

Child dedication



The Holy Seed Church





BLESS THIS LITTLE CHILD, LORD

LORD, LOOK DOWN FROM
HEAVEN ABOVE AND TOUCH THIS
SPECIAL CHILD WITH LOVE.

PROTECT AND GUIDE THIS
LITTLE ONE TILL EACH AND EVERY
DAY IS DONE:

REMINDE US OFTEN THAT IT'S
TRUE: THIS LITTLE LIFE IS A GIFT
FROM YOU.

A MIRACLE YOU'VE SENT OUR
WAY! LORD, BLESS THIS LITTLE
CHILD TODAY.

Child dedication

The New Testament does not command such a ritual as child dedication.

However, the way Jesus related to little ones encourages dedicating children to God (see Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15, 7).

"Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them." It is understandable; however, that child dedication would be questioned by those whose background leads them to associate it with churches that practice infant baptism. For this reason, in The Holy Seed

Church service there are no godfathers or godmothers. It is not a christening service, and ought not to appear as such, but a time of the parents dedicating themselves to God in the upbringing of their newborn or infant child. The service should be organized to emphasize its four

basic

{a} purpose

1. To thank God for the miracles of this birth.
2. To covenant the parents and family to raising the child to love Jesus.
3. To commit the congregation to providing the facilities and support for assisting the family in its task.
4. To bless the child and dedicate it to God. If a minister is not available, an elder may officiate during child dedication. However, an elder should not officiate without the local church pastor's approval.

{b} Planning the service Place

Some cultures encourage a baby presentation in the home. However, in most circumstances the ideal is to have the baby dedication as part of the morning glory service. Since commitment of the congregation is one the purposes of the dedication, it should be held when the largest possible representation from the congregation is available. Time of year. The annual church calendar should include dates when baby dedications are planned as well as scheduling ones when occasions arise. Be sensitive to time when relatives of the parents might be able to be there for the dedication. Announce the dedication date a few weeks in advance, inviting [parents to plan for the service. Make the event evangelistic by encouraging participants to invite their families and friends. Age. Babies may be dedicated at as young an age as parents are prepared to bring them to church. Children after school age are seldom dedicated. An exception may seem appropriate in the case of children of new church members.

{c} Conducting the service

The typical dedication service has four parts:

- (1) **Parents called forward.** Make the baby dedication an important family event. Encourage non-member spouse to attend when their children are dedicated. Invite other sibling to join the dedicatory service. They may otherwise feel a bit left out by all the attention the baby is getting. Grandparents may wish to be included. Occasionally a grandparent will bring the baby even if parents are unwilling to attend, although this is not ideal. One good plan is to invite parents to come forward during the singing of the opening hymn, chosen to fit the dedication.

Using the morning hymn would have been sung anyway. The last stanza of the hymn could be sung after the dedication as parents

leave the platform. The entire dedication should take no more than four to five minutes. The homily must be very brief. Homilies before events such as weddings, baptisms, or child dedications are usually not very effective. Anticipation of the upcoming event is so strong that people hear little of what is said beforehand. Parents are also fearful their baby will cry. Five minutes seem to them like an age. If the homily is more than one or two minutes, it can be given while parents are still in the congregation, perhaps on the front row.

(2) Homily. Parents should stand facing the congregation so worshipers do not feel shut out of the service. There is some spiritual significance in the father, as spiritual leader, holding the child. On the other hand, the mother might do better at keeping the child quiet. It may be best to let local culture and the parents decide. The homily should emphasize the covenanting or charging of the parents and the commitment of the congregation. A thought may be brought from such passages as:

- Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Teach them diligently to your children."
- 1 Samuel 1:27-28 "For this child I prayed, I also have lent him to the Lord."
- Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go."
- Matthew 18:2-6, 10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones."
- Matthew 19:13-15 "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray."
- Ephesians 6:4 "Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

(3) Close your homily with remarks such as the following

"Parents, before setting your child apart in dedication. I invite you to enter into a covenant with God. In bringing this little child for Christian dedication, you are accepting before God the sacred responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. By this symbolic act you seek to express your belief that this little one is not only your child but God's. "The congregation joins you in dedicating this precious one to God, assisting you in working toward the day when this act of dedication shall be followed at an appropriate age by baptism, thus, entering into full and happy membership in this church family." "You, therefore, as parents promise to do all in your power to bring this child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Do you so covenant?" Parents answer: "We do."

(4) Prayer. Pastor or elder and parents should kneel for the dedicatory prayer. The congregation usually remains seated. It is important that an individualized, relational atmosphere prevail during the dedication. One way to accomplish this is for you to hold the baby while praying though one should be mindful of how the

child may react. An alternate method is for the parents to hold the children and you lay your hands on the head of each child in turn as you mention each one's name in prayer. If the group is large, other elders may join in the laying on of hands. The four purposes of a child dedication, included above, should be mentioned in the prayer. Ideally, each child and parent should be mentioned by name. You could lead into the Lord's Prayer, with pastor, parents, and congregation joining their voices in congregation.

- (5) **Certificate and congratulations.** Certificates are usually given to parents after the dedication prayer. Typically, these include enrollment in the Sunday school cradle roll, and you may want the leader of the division to assist you in congratulating parents and presenting the certificates. They can be obtained from the General Conference Ministerial Supply Center, The Holy Seed Church book shop, or publishing houses. Sometimes a single flower in a bud vase is put up front before the service and presented to parents as part of the dedication.

