

Candle of Life

By Julie Filby

The Spirit announced to Mary that she would bear God's Son—God's own Son would enter our world as a baby. Create a pillar candle with an image of Jesus as an infant to use in observing the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25 and for other family prayer times this spring.



For

Young Family

Season

Spring, especially around the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25)

Needed

Bible, calendar, thick pillar candle, small picture of Baby Jesus cut from a Christmas card or an Internet image, knife or other tool to carve candle, small piece of cloth or paper, 2 push pins. Optional: photo of pregnant woman in your family

Activity Plan

1. Gather in a comfortable place and pray aloud:

O God, we celebrate that your Son, Jesus, came to live among us as Mary's baby. Thank you for the saving love that is ours because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Amen.

2. Open your Bible and read aloud the story of the Annunciation, the announcement of Jesus' birth, from Luke 1:26-38 (use the text on the last page). Discuss Mary's reaction to this announcement.
3. Look at the calendar and count nine months from March 25. What date will that be? Talk together about how Jesus grew inside Mary's body for nine months before he was born. All babies grow inside their mothers' bodies for nine months before they are born. And God loves each baby even before we can hold and love him or her. Optional: Show a photo of a family member when she was pregnant.
4. Work together to make a Candle of Life. In the side of a thick pillar candle, carve a niche just large enough to hold the small picture of Baby Jesus. Use push pins to fasten a curtain made from a small piece of cloth or paper over the opening.
5. Comment that the Baby Jesus is "hidden," but even though you can't see him, he's still there. God knew and loved Jesus even before he was born and Mary could hold him. This is true for every baby.
6. Light the candle and say a prayer of thanks for Baby Jesus and other babies you know. Be sure to pray for babies who are sick or hungry. (Continue to use the Candle of Life during family prayer times for several weeks, including prayers for babies.) You may want to finish your time of prayer by saying together this traditional prayer that is based on the Bible reading:

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

Birth of Jesus Foretold

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God."

³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

