

This Christmas Remember the Poor Children

Have you ever considered that at Christmas we are actually celebrating the entrance into the world of the most famous poor child ever to be born?

Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, wrote this poem to remind herself, her family and all who would read it that the season of Christmas can be a time "to give back to all of our children their sense of security and their ability to dream about and work toward a future that is attainable and hopeful."

*Jesus, small poor baby of Bethlehem,
Be born again in our hearts today
Be born again in our homes today
Be born again in our congregations today
Be born again in our cities today
Be born again in our nations today.
Be born again in our world today.*

It is hard to believe that in a nation as rich as ours that 11 million children have no health insurance, that only 12 percent of children who are eligible for assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant receive it, that Head Start serves only three out of five eligible children and that the richest school districts in the nation spend 56 percent more per student than do the poorest.

In the Diocese of Bethlehem we have been working continuously this past year to raise the awareness of the inequities many of our children are facing throughout our state in our Public School System through the *Good Schools Pennsylvania* movement.

Governor-elect Rendell has promised that, as one of his first acts as governor, he will call for a Special Session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly to address the inequities and funding of our Public Schools, recognizing that our poor children lose the most. He will not be able to address the educational crisis alone; he will need the support of the House and the Senate to make the necessary changes to right this unjust situation.

As faithful Christians, committed to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and (to) respect the dignity of every human being" by virtue of our baptism, we **can** help. *Good Schools Pennsylvania* has designed a Christmas card that is available free to everyone willing to send it to their Legislators. It says,

*Front cover: Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

*Inside: During this season of giving,
let us each remember what we are called upon to do for our children.*

We count on you to act for all the poor children of the Commonwealth

as you address the inequities in our public schools in the New Year.

Cards are available from your Parish Child Advocates and from my office free of charge. All you need to do is personally sign the card, address and stamp the envelope and send it to your legislators.

This simple act of Child Advocacy is a wonderful and simple way to honor the most famous poor child ever born who calls us to love the poor children of today. AWE: Children's Ministries and I challenge every member of the Diocese to send a card. Imagine what an impact it would make if every Christian in the state did likewise!