



# *The Rights of the* **CHILD**

## Gathering Prayer

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Heavenly Father,

As we gather here today, strong in our faith and safe in your love,  
We ask that you help us trust in you to look after our children.  
You have watched over them from their first moments.  
You created them so perfectly.  
They are such a gift.  
Help us to love, care and protect them from harm.  
Lead us as a community to build our relationships  
Upon the foundation of your hope and truth.

*Amen.*

*(An opening prayer.*

*Adapted from [www.lords-prayer-words.com](http://www.lords-prayer-words.com))*



## Introduction

# Be an Advocate

In his closing address at the XXI General Chapter (2009) the Superior General Emili Turu urged that Marists become experts in the defence of the rights of children and the young.

'Let us hope that in eight year's time, when we look back, we will be able to say that the Institute has taken very significant steps in that direction.

We remember Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt to protect the child Jesus. This image urges us to become experts and advocates for the rights of children and young people; speaking bravely and prophetically in public forums. We feel ourselves impelled to challenge social, economic, political, cultural and religious practices that oppress children and young people. Now is the time for all to



join in the work of the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity (FMSI).'

In 2007 the Marist Brothers established an office in Geneva, Switzerland, home of the United Nations Human Rights Council, to give them the opportunity to participate in relevant UN conferences, meetings and working groups dealing with child rights. By sharing the expertise of Marists throughout the world, FMSI is able to engage in discussions and decisions on standards and international agreements dealing with the human rights of children and young people.

A primary focus of the work of the office is to highlight the rights of all children and young people to have access to a good education but

this does not exclude other rights of children that are being abused or denied in particular countries. Marists from around the world provide information and evidence on how well this right is being fulfilled in their countries.



*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for he has anointed me to bring good news to  
the poor”*

Luke 4:18

## Scripture

Mark 10: 13-16

*Scripture*

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

*The Word of the Lord*

*Thanks be to God*



# Reflection on the Scripture

## Reflection

Pope Francis' homily during the concluding mass in Philippines (January 2015) perfectly encapsulates what it means to protect all children today:

"In the Gospel, Jesus welcomes children, he embraces them and blesses them (Mk 10:16). We too need to protect, guide and encourage our young people, helping them to build a society worthy of their great spiritual and cultural heritage. Specifically, we need to see each child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished and protected. And we need to care for our young people, not allowing them to be robbed of hope and condemned to life on the streets.

It was a frail child, in need of protection, who brought God's goodness, mercy and justice into the world. He resisted the dishonesty and corruption which are the legacy of sin, and he triumphed over them by the power of his cross. Now, I commend you to him, to Jesus who came among us as a child. May he enable all the beloved people of this land to work together, protecting one another, beginning with your families and communities, in building a world of justice, integrity and peace."

*A child has no difficulty in loving, has no obstacles to love. And that is why Jesus said, "Unless you become like little children.."*

Mother Teresa



## Group Discussion

# Group Discussion

As Pope Francis said: ' God blessed us with the gift of Children.' Let's take a moment to think of the children who have been entrusted to our care.

**Q:** What 'gifts' have they given you?

Kahlil Gibran reminds us that we do not own children, like a possession, we are more like stewards who look after and care for them.

### *On Children*



Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.  
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them,  
but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children  
as living arrows are sent forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might  
that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.

Kahlil Gibran

**Q:** What is your response to Kahlil Gibran's words?

**Q:** Highlight words or phrases that stood out for you?

As adults, parents and teachers we are called to protect and care for the weak, the vulnerable, and the innocent. We cannot do it alone, as the traditional African proverb says "It takes a village to raise a child".

**Q:** How is the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" reflected in your community?

# Be Inspired

## *As Marists Act*

As Marists, be inspired, and act

The cries of the world, especially those of the poor people, touch the heart of God and ours as well. The depth of God's compassion challenges us to be men and women whose hearts have no bounds since in his infinite love, God continues to be totally involved with all men and women and today's world, with its disappointments and hopes.

(\* 127 Water from the Rock)

Our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth.

(\* 128 Water from the Rock)



Marists working for the Rights of Children in Australia

## MARIST YOUTH CARE

*Care*



Take some time to look these clips:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heQb1aDZ-BU> Pete's Place

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfRLcvaaEy4> Short stories

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDb8xuf2BX8> Teachers from Youth Care's perspective

**Q:** How is Marist Youth Care helping at risk youth?

## MARIST SOLIDARITY

*Solidarity*



<http://youtu.be/gvmj4Ff-ef4> 2015 campaign

**Q:** What is your response to this campaign?

**Q:** What are you/we going to do to as a result of this campaign?

# A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD.



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- Article 1** Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention.
- Article 2** The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.
- Article 3** All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.
- Article 4** Governments should make these rights available to children.
- Article 5** Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly.
- Article 6** Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.
- Article 7** Children have the right to a legally registered name and nationality. Children also have the right to know their parents and, as far as possible, to be cared for by them.
- Article 8** Governments should respect a child's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.
- Article 9** Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good. For example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting a child. Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm the child.
- Article 10** Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.
- Article 11** Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.
- Article 12** Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.
- Article 13** Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.
- Article 14** Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.
- Article 15** Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

- Article 16** Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.
- Article 17** Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.
- Article 18** Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work.
- Article 19** Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 20** Children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly by people who respect their religion, culture and language.
- Article 21** When children are adopted the first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether children are adopted in the country of their birth or if they are taken to live in another country.
- Article 22** Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.
- Article 23** Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.
- Article 24** Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.
- Article 25** Children who are looked after by their local authority rather than their parents should have their situation reviewed regularly.
- Article 26** The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.
- Article 27** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.
- Article 28** Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthier countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

- Article 29** Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.
- Article 30** Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live, as long as this does not harm others.
- Article 31** Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.
- Article 32** Governments should protect children from work that is dangerous or that might harm their health or education.
- Article 33** Governments should provide ways of protecting children from dangerous drugs.
- Article 34** Governments should protect children from sexual abuse.
- Article 35** Governments should make sure that children are not abducted or sold.
- Article 36** Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development.
- Article 37** Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in a prison with adults and should be able to keep in contact with their family.
- Article 38** Governments should not allow children under 15 to join the army. Children in war zones should receive special protection.
- Article 39** Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.
- Article 40** Children who are accused of breaking the law should receive legal help. Prison sentences for children should only be used for the most serious offences.
- Article 41** If the laws of a particular country protects children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws should override the Convention.
- Article 42** Governments should make the Convention known to all parents and children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles in all. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure that all children get all their rights.

**Go to [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc) to read all the articles.**



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**Q:** How do you in your everyday life uphold the rights of children?



# Our Personal Commitment

## Commitment

Many of the troubles of modern society are caused by broken families. Many mothers and fathers are so busy that they are never home.

Children come home from school and there is no one  
to receive them  
to pay attention to them  
to encourage them if they are sad  
to share their joy if they are happy.

Children long for somebody  
to accept them  
to love them  
to praise them  
to be proud of them.

If they do not have this, they will go to the streets where there are plenty of people ready to accept them. The child can be lost. Much hatred and destruction is caused when a child is lost to the family.

Like our lady and St Joseph we must go and search for the child. When Jesus was lost they went and searched. They did not sit and wait. They did not rest until they found him. We must bring the child back, make the child feel wanted.

Without the child there is no hope.

Mother Teresa  
*Words to Love By*



# Closing Prayer:

## Closing Prayer

### All:

Loving God  
as we encounter Your image in every child no matter what age,  
we ask for wisdom and Your grace to:  
see the wonder and awe of the world through the eyes of children,  
acknowledge and celebrate their agency,  
listen to their voices with respect and understanding,  
celebrate with them as they live who they are called to,  
invite and nurture their full participation in life and community,  
value their relationships and heritage,  
commit ourselves to their right to dream,  
seek meaning,  
to love and to grow knowing that they are Your children  
loved by You.

We ask this prayer through Jesus, the Child, the Adult, the Christ,  
Who lives with You and the Holy Spirit,

*Amen.*

*(Source: Catholic Education South Australia)*

St Marcellin Champagant:

***Pray for us***

Mary our Good Mother:

***Pray for us***

And let us always remember:

***To pray for one another***

