

New Church Youth Association

Children's Day - 19th January 2020



Dear Friends,

Once again the New Church Youth Association invites you to use your time of worship to focus on children. While many of you care for children in your family, work or church, some of you do not, but we ask you all to spend this time thinking about and praying for children, both in our church organisation and in the wider world.

Suggestions for worship and personal reading

Opening sentence from the Word:

He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. Psalm 91 v11

Reading from the Word:

Matthew chapter 2 v 13- 23

From the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg

Arcana Caelestia 2303

Angelic spirits went on to speak about young children on earth. They said that immediately after these are born, angels from the heaven of innocence are present with them; then in the next phase of their life angels from the heaven of the serenity of peace; after that angels from the communities of charity; and then, as innocence and charity diminish when they are older children, different angels again are present with them. And when at length they become more grown up and enter upon a life alien to charity, angels are indeed present though more remotely, but in accordance with the ends of life which are especially regulated by the angels by a continual instillation by them of ends that are good and a turning aside of ends that are bad. But to the extent they are able or are not able to do this, so they flow in more nearly or more remotely.

Arcana Caelestia 6750 (second part of sub-section 1 and all of sub-section 2.)

...factual knowledge is what those who are being regenerated must learn first, for that knowledge is the groundwork for things that compose the understanding, and the understanding is what receives the truth of faith, and the truth of faith what receives the good of charity. From this it may be seen that factual knowledge constitutes the first level to be laid down when a person is being regenerated.

[2] Factual knowledge also constituted the first level to be laid down in the Lord when He made His Human Divine Truth or the Divine Law. This is what is meant by the Lord's being taken to Egypt when He was a young child, Matt. 2:13, 14, and so by the prophecy in Hosea,

'Out of Egypt have I called My Son.' Hosea 11:1; Matt. 1:15.

It has been shown quite a number of times that 'Egypt' means factual knowledge. By factual knowledge however one should understand not secular knowledge but knowledge that the Church possesses. The latter kind of knowledge is also what is meant by 'Egypt' in the genuine sense.

Talk - Keeping children safe

Almost every parent and adult wants to keep children safe. There are probably more measures to help with this now than ever before. Objects and materials are designed and tested to make sure that they are safe for children. Risk assessments are undertaken before children take part in activities. Organisations, such as our churches, appoint child protection and safeguarding officers.

Some threats, such as those to children's emotional and mental safety, are more difficult to manage. I suspect that, sadly, there has always been bullying, emotional abuse and exploitation of children. Nowadays, with online communications, protecting children and young people from these dangers has become a major concern and challenge.

At the time when Jesus was born threats to His safety were somewhat different. The Bible stories suggest that the Lord did not have the safest start to His earthly life. Immediately before His birth the heavily pregnant Mary, accompanied by Joseph, made the relatively long journey, on foot, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary ended up giving birth to her first baby in a stable - not the cleanest of places! But much worse was to follow; Herod, King of the Jews at that time, heard from the Magi that a new king had been born and, thinking that this was an earthly king who might depose him, Herod became so enraged with jealousy and fear that he planned to kill Jesus -the baby king. Before Herod could carry out his plan Joseph was warned about it by an angel in a dream and was told to take Jesus and Mary to safety in the land the of Egypt. They stayed in Egypt until Herod's death. His successor, Archelaus, was also very cruel and Joseph was warned by an angel in another dream not to return to Bethlehem. So the young family eventually settled in Nazareth, in the area of Galilee.

We know that today, in troubled parts of the world, some parents feel that they need to make perilous journeys to other countries in order to keep their children safe, as Mary and Joseph did. Very few, if any of us have to take such action. So what is the relevance of the story for us?

Firstly, it can remind us that we are not alone in our efforts to keep children safe. Sadly we are not always able to prevent children from suffering physical or emotional harm but the Lord's wonderful providence keeps what is most important, their spirit within them, safe from harm. Just as angels played a major role guiding Joseph in how to keep the infant Jesus safe, they also play a major role in keeping all babies and children spiritually safe today. The Lord sends guardian angels to protect all babies and children. Angels have a sphere of goodness and love for the Lord, which evil spirits hate and cannot bear to be near so they are prevented from causing spiritual harm to children.

But why was Egypt chosen as the place where Jesus would spend His early years? From ancient times Egypt had been a place of learning where people gained knowledge of all kinds, especially natural knowledge.

Like everybody else Jesus had to begin His earthly life by gaining knowledge. And so it is with each of us. To begin with, babies learn about the world through their senses and then by asking questions. Later, children learn at school, college and maybe university. This kind of learning helps to develop their minds in order for them to be able to think and understand, gain skills and eventually, employment. But another area of learning is even more important for children - that is learning the stories of the Word in the Bible and, later, coming to understand the wonderful truths they contain. The Word shows them how the Lord came into the world to free us from the control of evil so that we can grow to love what is true and good from Him. It shows how to choose a life of love to the Lord and other people. We are taught that when children read the Word the angels are very near.

When we encourage children to read the Word and help them to understand its message we enable them to make wise choices and live loving, useful lives, safe in the knowledge of the Lord's love for them.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, thank You for this time when we are reminded to celebrate and give thanks for the children and young people in our church organisation. We welcome the special qualities which children bring such as innocence, trust, enthusiasm and joy in the present moment. We thank You for the opportunities they have to enjoy each others' company and learn together such as activity days, in Sunday schools and at Purley. May they continue to learn more of Your truth and Your love for them throughout their lives. Amen

Lord, we pray for all children throughout the world. May we trust that You are constantly striving to bring love and peace into their lives and keep them safe. We ask for Your blessing, Lord, on all who care for or work with children. May they seek Your guidance so that they make wise decisions, perform loving actions, and are strengthened in the important role they play in children's lives. Amen

Suggestions for Children's Activities

- 1) see www.newchurchvineyard.org The Flight into Egypt Lesson 30 project ideas.
- 2) Discuss people who help to keep children safe e.g. school crossing patrol, school staff, parents, police, swimming teacher etc. - make a 'Thank you card' for one of them.