



The Pope's Prayer Intention for January 2018

Religious Minorities in Asia

Pray that Asian countries will allow all people to practice their faith freely, especially Christians and other religions with small communities.

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Jesus is really good at paying attention to us. Over and over in the Bible, Jesus pays attention to sick, troubled, or unimportant people that everyone else avoids. Jesus talks to these people in a kind and loving way. The Gospel of Luke tells about a time when Jesus spent time with children:

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them, and when the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:15-16).

This story shows the disciples making a mistake: They thought children were not as important as grown-ups. They "rebuked" people who wanted their children to get to know Jesus. That means the disciples scolded or maybe even yelled at the families who wanted to be close to Jesus.

But Jesus loves people, especially being with children. Jesus invited the disciples to see how important children are. He hugged the children, explaining that God wants children to be happy forever in heaven.

In some parts of Asia, Christians feel like the children in

Luke's Gospel story. Some people act like bullies, telling Christians and other religious groups that they should stop going to their churches and join more popular religions — or just forget about God entirely! But God never forgets about us. God loves us.

Let's pray that all people in Asia break free from bullies and honor God with all their hearts.

Let's pray together:

Jesus, you are the King of the Universe. Accept our prayers for people in Asia. May all people be free to follow you. Amen.

Think about it!

- Do you ever feel ignored or unimportant? At those lonesome times, Jesus loves you more than ever.
- What can you do at home or school to help a lonely person feel better?

■ Asia is the biggest continent on our planet. With a grown-up, find out how many people live in Asia. Jesus loves every single one of those people.

Activity

Sardines are small fish that travel together in huge groups. When fishers catch sardines for people to eat, they pack up the sardines tightly in little tins. "Sardines" is a hide-and-seek game that makes all the players come together in a small space. You need at least three people to play, but the more the merrier!

- One player hides while all the other players (the "seekers") count to 20.
- When the counting is done, the seekers split up to find the hider.
- When a seeker finds the hider, that seeker joins the hider in the hiding place.
- All seekers who find the hider pack into the hiding place together until only one seeker is left, which ends the game.
- To play the next round, the last seeker becomes the new hider.

Playing Sardines can help us remember that Jesus wants more and more people to join him in heaven.



GRACE MAZZA URBANSKI is the author of *Pray with Me: Seven Simple Ways to Pray with Your Children*. These reflections are courtesy of the Apostleship of Prayer. See

ApostleshipOfPrayer.org.