



Father Gerard O'Rourke, director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs with 3-year-old Ayana Douglas and her mom, Pamela of the Baha'i community of San Francisco

CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO

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Celebrating Children

Interfaith breakfast focuses on caring for kids

By Evelyn Zappia

Various faith-communities from the Bay Area united in prayer at the Fourth Annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast hosted by the San Francisco Interfaith Council Nov. 20 at San Francisco's Cathedral Hill Hotel.

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown took the opportunity to thank the religious leaders for their participation in the interfaith service held at the Bill Graham Center, following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. "Your support inspired mutual healing for our city, state and nation," he said.

The theme for this year's gathering was "Caring for the City's Children," coinciding with the United Nations Universal Children's Day. Five students from San Francisco's Convent of the Sacred Heart Elementary school participated in the interfaith event, representing the diversity of faiths within the educational institution.



*Mayor Willie Brown with Convent of the Sacred Heart Elementary students.
Left: Ivy Paw, Buddhist; Neema Patel, Hindu; Julia Litman-Cleper, Jewish;
Yasmeeen Ben-Halim, Muslim; and Deirdre Herbert, Catholic*



Iftekar Hai of the United Muslims of America

(PHOTOS BY EVELYN ZAPPIA)

Celebrating children . . .

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Neema Patel's Hindu prayer asked that "obstacles be removed for those children in our world who do not have families." Ivy Paw's Buddhist prayer explained the importance of the "lotus flower, a sign of beauty, that can grow out of muddy waters." Julia Litman-Cleper's Jewish prayer asked "all of us be mindful of those who do not have an abundance of harvests...and help provide for those who are hungry."

Deirdre Herbert requested in her Christian prayer "we not just be thankful today, but everyday of our lives." Yasmeen Ben-Halim's Muslim prayer asked "we learn to share the good things of this world so that all may have more gratitude in their hearts."

The highlight of the event was tiny three-year-old Ayana Douglas of Baha'i Community of San Francisco who led the gathering in a prayer/song singing "We are flowers of one garden. We are leaves of one tree. Come and join us in our quest for unity. It's a way of life for you and me."

Archbishop William J. Levada who said the closing prayer, thanked God for his graces of food, shelter, family, and friends. He prayed for harmony in our land and remembered the victims and families of the Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S.