

New Beginnings

Baby Dedication

Frank Lewis

Life offers opportunities to celebrate new beginnings. We recognized three new beginnings in one service: the birth of a baby, the ordinance of baptism, and the graduation of students from high school. The graduates were sitting on the front pews in the sanctuary.

I began the service by bringing the infant in from the back of the sanctuary. I walked toward the front of the sanctuary, making sure that everybody could see the baby. I was miked, and I talked to the baby as I went.

I introduced the baby to his new church family. I talked about the responsibility this congregation has in providing an atmosphere that will be conducive to directing the child toward faith. Just as we were now walking up the aisle, one day this child would walk up this aisle on his own, come to this altar and publicly profess his faith in Jesus Christ.

Once I was at the front, I alerted the church that before we could blink an eye,

this child would be sitting on this front pew, ready to celebrate his graduation, too. We had a responsibility between this day and that day to encourage this one toward faith.

The parents joined me at the front. I explained to the parents that Justin Juarez's biblical name means "full of justice." While I still held the baby, I challenged them by saying: "John and Angie Juarez, do you vow to provide an atmosphere and spiritual nurturing that will incline Justin's heart toward the gospel and a saving relationship with Jesus Christ?" I waited for them to respond.

I next challenged the church by saying: "Church family, do you take the responsibility to assist the Juarez family, as you teach and work with them in Sunday School, discipleship classes, RAs, choirs, and in conversations in the hallway that will encourage them in the spiritual development of their son, Justin?" I waited for their response.

I then huddled with the family and prayed with them for God's protection and guidance. The prayer closed as I lay my hands on Justin and pronounced the following blessing: "By God's power, may you be wise, be strong, be pure."

The following day, I mailed a letter to the child, sealed in an envelope with instructions that it is to be opened on the child's 12th birthday.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Date of Dedication Service

Infant's Full Name
Street / Mailing Address
City, State ZIP

Dear First Name:

Happy Birthday. I am writing this greeting to you on the day of your Parent-Child Dedication at First Baptist Church, Nashville. As you read this letter, you are celebrating your 12th birthday. I hope today is a special day for you.

God blessed you with two very special parents. They prayed for you during your mother's pregnancy. Earlier today at your dedication, we reminded your parents of their responsibility to provide for you a home in which Christ is honored. We prayed that you would grow up learning God's love and that one day you would accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Now you are 12 years old. Your parents have made most of life's important decisions for you until now. There is one decision only you can make. You alone must decide how to respond to God's love for you in Jesus. If you have already received Jesus as your Savior, I pray that you will continue to grow as a Christian and that you will stay close to Jesus in the years ahead. If you have not yet received Jesus as Savior, I urge you to trust Him. This has been our prayer for many years.

May God bless you on this special birthday.

In Christ's love,

Pastor's Name

Frank Lewis is pastor of First Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

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