



CATHOLIC CHARITIES 180TH ANNIVERSARY CHILDREN'S SERVICES PRAYER SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Leader:

From our founding in 1830 as St. Peter's Orphanage for Girls, Catholic Charities has been committed to the care of the most vulnerable members of society - our children. In our early years, we focused on providing homes for children who had none through a system of orphanages. Catholic Charities' concern for our communities' children grew to include finding children permanent homes through adoption, keeping children and their families strong through our Basic Needs, food distribution, and childcare food programs, and healing those children who had been emotionally injured through our routine and intensive outpatient counseling programs. And our inaugural program, St. Peter's Orphanage, continues our legacy of service today as Seton Villa, a therapeutic group home for children.

Leader:

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. (Matthew 19:13-15)

Jesus reminds us that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the children. At this time, let us pause and think of the condition of children in our communities.

Reader 1: Where there is disease, children get sick and often are the first to die.

Reader 2: Where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places.

Reader 3: Where there is poverty, children are hungry.

Reader 4: Where there is violence, children are afraid to play in their neighborhood.

Reader 5: Where there are family problems, children's spirits are wounded.

All: Therefore, we hope for a community where all children can find a safe place; where all ages, races, genders, creeds and abilities are recognized, valued and celebrated; where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them; where all children have "first call" on our resources and first place in the minds and hearts of adults.

Leader: Because Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name, Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the Kingdom of God is like. We, at Catholic Charities have a long history of caring for and lifting up the spirit of the children entrusted to our care.

At this time, let us pray for the children.

Reader 6: For each and every child that Catholic Charities has helped over the years, that they feel they have benefited from being associated with Catholic Charities and have felt loved in the process. Let us pray,

All: Lord, hold the children close to you.

Reader 7: For the children we place in adoptive and foster homes, that they know they are a privilege, a joy, a treasure. Let us pray,

All: Lord, hold the children close to you.

Reader 8: For the children we care for at Seton Villa, that they develop endurance and perseverance as they face the challenges and crises in their lives. Let us pray,

All: Lord, hold the children close to you.

Reader 9: For the children in the Intensive Outpatient Programs, that they know God's guidance and strength as they face the trials, troubles, or fears that they may encounter. Let us pray,

All: Lord, hold the children close to you.

Reader 10: For children who are misguided, vulnerable, and frightened that they find hearts of compassion, helping hands, and kind words. Let us pray,

All: Lord, hold the children close to you.

Leader: Heavenly Father, bathe our children in restful and confident hope. We ask Your blessings be with them in their daily life, in their relationships, in their challenges, and in their hopes. May they overflow with Your peace always!

All: AMEN!