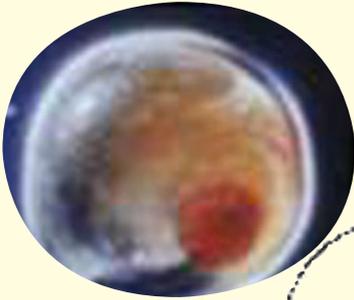


# THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE WOMB:

## A MEDITATION AND A PRAYER



By Kathleen Curran Sweeney

# Introduction

We are immersed in a culture of images and the external appearance of things. Too seldom are we asked to contemplate the inner reality, the inner being of what we see.

In the following meditation, we are asked to reflect on how Jesus Christ, for whom and in whom all the world is created, took on both the external appearance and the inner reality of a developing human person, from the moment he is conceived by the Holy Spirit to the day of his birth. We are not accustomed to seeing him thus, because this development is hidden within the protective womb of Mary. But today's technology allows us to pull aside the veil surrounding this early development of the child. Photography and ultrasound imagery allows us to see the physical appearance of the child and the science of embryology and fetology provides us with the intricate and amazing details of the child's development.

"The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name." (Isaiah 49:1)

The humility of the Son of God in submitting his personhood to this development bestows an infinite dignity on this bodily phenomenon. Every preborn child shares in this dignity and is called to union with Christ, even to receiving into his body the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ.

Christ's external appearance is not always attractive to the eye. There was the time in his life that, "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53: 2). Yet the inner reality of the divine-human Person is such a brilliant beauty that our eyes are not strong enough to behold it. In his condescension, he has hidden himself in the simplicity of the Eucharistic Host.



Dear Lord Jesus,

You allowed yourself, in your humility, in your divinity, to become one cell within your mother Mary. In awe, we contemplate this fact: You, the Son of God, an eternal divine person, agreed to begin your human development as one human cell, conceived by the Holy Spirit, with the cooperation of Mary. In this cell, your whole divinity and your whole humanity was present. Your Father's love and your mother's love were there. Your Father's plan and your mother's acceptance were there.

# First Month

Mary has said Yes! She has given her whole self to the Father's will. She does not know all that this will bring about. She hastens to Elizabeth with whom she shares the amazing promise the Lord has made. Elizabeth's son John within her womb leaps with joy.

Jesus, your Sacred Heart, started beating at 21 days. It is throbbing with love for every one of us. Every drop of your blood will one day be poured out for us, the blood that will be shed for us and will be given to us in the Eucharist. Your body is being prepared for this great miracle of divine generosity. In this preparation, you are sharing your life with every preborn child who may one day have the privilege of mingling his or her blood with yours in the union of the Eucharist. The mother is also united in this as her body sends her own oxygen and nutrients through the placenta to her preborn child. You are preparing every mother in this generosity of unselfish giving.

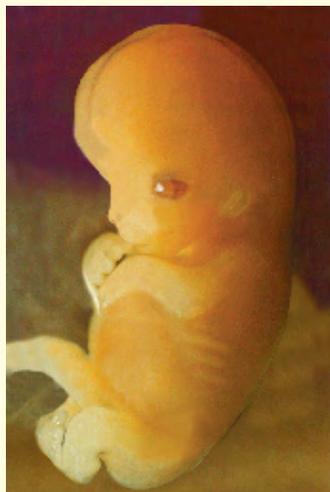


It is awesome to realize that your neural tube now forming would be the source of all the nerves, brain connections, and feelings that would carry the divine wisdom, knowledge and love of our Savior. You are a form now so very small, yet bearing divine infinity.



## Second Month

All is very dark there in the womb. You know this darkness, this not-yet-light experience. And in some human mothers' hearts an outer darkness has crept in. Will it block the light to come? Will it endanger the child protected in the mother's womb? Lord, you came into the womb of your mother to share the life and suffering of all of us. May your life in the womb redeem the life of your preborn brothers and sisters and protect them from outer darkness.



When your umbilical cord is full of oxygen and nutrition from your mother Mary, you show us the goodness of this relationship of dependence between mother and child. You have allowed yourself to receive this life-giving goodness through Mary, an ordinary young woman filled with a very special grace by your Father's will. You have allowed Mary to mediate this umbilical dependence to your incarnate Person.

In a very confined space, Lord, you made your first movements. Your joints worked. Your fingers opened and shut—to bless the world. You have come into this space in order to share it with every little one making this journey of unfolding within the mother. Your organs and structures have formed, all to be used for the salvation of the world.

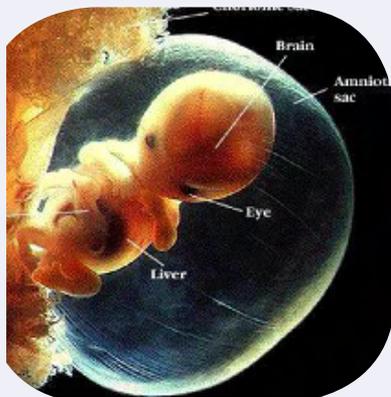


# Third Month



As you enter the third month of your life in the womb, your vocal chords are forming, destined to be the concrete external expression of God's Word to the people, to teach us the way to follow you. At this time, you are blessing the vocal chords of every preborn child that they might also give voice to the words of God.

Even though your feet look tiny and feeble now, what weight of the world they are destined to bear! Even though the bones are now soft cartilage, they will later grow strong and hard and bear the weight of the Cross for our sins.



Your eyes with which you will look upon others so lovingly are now shut, but they are developing. You will use them to see and hear your people's needs. Your eyes are united with your divine sight with which you see into people's hearts. You are so tiny yet so perfect. Your Father in

heaven is delighted to look upon the growth of your human body, which your mother Mary protects so quietly within her. The whole destiny of the world is held in your tiny form. Your Divine Person has submitted to such a gradual human growth.

## Fourth Month

Jesus, in your time in the womb, you share the meekness of the littlest ones, in all they receive from their mother and father and from the outside world around them. In union with all the little ones in the womb, you are open to receiving, both the good and the bad. You have accepted all this already according to the will of your Father in heaven. Dear Jesus, bless this time shared with our preborn children as they prepare for their own special destiny.



You cannot cry out to protest the suffering of your companions residing in other wombs. You are dependent on adults to intervene with love for all the little ones who share your journey toward birth. Your little chest practices inhaling and exhaling in preparation for the day of birth. Your heart is beating very fast, the heart that will be pierced with love for us.

The umbilical cord has grown thick. The connection with your mother will never loosen, but only grow stronger as she bears your pain and receives your whole Church as your Mystical Body.



# Fifth Month

Your head and neck are straightening so you can hold your head erect. The whole dignity of your divinity and humanity is in this head held high, but it also will bend in compassion for others. You do not want to be one of the “stiff-necked people” but one who bows his head before the Father. This head will even bow to the Father far enough to be crowned with thorns, to be an object of humiliation. All of this is being prepared as your human form unfolds itself in detail.



If we could see you in the womb at this time, we would note your now visible maleness. Your manhood will be fulfilled in your fatherhood of the new family formed from the blood and water that will flow from your side, from the body you will give for the life of the world. Your manly priesthood will be the first among many brothers to mediate the grace of the Holy Spirit to God's new people.



Little Jesus, we can see a movement like crying even though no sound can come out in the airless chamber of your mother's womb. Do you weep already for our sinful refusal to hear your words? Do you weep together with other little ones in the womb whose cries cannot be heard? Lord, help us speak on behalf of these silent little children of yours. These tears will be ready to weep over Jerusalem, over your people who will reject you and the Father's will. What deep sorrow awaits you. But also tears of love will fall from these eyes, love for Lazarus, love for your foster father Joseph, love of affection for each of us.

The nerve cells for all your five senses are developing their amazing network in the brain to process all that you see and hear and touch. These nerves will be sensitive to every human feeling and experience, in order to empathize with the sensitivities of others. Now you can hear sounds and voices outside the womb—your precious mother's voice and St. Joseph's words to her, their prayers and hymns so pleasing to the Father, the noises of life in Nazareth which will always feel like home.



At this time you can feel pain. You will experience pain as we do, and your spiritual pain will be even greater because your human pain is united with your divine act of redemptive suffering. Dear Jesus, I can not even conceive the extent of pain you experienced in your human life. Through your obedience in suffering you will make reparation for all the offense to the Father from human sin.

Now your hair begins to grow. Will this hair remain uncut as a Nazarene consecrated to God? Your milk teeth and even your permanent teeth are forming. They will hold the smile you radiate to those you love so deeply. The Holy Spirit is doing a marvelous work in you as your little body grows stronger. The legs and the muscles that will take you over the roads of the Holy Land are growing longer and stronger. Your mother is sharing her immune system with you so you will be protected from infection and illness when you emerge into the world.



I see your hands becoming coordinated, preparing for your humble task of carpentry and for your divine task of blessing and healing. What power in those hands now so tiny!

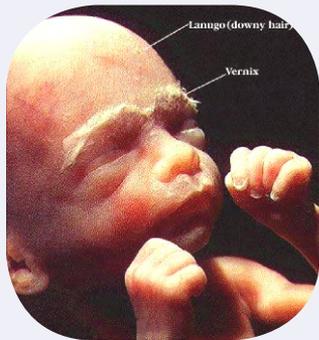
# Sixth Month

What a marvel that you already have a fully formed tongue in your 6th month—the tongue given you by the Father to carry His words to the people, to those who have ears to hear.



Now, as Mary walks through her day and rests with weariness at its end, you are developing your own sleeping and waking habits. Yet the Father will call you out of these at times to be with him in prayer through the night. I want to be with you in your sleeping and waking, in your prayer and your working.

Another wonder is the developing of your brain which is entering a period of rapid growth that will continue throughout your childhood. You, whose divinity contains all knowing and all creativity, have submitted your humanity to the gradual growth and learning of the ordinary human child. What an immense gift you bring to the value of childhood.



I see you clasp and unclasp your hands. If I were to put my finger in your little hand, you would grasp it. You are getting ready to grasp the tools that St. Joseph will show you, to grasp the hands of your neighbors, of your followers, and of your dear Mother.

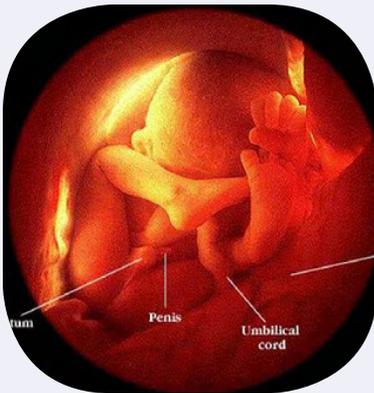
Some little ones prematurely born at this time will survive. Little Jesus, pray with me now for these tiny infants sharing this age with you, that they will be received with love and care to bear them forward in life.

# Seventh Month

Your nervous system and sensitivity are increasing so that your mouth and lips may react to all that is around you, with smiles and laughter, with words of love, expressing all the emotions of human experience. I love to be with you in this marvelous time of your human growing.



Now your eyes can distinguish light from dark. Even though it is very dark in your mother's womb, you yourself are the light come into the world and you must be shining the spirit of light in Mary's womb. All your senses are alive to changes in light, sound, taste, touch and smell. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the gift of these five senses and for blessing them within your divine Person. You are receiving all the material world around you into your self and bringing it to the Father. Please bless all the little ones in the womb so they can also bring their experiences to the Father in heaven.



What amazing humility that the divine Son, in whom, through whom and for whom the whole world is made, should confine Himself to this small space. Soon you will emerge from it. But first your mother passes to you her antigens to protect you from infections and diseases. What beautiful cooperation between you and Mary, even when she is unaware of it. Lord Jesus, soon you will unfold yourself from your cramped position and come forth.

# Eighth Month

Your body is now filling out, looking almost like a newborn infant. Oxygen, so necessary for life, is being carried through your body by the red blood cells which are being produced in your bone marrow. What an intricate system the Father has prepared to bring life in all its fullness to every cell. Your little body will bring even greater fullness to our human life. What a precious gift of divine life you bring to humanity. This is the blood that will be given up for us, not only on the cross but also in the Eucharist to share your divine life with us that we may have eternal life.



Dear Infant Jesus, as your head grows larger to contain your developing brain, I marvel at the creative work of your divinity. Now an appropriate vessel is being prepared for your thoughts, both human and completely united with the Father's mind.

Your ears will hear what is behind people's words, their true thoughts and feelings. Your divine ears can hear even the inarticulate cries of the people, unexpressed but urgent. You are blessing the eyes and ears of every preborn child that they might see and hear the Lord speaking to them.



# Ninth Month

Now you are exercising your breathing muscles which will one day breathe the Holy Spirit on your disciples. You are coordinating the muscles that will carry you through the world. I see you stretching and flexing in your little space. Your skin is very soft now but Mary's womb protects it. What horror she will feel when this skin is torn from you by the soldiers' flagellations.



The walls of the womb are stretching as you grow, so now you can even perceive the light outside of Mary and sense the dark of night. To the Father, you can say, "A body you have prepared for me..." This is the time of preparation when your body fills out. You are growing conscious of all that is around you and

your mother. Now when Mary walks the streets of Nazareth her steps grow slower as she becomes "heavy with child," heavy with the weight of the world inside her, which her child bears. What visions go through your infant head, sleeping and dreaming in the womb of your mother?



# Nativity

But what is this? An unusual lifting up—your mother is being raised up. Oh, of course. Joseph is putting her on the donkey for the trip to Bethlehem. Your daily cycles with Mary are changing. Now you are bumping up and down with Mary on the donkey along the ruts and cracks, hills and valleys of the road to Bethlehem. It is good you continue to put on fat to help you keep warm because it is cold in these hills in winter.

Sometimes you hiccup and Mary is hoping you are alright. There is a special substance that is keeping air sacs open so you will be ready to breathe. Your lungs are maturing and all your other organs are fully developed.

You are ready to be born! But you can feel your mother's anxiety. Will there be a good place for the Son of God to be born into his world? Then your little ears pick up a familiar sound—the singing of the choir of angels—just like in your Father's House! Now is the time. I am coming, Mother!

What joy when Mary and Joseph finally see  
your face!





Graphic of Chalice and Host courtesy of  
Resources for Catholic Educators

Photos of child in the womb courtesy of  
Dr. David Prentice, *Embryonic/Fetal Development*,  
(Wn. DC: Catholic University of America, 2008)  
and of Life Issues Institute, *Windows to the Womb*, 2001



*Image courtesy of [LifeNews.com](http://LifeNews.com)*