



Program — Our Most Precious Gifts June 2002

Every child is potentially the light of the world.
From the Baha'i Writings

Our Most Precious Gifts: The Children

Love, with little
hands, comes and
touches you
With a thousand
memories and asks
you
Beautiful,
unanswerable
questions

Carl Sandburg

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My Name is Today

We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer "Tomorrow". His name is "Today".

Gabriela Mistral

Nobel Prize-winning poet from Chile

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O God,
Guide me, protect me,
Illumine the lamp
Of my heart
And make me
A brilliant star.
Thou are the Mighty
and Powerful.

Baha'i Prayer

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A World Fit For Us

We are the world's children.
We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.
We are street children.
We are the children of war.
We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.
We are denied good quality education and health care.
We are victims of political, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.
We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.

We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.

In this world

We see respect for the rights of the child:

- governments and adults having a real and effective commitment to the principle of children's rights and applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child to all children,
- safe, secure and healthy environments for children in families, communities and nations.

We see an end to exploitation, abuse and violence:

- laws that protect children from exploitation and abuse being implemented and respected by all,
- centres and programs that help to rebuild the lives of victimised children.

We see an end to war:

- world leaders resolving conflict through peaceful dialogue instead of by using force,
- child refugees and child victims of war protected in every way and having the same opportunities as all other children,
- disarmament, elimination of the arms trade and an end to the use of child soldiers.

We see the provision of health care:

- affordable and accessible life-saving drugs and treatment for all children,
- strong and accountable partnerships established among all to promote better health for children.

We see the eradication of HIV/AIDS:

- educational systems that include HIV prevention programs,
- free testing and counselling centres,
- information about HIV/AIDS freely available to the public,
- orphans of AIDS and children living with HIV/AIDS cared for and enjoying the same opportunities as all other children.

We see the protection of the environment:

- conservation and rescue of natural resources,
- awareness of the need to live in environments that are healthy and favourable to our development,
- accessible surroundings for children with special needs.

We see an end to the vicious cycle of poverty:

- anti-poverty committees that bring about transparency in expenditure and give attention to the needs of children,
- cancellation of the debt that impedes progress for children.

We see the provision of education:

- equal opportunities and access to quality education that is free and compulsory,
- school environments in which children feel happy about learning,
- education for life that goes beyond the academic and includes lessons in understanding, human rights, peace, acceptance and active citizenship.

We see the active participation of children:

- raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child's right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- children actively involved in decision making at all levels and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.

We pledge an equal partnership in this fight for children's rights. And while we promise to support the actions you take on behalf of children, we also ask for your commitment and support in the actions we are taking – because the children of the world are misunderstood.

We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.
We are not expenses; we are investments.
We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world.

Until others accept their responsibility to us, we will fight for our rights.
We have the will, the knowledge, the sensitivity and the dedication.
We promise that as adults we will defend the children's rights with the same passion that we have now as children.
We promise to treat each other with dignity and respect. We promise to be open and sensitive to our differences.

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality.
We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all.
You call us the future, but we are also the present.

*Meeting of Under 18 Delegates to the United Nations Special
Session on Children, New York 5-7 May 2002*

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Say Yes to Children

Your children are not your children,
They are the son's and daughter's 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 He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as he loves the arrow that flies,
So He loves the bow that is stable.

Kahlil Gibran

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A Creed for Tomorrow's Child

A child learns what she Lives

If a child lives with criticism, she learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, she learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule, she learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame, she learns to feel guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance, she learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement, she learns confidence.
If a child lives with fairness, she learns justice.
If a child lives with security, she learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval, she learns to like herself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, she learns to find love in the world.

Anon

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For My Baby

O Lord, my God, shine the warm light of Your love on my child.
Hold her safe from all illness and harm.
Come into her little soul and comfort her with Your happiness.
Let her feel your peace.
She is too tiny to speak to me, and her cooing and gurgles are hard to translate into human words.
But to You, her little sounds are prayers.
Her cries are cries for Your blessing and grace.
Let her learn Your ways while she is still a child.
In adulthood, let her live the whole span of a human life, fulfilling Your purposes.
And in her old age, let her die joyfully, secure in the knowledge of Your eternal love.
I am not asking that she should be wealthy or famous, but I do ask that she will live prayerfully, serve others in true humility, loving You.
Smile on her, my God. Amen.

Johann Starck

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A Recollection by Dr Arun Gandhi.....

Dr Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for non-violence, has shared the following story as an example of non-violence in parenting.

‘I was 16-years-old and living with my parents at the institute my grandfather had founded 18 miles outside of Durban, South Africa, in the middle of the sugar plantations. We were deep in the country and had no neighbours, so my two sisters and I would always look forward to going to town to visit friends or go to the movies.

One day my father asked me to drive him to town for an all day conference, and I jumped at the chance. Since I was going to town, my mother gave me a list of groceries she needed and, since I had all day in town, my father asked me to take care of several pending chores, such as getting the car serviced.

When I dropped my father off that morning, he said, “I will meet you here at 5.00pm and we will go home together”. After hurriedly completing my chores, I went straight to the nearest movie theatre. I got so engrossed in a John Wayne double-feature that I forgot the time. It was

5.30 before I remembered. By the time I ran to the garage and got the car and hurried to where my father was waiting for me, it was almost 6.00pm.

He anxiously asked me, “Why were you late?” I was so ashamed to tell him I was watching a John Wayne western movie that I said, “The car wasn’t ready, so I had to wait,” not realising he had already called the garage.

When he caught me in the lie he said, "There's something wrong in the way I brought you up that didn't give you the confidence to tell me the truth. In order to figure out where I went wrong with you, I'm going to walk home 18 miles and think about it."

So dressed in his suit and dress shoes, he began to walk home in the dark on mostly unpaved, unlit roads. I couldn't leave him, so for five and a half hours I drove behind him, watching my father go through agony for a stupid lie that I uttered.

I decided then and there that I was never going to lie again. I often think about that episode and wonder, if he had punished me the way we punish our children, whether I would have learned a lesson at all. I don't think so. I would have suffered the punishment and gone on doing the same thing. But this single non-violent action was so powerful that it is still as if it happened yesterday. That is the power on non-violence.'

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Children Dreaming

by Crowman

This is a story of generation and generation generation
pass down through our dancing stories our cultures
lets face it
we older ones muck up the worlds

Now it is time for the children to take over the worlds
we made a mess of things in our times
let our children fix it all up – our mess
without any bickering
the worlds or the environment
not tell us we all work together on this one

Respect our culture future – **are you**
looking after our culture future
feeding our culture future
teaching our culture future
speaking instead of paddy whacking
our future modern future of technology
no bickering now ya lot

Modern walk about 4wds
or little space cars who knows
their totem is computer
message stick e-mail
mind travel mobile phone
language technology terminology talk
Us older ones need to learn our children's language
so we not left behind in their worlds

□ *Maurice Nicholson Sunday 6th May 2001*

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Ode to a Girl

Take her hand
and show her the sun,
Teach her the beauty
of a reasoning mind,
Show her the strength

of a courageous eye,
Touch her with gentle favour
and courtesy,
And she will yield for you
children of peace,
Who bring light
to the dark side of day.

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O my Lord! O my Lord!

I am a child of tender years. Nourish me from the breast of Thy mercy, train me in the bosom of Thy love, educate me in the school of Thy guidance and develop me under the shadow of Thy bounty. Deliver me from darkness, make me a brilliant light; free me from unhappiness, make me a flower of the rose garden; suffer me to become a servant of Thy threshold and confer upon me the disposition and nature of the righteous; make me a cause of bounty to the human world, and crown my head with the diadem of eternal life.
Verily Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty, the Seer, the Hearer.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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All We Need to Know

An Uncommon Thought by Robert Fulghum

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pit at Sunday School.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say sorry when you hurt somebody.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.

Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup – they all die. So do we.

And then remember Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned – the biggest word of all – LOOK.

Take any on of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all – the whole world – had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is true, no matter how old you are – when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

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Happiness will flee whosoever
is not trained from childhood.
Reflect: The green branch can be guided,
but the dry twig is straightened only by fire.

Sa'di – Persian poet

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Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art – the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn worldwide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.

Certainly, certainly neglect not the education of the children. Rear them to be possessed of spiritual qualities, and be assured of the gifts and favours of the Lord.

Baha'i Writings

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O God!
Educate these children.
These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, and roses of Thy garden.
Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love.
Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop and appear in the utmost beauty.
Thou art the Giver!
Thou art the Compassionate!

'Abdu'l-Bahá