

## BAMBINELLI SUNDAY – 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN ADVENT

This is a beautiful Advent Tradition - Bambinelli Sunday, Blessing the Christ Child - which has been celebrated in Rome for over thirty years and helps children and young people to prepare for Jesus. Each family will bring the Christ Child from its own crib or Nativity scene and the Pope blesses it during the noon Angelus that day.

It is a wonderful way to bring family and parish together. We might copy that tradition by encouraging families to bring the baby Jesus from their own cribs to church on the Third Sunday of Advent and, at the end of Mass, the priest or deacon could ask the children to bring the *bambinelli* to the foot of the sanctuary for a blessing.

Pope Benedict's words of blessing in 2008 might be used:

God, our Father  
you so loved humankind that you sent us your only Son Jesus,  
born of the Virgin Mary, to save us and lead us back to you.

We pray that with your Blessing  
these images of Jesus, who is about to come among us,  
may be a sign of your presence and love in our homes.

Good Father,  
give your Blessing to us too, to our parents, to our families  
and to our friends.

Open our hearts,  
so that we may be able to receive Jesus in joy,  
always do what he asks and see him in all those  
who are in need of our love.

We ask you this in the name of Jesus,  
your beloved Son who comes to give the world peace.  
He lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

Perhaps the meaning of this tradition can be best understood in the Words of Pope Benedict in 2009:

The blessing of the “Bambinelli” [Baby Jesus figurines] as they are called in Rome, reminds us that the crib is a school of life where we can learn the secret of true joy. This does not consist in having many things but in feeling loved by the Lord, in giving oneself as a gift for others and in loving one another. Let us look at the crib. Our Lady and St Joseph do not seem to be a very fortunate family; their first child was born in the midst of great hardship; yet they are full of deep joy, because they love each other, they help each other and, especially, they are certain that God, who made himself present in the little Jesus, is at work in their story. And the shepherds? What did they have to rejoice about? That Newborn Infant was not to change their condition of poverty and marginalization. But faith helped them recognize the “babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” as a “sign” of the fulfilment of God’s promises for all human beings, “with whom he is pleased” (Lk 2: 12, 14).