

Blessing Way Ceremony (Birth Ceremony)

Materials Needed

Herbal tea

Cornmeal

Oil or belly rub

Something to draw a labyrinth Henna or body paints for the mother's belly. (Optional)

Each woman, friend, family member is invited to bring a bead to add to the mother's birthing necklace.

Each person may bring a candle (and blessing) for the mother and baby.

Each person may bring a rope or cord tied in a knot to untie.

There are many rituals that can be associated with the Blessing Way Ceremony. This is NOT an absolute ceremony, but a celebration of an incipient new life. This is to be considered a collection of ideas, blessings and rituals that can all be done at the mother's desire.

The Blessing Way has three main parts. First is starting with some sort of introduction and a bringing in a joyful spiritual mood. It is entirely appropriate to make this introduction a Bundle Ceremony, but it can also be done in other ways too.

Second, the cleansing. This should be a time of spiritual cleansing, focusing on the mother, and preparation for birth.

Third is the closing to seal or cement the occasion.

First Stage Ritual Suggestions

Put sage, cedar, and/or sweet grass in a bowl and smudge (put the smoke on) the mother to be. As the prayer proceeds, smudge the appropriate area.

**May your hands be cleansed
That they create beautiful things.**

**May your feet be cleansed
That they take you to where you most need to be.**

**May your heart be cleansed
That you might hear its messages clearly.**

**May your throat be cleansed
That you might speak rightly when words are needed.**

**May your eyes be cleansed
That you might see the signs and wonders of this world.**

**May this person and space be washed clean
By the smoke of these fragrant plants;
And may that same smoke carry our prayers,
Spiraling to the heavens.**

Lighting candles by having each person lights a candle and says a wish, blessing, or prayer for the mother and baby.

Second Stage Ritual Suggestions

Drawing the Labyrinth (optional)

The Labyrinth was used as a symbol of birth. It was drawn with a cross shape in the center representing the four directions, and in a circular pattern so there is only one way out and no dead ends (to stall birth). The mother may sit in the center and have it drawn around her in chalk (or in the dirt if outside).

A Navajo Blessing Way Prayer

In beauty may I walk.
All day long may I walk.
Through the returning seasons may I walk.
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.
With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk.
With dew about my feet may I walk.
With beauty may I walk.
With beauty before me, may I walk.
With beauty behind me, may I walk.
With beauty above me, may I walk.
With beauty below me, may I walk.
With beauty all around me, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.

This may be done while rubbing corn meal on the mother's feet, or soaking her feet in water in which floats flowers or essential oils. Flowers or petals that have fallen to the earth are most appropriate as they signify allowing nature's time to take her course.

Other ideas are henna or belly painting, braiding or styling the mother's hair, weaving flowers into the mother's hair. The general idea of this stage is to pamper the mother, and honor her in her place in the continual transition from maiden, to mother, to crone.

Beads for the Necklace

If desired, each participant can bring a bead to be made into a birthing necklace. As each bead is presented, each person offers a blessing, wish, or prayer for the mother's safe delivery.

Third Stage Rituals

Each woman, or an elder unties a knot, symbolizing the opening of the womb. A benediction or perhaps the Navajo Blessing Way prayer is said before all depart, and share in herbal tea or foods.