

September/October 2000

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES



through the years

Gotcha day

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"Gotcha Day" is an annual opportunity to celebrate and remember the day of a child's adoption. According to Barbara Biziou, author of the new book *The Joy of Family Rituals*, "It is designed to show your adopted child how much you wanted him and that every year you continue to cherish him." The ceremony is performed on the anniversary of the day the child came into the home.

Close relatives and friends gather in a circle, and a pink candle is lit to symbolize the group's love for the child. Each person talks about the importance of having the child in the family and community. Then the parents explain in age-appropriate terms why they wanted a child, what they had to go through, and what happened on the day they first saw their child.

"Be as descriptive as possible about the circumstances — going to a hospital, a home, or a law office, or perhaps

making a trip to another country to pick up the child," Biziou writes.

"Talk about what it felt like to hold him, what you did first when you got home, how strange and wonderful it was to have this new life in the house. This story is part of a family legend. Even if the child has heard it a hundred times before, most children delight in the repetition."

To close the ritual, ask the child to stand in the middle of the circle while a blessing is recited. Group members can place their hands on the child. "End with a ceremonial buffet of all your child's favorite foods and music," Biziou advises. She adds that if a child was adopted from another culture, it is important to incorporate



Gotcha Day: marking a child's entry into a community of loved ones

traditional food and music into the celebration.

The Meaning: "Gotcha Day" can be an annual reminder to a child that he or she is wanted and loved by the family and community. It can be celebrated in addition to the child's birthday. **AF**