

A PRAYER FOR CHILDREN

We pray for children 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 new pair of sneakers
Who never "counted potatoes," who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead in
Who never saw a circus, who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions
Who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray for those who never get dessert
Who have no security 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 all their allowance before Tuesday,
Who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food
Who like ghost stories, who shove their 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 car pool
Who squirm in church and scream into the telephone, whose tears 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 a 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 be.
For those we never give up on and for those who never get a second chance.
For those we smother and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

Amen.