

- 1 It was on this day in 1986 that the whole world learned the name of a small town, 80 miles (130 km) north of Kiev in The Ukraine. The town was Chernobyl, and The Ukraine is now an independent country but, at that time, was part of the Soviet Union, before the Fall of Communism.
- 2 12 miles (20 km) outside the town of Chernobyl is a nuclear power plant. Some of the people operating the nuclear power plant wanted to conduct an experiment with the water-cooling system. To do this, they decided to switch off the safety systems, which were designed to cut off the nuclear reaction if there were any problems.
- 3 One of the nuclear reactors went out of control. If the engineers had not over-ridden the safety systems, the reactors would have switched themselves off when they became dangerous. The engineers made a wrong decision, with disastrous consequences, and a steam explosion caused the reactor's protective covering and roof to be blown off - the roof weighed hundreds of tonnes. Vast amounts of radiation were released.
- 4 Far too late, 100,000 people were evacuated from towns miles around. By that time, radiation was being carried by high air currents across Europe. Detectors in Sweden were the first to alert the rest of Europe as to what was happening. Those detectors showed that the radiation in Sweden - 800 miles (1300km) away from Chernobyl - was high. The fallout of radiation in Britain was such as to cause concern in agriculture, and for some months it was forbidden to eat Welsh lamb - lambs that had eaten the grass that had been exposed to the radiation that had spread from 1500 miles away.
- 5 The greatest concern, of course, was for the many people far more seriously affected by the radiation - they were within a hundred miles of Chernobyl. Over the following months, many of the children developed leukemia and other forms of cancer, and some of the sick children were invited to Britain and other countries for holidays.
- 6 That decision to cut off the safety system cost the lives of many people. That irresponsible choice left vast areas of their country so radiated that no-one will be able to live there again.
- 7 *Let us pray:*
**God our Father,
with the gifts you have given to us
we have responsibilities and duties.
Lead us to do our best
and act responsibly.
Give us courage
when we face difficulties.
Inspire us to make our choices wisely,
always remembering
that there are consequences
to what we choose to do.
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org