



A Prayer for Children

Ina Hughs

We pray for the 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 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 hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money. 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 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; who 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; who we never give up on and for those who don't get a second chance. For those we smother and... and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.