

# A Prayer for Children

*Written By: Ina J. Hughs*

We pray for children  
Who give us sticky kisses,  
Who hop on rocks and chase butterflies,  
Who stomp in puddles and ruin their math workbooks,  
Who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those  
Who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,  
Who've never squeaked across the floor in new sneakers,  
Who've 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 fistfuls of dandelions and sing off key  
Who have goldfish funerals, build card-table forts  
Who slurp their cereal on purpose  
Who put gum in their hair, put sugar in their milk  
Who spit toothpaste all over the sink  
Who hug us for no reason, who bless us each night.

And we pray for those  
Who never get dessert,  
Who watch their parents watch them die,  
Who have no safe blanket to drag behind,  
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 those  
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 quarters from the tooth fairy  
Who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,  
Who squirm in church and scream on 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 chance.  
For those we smother,  
And for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer.