



# International Solidarity Reflection

Children

*Shalom*

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## **Introduction**

On 20 November 1989, the UN General Assembly marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. On that same day, the international community extended human rights protection to one of the most vulnerable groups in society – children – when it adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 54 articles it spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life.

## ***Call to Prayer***

Mother Theresa's heart was moved to a special love for children, especially the children of the poor and those who had lost their parents. Let us remember that children, the young of all species, come into the world wanting and needing the same things: a caring family, shelter and nourishment, freedom to play, a chance to grow and develop in ways that are consistent with their nature. May we always, with compassionate hearts, act on behalf of these "little ones" who have no voice and no choice.

## **Experience**

Do you remember being twelve years old?

Kalpona remembers. That was the year her father became ill and could no longer work. So she went to work in a sweatshop in Bangladesh to help support her family. Her first day of work, someone handed her a pair of scissors and she stood on her feet – choking on dust and her hands cramping – for the next 14 hours. She earned just \$6 a month.

Kalpona quickly began looking for another job – and found one. On this job she earned about \$8 a month, but worked up to 17 hours a day. She would begin work at 8 a.m. and end her day at 3 a.m. – forced to sleep on the production floor with the other workers.

The clothing made by this young girl – and hundreds of thousands like her – eventually made its way to "wholesome" stores and into the closets of unknowing consumers like you and me. (*Co-op America – now Green America*)

## **Reflection**

"Let us never forget the love of Jesus for children, whom he took upon his lap, caressed, and blessed! Of them he said, 'Whoever receives one of these little ones in my name receives me.'" (*Trust and Dare*, Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger)

93,000,000 school-age children did not go to school in 2006. (*World Ark*, Heifer Project International, Sept/Oct 2008)

25,000 children die every day from preventable causes. (UNICEF USA)

“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.” (UNICEF, “Child poverty in perspective,” Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007)

“The child awakens to a universe. The mind of the child to a world of meaning. Imagination to a world of beauty. Emotions to a world of intimacy. It takes a universe to make a child both in outer form and inner spirit. It takes a universe to educate a child. A universe to fulfill a child.” (“It Takes a Universe,” Thomas Berry)

“The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”  
(Preamble to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*)

## Action

Reflect on the words of the Iroquois Constitution: “In every deliberation, let us consider the impact of our decisions on the seventh generation.”

When purchasing clothing, ask a salesperson if the brand is child labor/sweatshop-free.

Volunteer as a tutor or mentor for children in need; spend time outdoors with a child and introduce her or him to the wonders of the natural world.

Care for Earth’s biodiversity and ecosystems; we are borrowing from future generations.

Donate to UNICEF or another international, national, or local organization dedicated to the welfare of children.

## Closing Prayer

Loving Parent, whose concern and compassion embraces all Earth’s children, stretch our hearts so that we may commit ourselves:

To the children  
To all the children  
To the children who swim beneath  
The waves of the sea, to those who live in  
The soils of the Earth, to the children of the flowers  
In the meadows and the trees in the forest, to  
All those children who roam over the land  
And the winged ones who fly with the winds,  
To the human children too, that all the children  
May go together into the future in the full  
Diversity of their regional communities.

(*The Great Work*, Thomas Berry)

Amen!