

Dedication Ceremony: "Elliot Jones"

Welcome to the Dedication ceremony for Elliot Jones. We are very glad that you are all here.

This ceremony is both ancient and timeless. From the earliest days of recorded history, parents have brought their children at an early age to a special place, sharing their joy and dedication with their family and friends.

We have this ceremony in public to mark the fact that we all have a responsibility for the care and nurturing of every child. It is our task to give them a world of peace and justice in which to grow. It is our responsibility to share with them our ideals and hopes. If we want our children to be compassionate and sensitive, we will be charitable and kind. If we want our children to learn that conflicts may be resolved peacefully, we will not hit nor humiliate our children, but rather discipline them with respect and mercy. If we want our children to be tolerant and fair, they will not hear us making demeaning or derogatory comments about people different than us. A child treated with respect will respect himself and others.

What we can do best as parents is to learn from our children the zest and wonder of life, with which all children come into this world.

Traditionally the element of water has played a symbolic part in this ceremony for all life has arisen from the water and it is through water that life is sustained as it flows forward. Traditionally, also, this is the time to recognize our children by name, for it is by name that each of us is acknowledged as a unique and separate person.

The flower we shall present to Elliot is also symbolic of the individuality we wish to affirm.

Now, will Elliot please come forward with his parents, _____.

This dedication ceremony is symbolic and sacramental. It springs from your hearts and is an expression of your deepest desires and highest expectations. Let me say that this child has come into the world at your invitation and not his own. May your sense of responsibility be equal to the promise that is his.

Parenthood is a most sacred trust. As parents, you must recognize no duty to be greater than that of providing the security and order that an atmosphere of love can give. Every child is entitled to be received into loving arms and to be guided with loving care during the years of growth. He has a just claim upon his parents -- and upon others entrusted with his care -- to a sensitive understanding of his needs and to all that is essential for the fullest development of her body and mind and heart.

Therefore, keep yourself and your child from developing fixed, rigid beliefs; allow him full access to all knowledge. Encourage him to develop the habit of independent judgment, and safeguard his right to the joy of adventure and thrill of discovery. Encourage Elliot to develop an unprejudiced and curious mind and a generous spirit.

I ask that you give your son not only permission, but encouragement, to develop his own ideas of God; let him decide what is of ultimate value. Please remember that a religious quest is best done in community. Elliot should be encouraged to explore many different religious beliefs, remembering that not any one doctrine can ever offer all the answers to the mystery of why we are here. When you decide to send Elliot to Sunday School, it is important that the two of you participate in this religious community as fully as your child.

What I ask for Elliot is what I ask for children of all communities -- that while developing in him a sense of his own integrity, we help him to develop a wholesome respect for the spirit, minds, and feelings of others.

Upon you rests the sacred joy of nurturing this young life through maturity, guided by loving recollections, worthy aspirations, and a joyful heart. To this end you, _____ now bear witness to your intentions.

Do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living for himself and for humankind?

(Parents say) "We do."

(Often, parents write their own promises or letter to their child.) For example:

With all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might, we pray for Elliot to be strong in mind and body, to grow steadily and sturdily in a home filled with joy. We pray for him to become a person who greets each day with passion, and one, who like all great leaders, remains true to his own integrity.

We pray for Elliot to be curious about the world around him, and to face challenges with an adventurous spirit and a smile. We pray for the ability to love and nurture this child, to provide for him, to educate him, to understand him and help him become a good man.

(Optional inclusion of grandparents:)

Apart from such obviously wonderful parents, Elliot is particularly blessed with four living grandparents, all of whom want to be part of this ceremony. Let us have the grandparents say a few words.

(The parents) have chosen godparents for Elliot, to nurture and guide him, and occasionally provide him relief from his parents. They have asked _____ to play this special role in Elliot's life. Will (the godparent) please come forward.

Let me remind all of you of an old Jewish proverb. "In time of trouble, go to the friend of your father, go to the friend of your mother." From this ancient wisdom comes the idea of godparents, special people who dedicate themselves to watching out for the welfare of others' children.

It is a noble and loving tradition to which you commit yourselves this day. In our society, it is not possible for even the most loving and capable parents to raise a child alone. If our children are to become loving and independent adults, they need the wisdom, counsel, love and support of many adult friends. You have been asked by _____ to accept a special responsibility.

Therefore, I will ask also of you:

Do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living for himself and for humankind? If so, please now say, "I do."

(Godparent say), "I do." (Godparent could speak at this time)

(To the gathered congregation): And do you, this gathered and chosen congregation, do you promise that to the best of your ability you will nurture and instruct this child in the way of right living for himself and for humankind? If so, please now say, "We do."

Please read the following words that have been printed for this ceremony:

Elliot, as you are wrapped in your parents' arms, so may your life be wrapped in justice and righteousness.

As your eyes are filled with wonder when you gaze at the world, so too may you be filled with wonder at the everyday miracles of life.

As your hand tightly grasps your parent's hand, so may you grasp hold of learning and grow in knowledge and wisdom.

As we embrace you today, so may you embrace this community and call it your own.

Optional readings:

(To the parents:) Name this child. (Parents say name out loud.)

Elliot, with the touch of this water on your brow and on your cheeks and on your lips, the traditional emblem of the rite of consecration, and in the gift of this rose, a symbol of the unfolding of a beautiful life, I welcome you and dedicate you to the service of righteousness and love.

Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth (optional)

Let us pray. For the gift of children, whose innocence and laughter keep the world forever young, we all rejoice and give thanks. We give thanks also for the community of children, youth, and adults whom Elliot will call friend and family. May we so live that our children will be able to acquire our best virtues and to leave behind our worst failings. May Elliot's sweet life receive abundantly the blessings of health, love, wisdom and in his turn give back richly to the common heritage that endures from generation to generation.

May hope, love and faith abide with thee now and forever. Amen