

Reading:

A woman held a babe against her bosom and said, "Speak to us of children."

And the wise one said:

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,
and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,
for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.
The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite and bends you with
might that the arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness.

Dedication:

This simple ceremony, this ancient rite of consecration, is both symbolic and sacramental. It springs from your hearts and represents your deepest desires and expectations. Let me remind you that this child came into the world at your own invitation, and not his/her own. May your sense of responsibility be equal to the promise that is his/hers. Throughout the ages, parents with high hopes and great expectations have reverently dedicated their children in the name of love and in the name of God.

Upon you rests the sacred task of nurturing this young life through maturity, guided by worthy aspirations and joyful hearts. I now ask you to re-dedicate yourselves to one another and to that end.

(To the parents): Do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living, both for himself/herself and for humankind? If so, say together, we do.

(We do.)

(To the godparents): Do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living, both for himself/herself and for humankind? *(We do.)*

(To the congregation): Do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living, both for himself/herself and for humankind? *(We do.)*

(To the parents): Name this child. *(parents say child's full name)*

With the touch of this water, the traditional emblem of this ancient rite of consecration, and with the gift of this flower, symbol of the unfolding of a beautiful life, I dedicate you to the service of righteousness and love.

Prayer:

O God, we are conscious this day of more than we can express: the fragile beauty of life, the ties that bind us across generations. May this young life receive abundantly all the gifts of health, long years, love and wisdom that are yours to give. For the gift of childhood, whose innocence and laughter keep the world forever young, we all rejoice and give thanks. May all of us be so dedicated that we give back richly to the common heritage that endures from generation to generation. Amen.