

A Prayer For Children

We pray for children...

Who put chocolate fingers everywhere,
Who like to be tickled,
Who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,
Who sneak Popsicles before supper,
Who erase holes in math workbooks,
Who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those...

Who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
Who can't bound down the street in a pair of sneakers,
Who never "counted potatoes,"
Who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
Who never go to the circus,
Who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children...

Who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
Who sleep with the dog and bury goldfish,
Who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money,
Who cover themselves with band-aids and sing off key,
Who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink,
Who slurp their soup.

And we pray for those...

Who never get dessert,
Who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
Who watch their parents watch them die,
Who can't find any bread to steal,
Who don't have any rooms to clean up,
Whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
Whose monsters are real.

We pray for children...

Who spend their allowance before Tuesday,
Who throw tantrums in the grocery store,
And pick at their food,
Who like ghost stories,
Who shove dirty clothes under the bed,
And never rinse out the tub,
Who get visits from the tooth fairy,
Who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
Whose ears we sometimes laugh at and
Whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those...

Whose nightmares come in the daytime,
Who will eat anything,
Who have never seen the dentist,
Who aren't spoiled by anybody,
Who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
Who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children

Who want to be carried and for those who must,
For those we never give up on and
For those who don't get a second chance.
For those we smother... and for those who will
Grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

Ina J. Hughs, Children's Defense Fund