WELCOME SPEECH

FOR

DANY SHALALA

Hello everyone and welcome to this very happy and important moment for the Shalala family, and, of course, in particular, for our “star,” Jacob. We want to thank all of you for being here and for sharing Jacob’s baptism ceremony and this celebration. There are a few very special “red letter days” that happen in life, and to us, a baptism is probably the second most important day in a person’s time here on earth… speaking chronologically, of course!! Each one of you shared our joy and excitement as Jacob was born, and here we are, seven months later, as we celebrate this next milestone. We are so moved and touched that you are all here to be with us, and it becomes more and more clear, as we “grow up” and mature and start families of our own, just how important and special friendships and close family ties really are. For those of you who have been there from the beginning… and let’s face it, there are so many momentous beginnings in life…. from birth, to being old enough to recognize and play with brothers and sisters and cousins, to starting school and finding those first friends who will become lifelong best friends, to starting at college and in careers… all through life we find the people to treasure and share not only the every day ups and downs of living, but also the really important life-defining moments like birth and baptism.

I look around the room and I am so moved to see our happiness reflected in each one of your faces. As a new mother, I am beginning to see the world from a new perspective-through the eyes of someone watching out for and nurturing her child. As I look at all of you, I am touched to think that a little baby could act as such strong clue to bring us all together and unite us in faith and hope for the future. The rite of Baptism holds many symbols that have withstood thousands of years, and during the ceremony, I really felt connected to my family, God, and all who came before us, and knowing it is our turn to pass on the lessons and traditions of our faith and legacy is really very humbling. The use of water in baptism reminds us how essential water is to our existence. It is a vital part of the foundation of life. It nourishes us and keeps us alive in much the same way as belief and faith support us. The symbolic use of oil in the ceremony evokes the power of healing, strengthening and resilience, all characteristics needed to be a strong human being with purpose and integrity. The baby wears a white garment as a symbol of giving one’s new life to Christ with grace and dignity… **(If you want to make a joke you can say**)… of course, the challenge is to keep a white gown clean on a seven-month-old baby!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Finally, a glowing candle represents the light of Christ and reminds us of the light that shines within all of us… and that is our soul.

Some may say it “takes a village” to raise a child, and believe me, even with our new and limited experience, I’m sure we wish we each had several more hands, but with this baptism comes something even more precious, and that is that Jacob has two amazing godparents to watch over him, teach him, and guide him through life (**If you want to make another small joke, you can say**) …oh… and one more thing… there’s a new requirement for godparents-recently written into “the code.” I heard there’s a directive that they also have to babysit… as much as needed!!! Godparent bonding time!!! (**Name your spouse or partner**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I are so deeply touched and proud to have two people in our lives that we know will be Jacob’s guiding lights… and **babysitters**…. We want to thank Dina Angelo and Claude Shalala for being there for our baby and us and for loving and caring for Jacob. Dina, we know Jacob will learn so much thanks to your (**name 3 outstanding characteristics**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and of course the way you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Claude, as godfather, you bring the Shalala legacy, warmth, humor and passion for life to Jacob and we love you for that (**If Claude has a particular hobby or passion for sports, you can say**)…. of course, even when you get carried away teaching Jacob to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, remember his bedtime curfew!!

Thank you all again for the blessing of your friendship, caring and love. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I are so lucky to have you all in our lives and now Jacob has his life ahead of him filled with so many people who share all of the joy you bring to us. Thank you all!