

Prayers for Youth in Need of Love and Support

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OPENING PRAYER AND INTRODUCTION

Leader: As we center ourselves to begin our prayer, let us listen to the Gospel according to Matthew:

“Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’ After he placed his hands on them, he went away.” (Matthew 19:13-15)

(Pause)

Let us pray:

Loving God, we hear you when you remind us to whom your kingdom belongs. Grant us the strength, humility and vision to serve those young people among us who are most at risk. May your spark of life be preserved in them that they might be protected from the darkness of the world. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Response: Amen.

The following readings are taken from the prayers of young people in shelters as documented in the column “Prayers of Street Kids.”¹ Listen now as we bear in mind how we are called to care for and protect those least among us.

Reader 1: “Prayers of Street Kids”

“Dear heavenly Father, please give me the strength to go on through my stay at Covenant House. Give me the wisdom to do what is right and not wrong. And please give me the strength to make the right

decisions about the things that occur. I know I haven’t been making the right decisions, but I’d like to do better at that.”

Response: God, ready our hands, our feet, our hearts, that we might be your face of love in action.

Reader 2: “Prayers of Street Kids”

“Dear Lord, this is your son. I am writing you today to thank you [for] stopping the pain and helping me get through my ordeal that I’m facing. Help me get my life right and find a job. Amen I love you.”

Response: God, ready our hands, our feet, our hearts, that we might be your face of love in action.

Reader 3: “Prayers of Street Kids”

“Dear God, if you’re there and you care, I just want someone to love me, someone to talk to when I need to talk. Someone to cry on when I need to cry. Most of all someone to love me and walk as far as they wish through my life. Amen.”

Response: God, ready our hands, our feet, our hearts, that we might be your face of love in action.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: “Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.” (Matthew 18:4-5)

(Pause)

Creator of all, as your children it is our best hope to humble ourselves to maintain faith like a child. Guide us in all that we do, that we may work to receive young people among us in your name. Grant, we pray, that they may grow, discover, and come to understand how deeply loved they are by you through our work to protect them. Through Christ, our Lord, we pray.

Response: Amen.

1. Some of these prayers are excerpted from an article by Kevin Ryan, president and chief executive officer of the nonprofit Covenant House. He details some of the written prayers of homeless or trafficked youth who have come to Covenant House for services in “Prayers of Street Kids,” Catholic News Service, April 13, 2011, <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2011/prayers-of-street-kids.cfm>.