

HOW ARE THE CHILDREN?

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe is considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passes between Masai warriors. "Kasserian Ingera," one always says to another. It means, "How are the children?"

This traditional greeting among the Masai acknowledges the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well-being. Even warriors with no children of their own always give the traditional answer: "All the children are well," meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place, that Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles of existence do not preclude proper caring for the young.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if, in our culture, we took to greeting each other with this daily question: "And how are the children?" I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, would it begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of and cared for in our own country?

I wonder, if every adult among us, parent and non-parent alike, felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children in our community, in our town, in our state, in our country, could we truly say without any hesitation, "The children are well; yes, all the children are well."

What would it be like if religious leaders began every worship service by answering the question, "And how are the children?" If teachers began every class by answering the question, "And how are the children?" If every town leader had to answer the same question at the beginning of every meeting: "And how are the children?" If every business leader and corporate executive had to answer the same question at the beginning of every work day: "And how are the children? Are they well?" wouldn't it be interesting to hear their answers? What would it be like? I wonder... I wonder...

And how are the children? Working together, may all our children be well.

From an adaption of a speech by Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill