are pens and paper for you to write down a prayer intention. You can then present your intention to Our Lady by placing it in the basket at *[insert designated Marian statue, icon, or painting and location]*. If you brought Our Blessed Mother a flower, you can offer it to her in thanksgiving for her maternal care by placing it in the vase located *[insert location]*. *[Consider adding: "For those who did not bring a flower, a limited supply is available near the pens and paper."]*

As we celebrate the gift of mothers and honor Our Blessed Mother, *we also recognize that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many.* We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions in your heart today.

Option 3 (if you *are* providing flowers)

(Suggested Weekend: May 9-10, 2020)

After Mass, please join us in offering a spiritual bouquet to Our Blessed Mother. All are invited to *[insert location of the table with the supplies]*, where there are pens and paper for you to write down a prayer intention. There are also flowers for you to offer to Our Lady in thanksgiving for her maternal care. After writing down your intention, take a flower, and present both to Our Blessed Mother at *[insert designated Marian statue, icon, or painting and location]*.

As we celebrate the gift of mothers and honor Our Blessed Mother, *we also recognize that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many.* We hope this spiritual bouquet provides an opportunity to pray for the intentions in your heart today.



INTERCESSIONS

These sample intercessions were written for use on Mother's Day (May 10, 2020); however, many can be used throughout the year. These intentions are appropriate for inclusion in the Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Mass. They can also be printed in the weekly bulletin, featured in email newsletters, shared on social media platforms, or prayed during personal or family prayer times.

For all mothers:

That they may be supported and encouraged in their special vocation of love;

We pray to the Lord:

That all might treasure and support God's plan for life and love;

We pray to the Lord:

For all mothers:

That their children will honor their many sacrifices by lives of service and virtue;

We pray to the Lord:

For mothers facing unexpected pregnancies:

That they may find strength and courage in the example of our Blessed Mother;

We pray to the Lord:

For all mothers awaiting the birth of their children:

That the Lord protect them and bring their babies to safe delivery;

We pray to the Lord:

For all married couples struggling to have a child:

That the Lord grant them peace as they hope for the gift of a son or a daughter;

We pray to the Lord:

For all those longing to welcome a child through adoption:

May the Lord guide their journey to parenthood and grant them peace along the way;

We pray to the Lord:

For mothers who mourn the loss of a child:

That they may find peace and consolation in the hope of eternal life;

We pray to the Lord:

HOMILY HELPS

These homily helps, rather than providing specific points based on the readings of the day, are structured to provide background and considerations for preaching with sensitivity and compassion on Mother's Day (May 10). While we should always celebrate the vocation of motherhood and thank God for the gift of life brought forth through mothers, it is also important to acknowledge the challenges of those who find this annual observance painful. Other ministry leaders can also keep these considerations in mind when planning events, activities, or communications in observance of Mother's Day.

**Sunday, May 10, 2020 | Fifth Sunday of Easter
(Mother's Day)**

First Reading: Acts 6:1-7

**Responsorial Psalm:
Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19**

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Gospel Acclamation: John 14:6

Gospel: John 14:1-12

Background

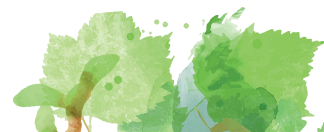
Mother's Day is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the vocation of motherhood and the gift of life entrusted to mothers by God in a very special way. While Mother's Day is not a liturgical or Catholic observance, many parishes still take advantage of this holiday to honor and pray for mothers. It is a fitting day to ask God's special blessing on those who bring forth and nurture human life. (The *Book of Blessings* contains various options.) If expectant mothers are present in the congregation, Mother's Day is also an opportune time to make use of the *Rite for the Blessing of a Child in the Womb*, which offers blessings for the mother and her unborn child.

In our efforts to honor and offer thanksgiving for all mothers, it is also important to remember that Mother's Day can be a difficult holiday for many people, such as women who are struggling with infertility, those who have lost or are estranged from their mothers, and mothers who have lost one or more children through miscarriage, abortion, or some other way.

Considerations

Some considerations are provided to bear in mind as you honor mothers while showing sensitivity and compassion to all who find this holiday especially challenging.

- ◆ During your homily, you may want to take a moment to acknowledge that this is a difficult day for many people. Those struggling with feelings of loss, emptiness, or loneliness on this holiday can often feel overlooked. This simple gesture can communicate a sense of understanding and recognition for what they are going through.
- ◆ Invite the congregation to pray for mothers as well as those who find this holiday to be painful: those who have lost a child; those who have lost their mothers; those struggling to conceive a child; and those waiting to welcome a child through adoption, among others.
- ◆ Consider utilizing the provided sample intercessions in the Prayer of the Faithful. Some pray for mothers, while others focus on those who may find Mother's Day difficult. Addressing both is a beautiful way to celebrate motherhood, while also extending compassion and solidarity. It is especially important to acknowledge those for whom Mother's Day is hard if you plan to offer a blessing for mothers following the Prayer of the Faithful or as a solemn blessing at the end of Mass.
- ◆ Some women are called to the vocation of motherhood physically and biologically, while others answer God's call as spiritual mothers.
- ◆ Reaffirm the goodness and gift of the vocation of motherhood. The incredible bond between mother and child is truly a gift from God to be celebrated.
- ◆ Consider highlighting the role the Church plays as our Mother and the role of our Blessed Mother in our lives. The Church and Our Lady can offer maternal comfort to those who are struggling and inspiration to mothers.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY

A Spiritual Bouquet to Our Blessed Mother

May has traditionally been observed as a month dedicated to Mary, Mother of God. It is also the month in which we celebrate our earthly mothers through the observance of Mother's Day.

Mother's Day provides a beautiful opportunity to pray for all mothers, including those facing an unexpected pregnancy. However, it can be a difficult holiday for many, including those struggling with infertility, those who have lost children, and those who have lost their own mothers.

This activity seeks to lift up the many intentions laid on our hearts by the observance of Mother's Day and offer them to Our Blessed Mother, during the month honoring her. It also provides a way to give thanks for her maternal love and care for us. On the weekend of Mother's Day, parishioners are invited to write a prayer intention on a slip of paper and offer it, along with a flower whenever possible, to Our Lady. While there are many options for adapting or carrying out this activity, the purpose is to present a spiritual bouquet to Our Lady, by placing the intentions and flowers beneath a statue, icon, or image of the Blessed Mother.

When the activity is complete, you will have a spiritual and physical bouquet of prayer intentions and thanksgiving offered at the feet of Our Lady. This offering can remain for the next week or two and serve as a visual reminder of the powerful intercession and love of Mary, Our Mother.

While the following directions describe completing this activity within a parish, this can be easily adapted for use in a school, ministry, or family.

Materials:

- ◆ *Flowers of various varieties (inexpensive options often include carnations, daisies, and alstroemeria, among others)
- ◆ Buckets to store the flowers in water
- ◆ Small note cards or slips of paper
- ◆ Pens
- ◆ Vases of water
- ◆ Designated statue, icon, or image of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- ◆ Copies of the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life* (optional, respectlifeprogram.org/may)
- ◆ Crayons or markers (optional)

Directions:

1. Use the included sample bulletin announcement the weekend before Mother's Day to invite parishioners to participate in the upcoming activity. (Be sure to submit your bulletin announcement request well in advance to ensure space is available.)
2. Gather your materials. Flowers can often be obtained in bulk through a local wholesale florist or wholesale chain. Your parish may have already established connections due to ordering flowers throughout the year. The size of your parish, school, or community will determine how many flowers you need to purchase. To help keep needed quantities lower, ask that each participant use only one flower. You could also consider asking parishioners to bring their own flowers, perhaps supplying only a small number – if any – for those who forget to do so.
3. Pre-cut notecards or small slips of paper.

**If your parish or community is unable to afford flowers, this activity can still be completed without them! Simply have parishioners place their written intentions in a basket before the designated statue of Our Lady. Or, you could consider providing crayons or markers and suggesting participants draw a flower next to their intention. This adaptation cuts costs and encourages participants' creativity! Another option would be to invite parishioners to bring their own flowers. If you do have some access to or money for flowers, you could provide a limited number on a first come, first serve basis for those who forget to bring one.*

4. Place vases filled with water near the statue, icon, or painting of Our Lady that will serve as the center of the spiritual bouquet.
5. Set up a table outside the church or in the vestibule (with the necessary permission obtained). Place the pens and slips of paper on the table. Set the flowers in buckets of water to the sides of the table or behind it. If there is room on the table, provide copies of the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life* for participants to pray together before the image of Our Lady or to take home with them to pray. (The litany can be found by visiting respectlifeprogram.org/may.)
6. At the end of each Mass, invite parishioners to participate in the spiritual bouquet using one of the sample pulpit announcements.
7. Arrange for volunteers to staff the table following each Mass. They can help pass out materials, answer questions, and assist younger participants in writing their intention. Direct participants to where they can present their intention to Our Lady.
8. Your bouquet should grow physically and spiritually after each Mass. Allow the flowers to remain for next week or two to serve as a reminder of the intentions entrusted to the intercession of Our Lady and in thanksgiving for her maternal care. Encourage parishioners to also pray for the intercessions placed under her care.

Ideas for Adaptation

Because each parish varies widely, you may need to adapt or change this activity to fit your specific needs. Think about the layout of your church building, the location of an appropriate Marian image, the schedule of Masses, and any other factors that may affect or be affected by this activity.

For example, depending on the space available in your parish vestibule, you may want to conduct the activity outside to help with the flow of foot traffic after Mass. If your parish has a Marian statue outside, consider offering the spiritual bouquet there. This will eliminate the need for parishioners to exit and re-enter the Church. Some parishes have Masses scheduled very close together, so moving outside can also help assure the next Mass is not disrupted or delayed.

You could also consider integrating this activity into regularly scheduled events like a May Crowning, or adapting it into a longer service by including a Eucharistic procession. You might ask participants to form a line to present their prayer intentions and flowers to Our Lady one by one. Or, you could encourage people to pray a moment in the pews before approaching and let the foot traffic flow organically.

The purpose of this activity is to seek the intercession of Our Blessed Mother for all the intentions brought to our hearts by the observance of Mother's Day, as well as to thank her for her motherly love for us. Assess what works best for your circumstances, and make adaptations or changes as needed!

One Step Further

Print the *Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life* in your parish bulletin for Mother's Day weekend or as individual copies. This is a beautiful prayer invoking Our Lady's intercession and can be found by visiting respectlifeprogram.org/may. Those who are unable to participate in the spiritual bouquet can take this home to seek the intercession of Our Lady throughout the month.

*We would love to see
how your parish or
community offered a
spiritual bouquet to
Our Blessed Mother!*

Share examples with us by emailing prolife@usccb.org, or tag us on Facebook (@peopleofflife) or Twitter (@usccbprolife).

iStock.com/TatianaDavidova; iStock.com/nevodka; iStock.com/PixelEmbargo; iStock.com/LightFieldStudios; iStock.com/Yevhenii Dubinko. Models used for illustrative purposes only. Photos used with permission. All rights reserved. Copyright © 2019, USCCB, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

