



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 a place 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 hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray for those

Who never get desserts,
Who have no safety 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 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 or temple and scream
into the phones,
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 who 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.