

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 never can find their shoes.

And we pray for those
Who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire
Who can't bounce down the street
In a new 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 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 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,
Who squirm in church and scream in the phone,
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.

For those we never give up on
And for those who don't have a second chance,
For those we smother
...and those who will grab the hand of anybody
Kind enough to offer it.

