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## *Raising Children*

An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by Dean Sam Candler

Children! They are the great signs of life in any community. And children of all ages, roaming through the Cathedral of St. Philip, are part of what gives this community great life.

Some of the most patient people I know are the parents and caregivers of these children. Healthy caregivers often willingly surrender their own hopes and interests, in order to guide and nurture their children. The father foregoes two hours of his Saturday in order to take his daughter to her soccer game. The mother says No to dinner with a friend in order to spend time with her son and his homework.

At church, I witness incredible patience from those with children. Adults are listening to their children's questions, even over the very interesting adult discussions. Grandparents sit patiently while smaller children fidget and squirm.

One of the most important discoveries I ever made about my own children, and now my own grandchildren, is that they are not actually mine. I do not remember anyone ever telling me this, but I sure figured it out soon enough. The more I tried to control and shape them as if I owned them, the more I failed as a father. We parents have enormous responsibility in guiding and nurturing and leading our children—of course!—but ultimately these children are not ours. They are different from us; they learn and grow FROM us.

Patience. This realization of holy difference, and healthy self-differentiation, is what produces patience. I believe that the most patient among parents and grandparents are those who realize that they do not own their children, that their children are separate from them.

If I had read Kahlil Gibran more carefully long ago, maybe I would have discovered this holy differentiation earlier. But his poem, *On Children*, describes this relationship wonderfully:

*On Children* (Kahlil Gibran, from *The Prophet*, 1923)

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters 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 tarries 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 also the bow that is stable.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip