



I would like to reverse a familiar phrase in use and say — “It takes a child to make a village!” In these times the miracle of a new life unites us. Diminishing are the times when a child was born to enrich a tribe or a nation. In every newborn child lies our planetary hope for the future. We all belong to him or her just as she or he belongs to all of us.

Poets once presented a baby as a being made of stardust. Now, scientists confirm that the image is pretty close to the truth. Out on the Kalahari desert, I am told, a mother still takes her newborn out on a moonless night and holds the baby up to the sky, asking that her child's heart be exchanged for the heart of one of the billions

of stars she sees about her. These are people who have not forgotten how to listen to the stars and she goes away confident that her request has been granted. Halfway around the world Carole Hal-lundbaek begins her charming book *Dear Little One* this way — *You enter the world, with all the stars in your eyes ... You are the embodiment of joy, and the surest sign of God's love.*

You are probably reading this a few days after a boy named Damien has been born to our daughter Holly and her husband Lance. I am writing it a few days before that, but Damien is already very real. I am beginning to think a baby's spirit comes among us before his or her body. Everyone has their role to play in this great ritual of birth. But I think the impact on the 80+ crowd, like myself, is sometimes overlooked. Well, I can at least speak for myself.

During a long life it is easy to lose track of what is important. Money, position, careers, honors, ideologies, esteem, are completely without interest to the new born. He sees things I have forgotten. The shadow on the wall. The spider finding a hiding place in the rocks. She hears the soft distant call of birds. The wind. Looks really deeply into the eyes of the cat. Values warmth. Every moment of life is celebrated!

I think this is what the Buddhists mean by "mindfulness". We all had it, but may have dropped some important things along the long path of life. That's OK. The baby is coming on the same path and picks up these things we let fall and hands them back to us at an age when we really need them.

If you listen very, very carefully to a baby's gurgle you can almost hear a slightly angelic — *"On you be peace."*

Same to you kid! Watch out for the potholes!

***Brother Toby***