



Current Issues in Prayer

December 2019

Welcome! The Pope invites people of good will to come together and pray:
That every country determines to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority.



Getting started:

I choose a comfortable place. I try to recollect myself in the presence of God and thank Him for those people who tirelessly work with the poor and those who are suffering.



Short story:

Seven-year-old Indian boy Daksh and his nine-year-old brother Saanu could hardly believe what was happening! The police had stormed in the hazardous factory where they had been working for the past three years, together with a group of children their age. The factory agent had promised their parents that the boys' wages would be sent to them. However, they never received anything. Nothing could have prepared the boys for the gruelling and inhumane working conditions at the factory. They were forced to work 12 hours a day without break-time. Many of the children developed skin diseases and other illnesses from working in the unhygienic environment of the dark rooms that had no ventilation. The employers monitored the children with CCTV and would punish and beat any child who stopped working. Daksh and Saanu have since been released. They found out that they had been saved through the initiative of Kailash Satyarthi who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. It is estimated that more than 80,000 have been saved from child slavery since he founded the 'Save the Childhood Movement' in 1980. Satyarthi's campaign helped change India's laws that now make education compulsory up to the age of 14 and prohibit children from participating in forced and hazardous labour. Despite this, child labour persists. Satyarthi will not give up. He insists on eradicating this social evil and says "Child slavery is a crime against humanity. Humanity itself is at stake here. A lot of work still remains, but I will see the end of child labour in my lifetime".



Time to reflect:

Is this story only relevant to a few countries like India? Is child labour the only form of abuse that children are subjected to? In spite of child protection legislation and in spite of incessant efforts from law makers and NGOs, this story illustrates the vulnerability of children and how they are most at risk of suffering. Why?



Let us pray:

Dear Lord, sometimes we fail to protect the innocent lives of children in favour of satisfying the needs of unjust economic systems. Enlighten policy makers in every country to ensure that children's interests are given a priority in their policies.



Inspiration:

Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future. *John F. Kennedy*



Hands on:

As a consumer I make a quick research on the products I buy. I go to the 'Bureau of International Labour Affairs' website to find out whether forced or child labour was used to grow or manufactured the products. I become aware of where abuse is happening and raise awareness around me. I choose products that are produced fairly and that do not promote child or forced labour.