



## Nursing in Church

Many new moms and even not so new moms feel uncomfortable breastfeeding at church and other public places. They feel torn between attending to the needs of their baby and being modest.

Nowadays, there are numerous ways to breastfeed outside the house in such a way that others have no idea what you are doing. Many home based businesses sell stylish nursing covers. Some women wear nursing dresses or shirts that have nursing flaps and slits. Others bring a blanket or wear a sweater to help them cover up while nursing. Many moms find slings wonderful for modest nursing and for general comforting of their baby. There is also the possibility of sitting in your Church's library or even situating yourself next to your husband in the pew so that you are covered well.

Breastfed babies are very portable, so attending Mass requires little else besides a diaper, maybe a change of clothes for baby, and a quiet toy. Actually, comforting a baby with breastfeeding is a very non-distracting way to quiet a crying baby and is just what baby wants!

The Catholic Church has had a long standing tradition of supporting and encouraging mothers to breastfeed. Two popes have made public statements in support of breastfeeding, and one theologian in particular, Fr. William Virtue, even wrote extensively about its importance in his doctoral dissertation. Christian artwork often portrays Mary breastfeeding Jesus, sometimes with her breast exposed. Scripture mentions breastfeeding numerous times and weaning is often mentioned as taking place at the end of the second or third year of life.

Even if you are not currently a nursing mother, there are many ways to encourage and support nursing mothers in your parish. If you see a mother at Mass with a baby and one or more other children, you can offer to play quietly with her child(ren) or to read to them while she nurses the baby. Another way to help that is so easy but still important is praising a nursing mother for her breastfeeding efforts. A positive comment can literally make someone's day! You can also bring a drink of water to a nursing mother. New mothers always appreciate meals so why not bring a meal to a mom who attends your church? One more possibility is to ask your parish priest if you can set out breastfeeding brochures in the back of church. Last but definitely not least (probably best!) is to start a CNML group. Send an email to [gina@catholicbreastfeeding.org](mailto:gina@catholicbreastfeeding.org) today for your CNML leader applicant packet.