

Child Consecration

November 15, 2015 | Patrick Preheim

Jesus came into our midst as a child, and this should give us pause for consideration. The one who would offer his body to feed hungry souls for a time needed to be fed. The one who would liberate the oppressed for a time needed to be protected. The one who would nurture disciples learned about a relationship with God from his parents and faith community (Lk 2.21-24, 41). In these paradoxes there is rich spiritual material. Perhaps we grow in our divinity as we come to accept our fragility and our dependence on others—our dependence on God, our dependence on families, our dependence on friends. Perhaps we grow in our divinity as we learn the patience, compassion and love which come as we parent, mentor, and otherwise care for others. “Children are both our near and distant future. It is by them and through them that we feel linked to the immortality of the human race” (Elie Wisel, Jewish Auschwitz survivor in *The World Needs Your Kid: Raising Children who Care and Contribute*, p. 12). Integrating the lessons of childhood into our lived existence, Jesus noted, is key to our ownership in God’s kingdom. Celebrating the gift of children is, therefore, the only sensible response for communities of faith. In our tradition we do this in a service of child dedication.

Child dedication is both a ritual of consecration and commitment. Today we declare these children sacred. God is the source from whence they have come and the home to which they will eventually return. Before we ever saw them, God was at work creating and shaping their inward parts, knitting each together in the womb of his or her mother (Ps 139). Before we ever called them by name, God said, “These are my children.” In the service of consecration we joyfully affirm that these children are foundationally children of God.

This is also a service of commitment for all of us: parents, family, friends, and faith community. As with many of God’s gifts, a new life brings both joy and responsibility. We commit ourselves to sharing with God in the nurturing and upbringing of the children entrusted into our care. It is not a commitment that any of us should take lightly, but neither is it a burden we must carry alone. For as God is present with us in the times of celebration, so too God promises to be present with us in each day of the future as we seek to live out the commitments we make here today (*For All Who Minister* (Church of the Brethren Minister’s Manual), p.154 adapted).

It is the custom of this congregation to allow parents a chance to speak before we ask them the questions of commitment and bless their child. Some take us up on our invitation to speak but it is not required. Since we have six families participating in the dedication service this morning we will invite households up two at a time. Parents will share. For the questions of commitment and child blessing family, friends, and children present will be invited forward as a visible demonstration of our joint ownership in our children’s future.

I now invite the Guenther and Roth households forward to share.