

**IN MY LIFE: CHILDREN ARE OUR GREATEST GIFT  
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NEW YORK**

*Even if the Buddha had not taught [that children are a treasure], you could tell as much simply from the evidence before your eyes.... Surely, there is no treasure greater than a child, no treasure greater than a child! Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. ("The Treasure of a Filial Child," The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 6, pp. 301-04)*

Less than a month ago, my wife gave birth to our first child, a boy. A new "fortune baby." His name is Charles Faulkner Plummer-Guest, a mouthful to be sure; we just call him Charlie. He weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 21 inches long at birth. He has blue eyes, which is standard for Caucasian babies at birth, and strawberry blond hair and a lusty cry. And he is the cutest, most charismatic little fellow his mother and I have ever encountered, and we have known a fair amount of infants in our day. (But then, of course, we are terribly biased, we know.)

The truth of the above passage has never been more apparent to me than since Charlie's arrival here. I have always had an overweening fondness for kids, frequently preferring their company to the larger-sized variety of human being.

But everything is different now that a kid of my own exists, and the Daishonin's wisdom is cast in a brighter, warmer, more incandescent light.

Of Buddhism's three treasures — of the body, the storehouse, the heart — it is clear to me under which category a child, the "greatest" treasure, falls. Children, especially but certainly not solely one's own, are our heart's greatest treasures.

The Daishonin seems almost giddy as he repeats his sentiment, "There is no treasure greater than a child, no treasure greater than a child!" He seems to want to insure that we do not miss the message.

Children are the future in the present. They are our greatest bounty, and must be recognized and valued as such.

Charlie needs, more than anything, love. He responds to society and is clearly nourished by the sounds, sights, and touch of his fellow human beings. And he is remarkably specific already. I have never met another infant who grunts with such ferocity to preface his poops. He has this particular way of pursing his lips in moments of intense concentration. And he smiles his toothless grin in a way that is, as all smiles are, unique. (But then, of course, I am terribly biased, I know.)

In recent weeks, I have much considered the oft-used term *fortune baby*. It is surely Charlie's fortune to be born into a loving family that practices this wonderful, humanist Buddhism. But, in keeping with the above passage, it is equally our great fortune that he was born into our lives.

Our fortune, as the Daishonin notes, is self-evident. We need only open our eyes to see how much richer our lives have become.

The Daishonin's boundless compassion is direct and essential. Children *are* our greatest gift. We must treasure all the children in this world, as if they were our own. For they, in truth, are. They will provide us with more happiness and create more value than we can ever imagine. In the birth of each child is the potential for a great human revolution, the potential to change our entire universe into a world where kosen-rufu thrives. **WT**

Title: Children Are Our Greatest Gift

Subject: World Tribune 07/16/99 n.3251 p.2 WT990716p02

Author: John Plummer

Keywords: Children Experiences Gift Greatest Human John Life Plummer Relationships Tribune World