

The Wonder of the Child in the Womb

Reflecting on the humanity of the unborn and acknowledging, with compassion, the deep grief experienced by parents who lose a child before or shortly after birth



Sunday, 21 June 2026

Bishops' Message

Day for Life presents an opportunity to celebrate the dignity of all human life from conception to natural end. The theme for 2026 is 'The Wonder of the Child in the Womb'.



Every year *Day for Life* falls on Father's Day and we wish fathers a blessed day. Today we remember with gratitude the loving care and direction our parents gave to us, whether they are still with us or have gone to the Lord.

Parenthood is a vocation of joys and hopes, of griefs and anxieties. On this year's *Day for Life*, we acknowledge the particular grief of mothers and fathers who have lost a child before birth or in infancy. Mother's Day and Father's Day can be especially difficult for parents who experience the loss of an infant. Such loss often takes its bodily toll upon the mother, and it can leave fathers feeling helpless and unsure of how to support their family, or of how to express their own grief.

The Church wants to be especially close to parents who have suffered the loss of an infant. We try to offer spiritual support through the pastoral care and blessing of our priests, and through the comfort of our liturgy. You only have to reach out to your priest or deacon if you would like to know more about this.

Just as importantly, many parents find consolation in their faith and its assurance that every child, including those who lose their life before they are born or soon after, is created, willed and deeply loved by God from all eternity. We have the Lord's promise from the Scriptures that: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5).



The Word of God reveals the sacred humanity of the unborn child and perhaps helps us understand why we feel such profound grief at the loss of a baby. Parents instinctively grasp how precious and unique the child is whom they have lost and whom they may already have called by name. They know how no other child can ever replace them.

Science is clear that life begins at fertilisation when a new and unique living human being comes into existence. Every technological development in recent decades has given us insight into how life in the womb unfolds for each of us. At conception, our gender, genetic makeup, and eye and hair colour are already determined. As early as five weeks, our heart begins to beat. By ten weeks, we can move and respond to touch and, beginning two weeks later, we have the capacity to feel pain. By eighteen weeks, our mother can sense our movement in the womb. By twenty-seven weeks, we can recognise the voices of our parents. For some decades, parents have been able to observe some of these stages through ultrasound scans during pregnancy. The more we learn about the science, the more we understand the teaching of the Church on the unique value of the unborn baby.

This understanding, however, is not complete without the recognition that, from the beginning, every human being is not just a body but also an immortal soul, with a unique and eternal connection with God, our Creator.

It is because of what both science and faith reveal to us that the Church and many people of good will have always held that the unborn child merits the full protection of the law, and why we have always rejected elective abortion.

This *Day for Life* 2026, we reflect on the wonder of human life from the moment of fertilisation. We remember how the Lord Jesus Christ Himself sanctified and experienced the beginning of life in the world as an unborn child, hidden in the womb of Mary. Mary knew that she was carrying the

Son of God – God and man – as soon as He was conceived. John the Baptist leapt in his mother Elizabeth’s womb when Mary greeted her. Our Lady treasured Our Lord in her heart and womb until His birth.

We, in our turn, commit ourselves to work and pray for our society to cherish the value of every little one, especially those at the earliest stage of human life, and to help our parish communities support all those in our midst who have suffered the loss of a child.

Most Reverend John Sherrington

Archbishop of Liverpool
England and Wales

Most Reverend Kevin Doran

Bishop of Elphin and of Achonry
Ireland

Right Reverend John Keenan

Bishop of Paisley
Scotland



Prayers

Prayers that can be used on or around *Day for Life*, celebrated in our parishes on Sunday, 21 June 2026.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made

Psalm 139: 1-6; 13-18; 23-24

O LORD, you have searched me
and known me!

You know when I sit down and when I rise
up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it. [...]

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's
womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it
very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written,
every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are your thoughts,
O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

If I would count them, they are more than
the sand.

I awake, and I am still with you. [...]

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Amen.

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Prayers

More prayers from the tradition of the Church - including suggested Bidding Prayers.

Prayer for the soul of a baptised child

Lord of all gentleness,
surround us with your care and comfort us in
our sorrow,
for we grieve at the loss of this little child.
As you washed N. in the waters of Baptism
and welcomed him/her into the life of
heaven,
so call us one day to be united with him/her
and share for ever the joy of your Kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for the soul of a child who died before Baptism

O God, searcher of hearts and most loving
consoler,
who know the faith of these parents,
grant that, as they mourn their child, now
departed this life, they may be assured that
he(she) has been entrusted to your divine
compassion.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers)

We pray for the Church: may the witness of her faithful people to the wonder and dignity of life from its very beginning to its natural end shine as a beacon of hope in our world today.

Lord hear us... Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for those in government: may they come to recognise, respect and protect the life of every human being, especially those in the womb, and so build up a more just society.

Lord hear us...

We pray for mothers, fathers and healthcare professionals facing difficult medical decisions for children before and after birth: may they find wisdom, clarity, strength, courage and peace as they navigate the demands of the journey ahead.

Lord hear us...

We pray for all mothers and fathers who have lost children before or soon after birth: in their sorrow and grief may they find comfort in the Church's sacramental and pastoral care.

Lord hear us...

We pray for all infants lost before or soon after birth: may they rest in the merciful keeping of God who holds every human being, however small, as precious in His sight.

Lord hear us...

We pray for those who support and promote the Day for Life and for the many initiatives funded by the Day for Life collections: may they see the fruits of their work in an ever-growing sense of the dignity of every human being from conception to natural death and in an increasing trust in the wisdom of God who is our one true hope.

Lord hear us...

More prayers can be found at: cbcew.org.uk/day-for-life



Day for Life

cbcew.org.uk/day-for-life

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