



***MISSIO-Advent Giving Program 2-3***

***Cycle A***

Missionary Childhood Association,

A Pontifical Mission Society

## Welcome to the MISSIO Advent Giving Program

### 2-3

To share the Good News of God's love and salvation, to be a missionary disciple. That's the opportunity offered to young people by *MISSIO-Missionary Childhood Association (MCA)*.

This **Advent**, in this program, children learn about their brothers and sisters in mission countries – children just like them. And they also discover that their own prayers, personal sacrifices and financial help make a faith-filled difference for their mission family – and make them missionaries today!

Program resources include four weekly lessons for young people divided according to grade level: K-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8. Scripture-based activities and Advent themes featured in this guide teach the importance of sharing the hope-filled message of Christ's birth with children half a world away by supporting the chosen project.

In addition, we include take-home materials and a weekly invitation to make a sacrifice of time, talent or treasure for the chosen project.

#### Leading the Sessions

As with all lessons, preparation is vital to success, with some activities requiring more time and planning than others. Perhaps an activity can be easily incorporated into existing weekly lessons, or may fit with strategies that best match students' current knowledge and needs.

Through MISSIO-The Missionary Childhood Association provides basic support for outreach to children in mission countries, including education and health care efforts. But more importantly, as children and their families offer their prayers and sacrifices through MISSIO they can be assured that children in the Missions also come to experience the abundant love of our Lord through the service of local priests, religious Sisters and Brothers, and lay catechists. To learn more about the work of the Missionary Childhood Association, a Pontifical Mission Society, visit [www.missio.org/resources](http://www.missio.org/resources)

## Week One

### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew (24:37-44) reminds us that no one knows when Jesus will return. We can prepare for His coming by praying, by being kind to others and by caring for those in need.

### Materials and Preparations Needed

- Advent wreath and candles
- Crayons, enough for each student to have a few
- Blank sheets of paper, one for each student
- Newsprint and marker

### Session Steps

1. Ask students: “How do you know that Christmas is coming?” Invite a few responses. Next, ask young people to imagine this time of year without all the preparations for Christmas – prompt them to think about whether or not they would know that Christmas was coming if they didn’t see and do all those usual preparations. Finally, invite additional responses to the question: “How does your family get ready for Christmas?”

2. Point out the Advent wreath. Provide a brief introduction noting its symbolism and significance to the Advent Season. Then invite the children to gather around the wreath as you light the first candle and pray:

*As we light this first candle for the first Sunday of Advent,  
let us give thanks for the Child whom we await  
and prepare for this Advent Season.*

*Let us also give thanks for children in the Missions  
who teach us the importance of staying alert  
to the needs of others around us.*

*Lord Jesus, Help us to reflect Your love for all by loving  
and helping to take care of all we meet.*

*Blessed are You, Lord Jesus, forever and ever.*

*Amen.*

3. Introduce the Season of Advent to the group as the four weeks the Church sets aside to await and prepare for the important celebration of Jesus' birth. During Advent, we think about how Jesus came to be with us a long time ago and how He is coming to be with us again. Explain that this is the first week of Advent.

4. Tell students that the Gospel reading for the first week of Advent comes from St. Matthew. In this reading, Jesus tells us that He is coming back, but nobody knows when it will happen. During Advent, we pay special attention to opportunities to follow the will of God. It does not matter if we are in school, at home, playing with our friends, we must choose what is pleasing to God. When we do that, we are ready.

Next, do some imagining. Have students close their eyes and picture clouds floating in the sky. On one of those clouds is Jesus, coming down to earth with power and glory. The Gospel reminds us that we need to be alert to all that is happening in and around us, and to make Jesus the center of our lives. We are told to prepare, to stay awake, and be ready.

5. Ask students to name some of the things for which they are responsible (chores, homework, etc.). Help them to think beyond "the basics" and name other actions - loving others, praying for others, having a kind heart, as examples. Get them to think less about themselves and more about others.

6. Choose a project on **MISSIO** and share the story and pictures with the group.

- Throughout the four weeks of Advent, we will not only prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ at Christmas, but also take the opportunity to "be alert" to the needs of others.
- We will do this by offering our time, talent and treasure to those in need of our prayers and our financial help. In this way, we are missionaries - by our prayers and our sacrifices!
- Each week, we will talk about ideas for staying alert and being responsive to the needs of the world through our prayers and actions.
- Each week, you and your family will be invited to donate money, offerings of prayers and acts of goodness.
- At the end of the four weeks of Advent, all of our prayers, actions and offerings will be gathered and sent to the project we have selected.

7. Ask students to think about ways they can collect money for their project. For example, they could give up a portion of their weekly allowance or donate money saved by giving up treats, such as candy. Invite students to share their ideas with the class.

## Week Two

### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew (3:1-12) tells us what we must do to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ and how to bring the Good News of Jesus to a waiting world.

### Materials and Preparations Needed

- Advent wreath and candles
- Newsprint and markers, two sheets and one marker for each group of four students

### Session Steps

1. Begin by checking with students on the Advent MISSIO program. Invite a few to share ways in which they are collecting funds for their project.
2. Point to the second Advent candle – a reminder of this second Sunday of Advent. Invite the children to gather around the wreath as you light last week’s candle, and a second purple/blue candle, and then pray:

As we light these candles for this second Sunday of Advent,  
we give thanks for the Child whom we celebrate this Advent Season.

We give thanks also for all those who help us prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of  
Christ.

Lord our God, help us to be ready for Your coming,  
by making good choices, and turning away from bad ones.

Create in us clean hearts, so we may welcome and care for all

Your children, in the name of Your Son, Jesus, Savior of our world. Amen.

3. Divide the students into teams, with four to five people on each team. Provide groups with a few sheets of newsprint and a marker. Name an event for which people must prepare (first day of school, Thanksgiving, a birthday, vacation, summer camp, going to Mass, etc.). Tell teams they will have only 60 seconds to brainstorm and write down at least six things they would need to do to prepare for the occasion. After each round, ask the groups to share their responses. After a few rounds ask: “What do you need to do to prepare for Jesus’ return?” Be sure each group provides answers to this question.

4. Tell students that this week's Gospel story tells of a man named John the Baptist. Ask if anyone heard of John, and what they know about him. Invite a few responses. Tell them that a prophet named Isaiah said that before Jesus' birth, someone would be sent to prepare the way for Him. John was that man. He used his voice to tell people that Jesus was coming. John also told people what they must do to prepare for Jesus' arrival. Ask if anyone knows what John might have said. Allow for a few responses.

5. Share the Gospel of Matthew 3:1-12 with the group. Tell students that when John speaks of preparing for Jesus he is telling us we need to repent. Ask students what it means to repent. Allow for a few responses then note that repenting means turning away from sin and turning to God.

Explain that sometimes we do things that we shouldn't, and we need to ask God to forgive us. When we tell God about the wrong things we have done, we are forgiven. Then we are ready for Jesus when He comes.

6. Note that John also tells us to "make straight his paths..."

Do you think that John the Baptist really wants us to work on roads? What do you think he meant by that? Allow for some responses. The message from John the Baptist in this Gospel is that no matter how good we are, there are always some "crooked ways" and "rough places" in our lives that we can work to improve. Ask students for some examples of "crooked ways" (dishonesty, selfishness, lack of caring or concern for others, etc.). John the Baptist is asking us - like he asked the people in his neighborhood - to make those crooked ways straight and to smooth out the rough places; then Jesus will have a clear path to come into our lives and hearts.

7. Go to your chosen project on **MISSIO** and send a message or post pictures to show your activity, prayers and union with the people you are helping.

Make the connection by noting that John reached out to the people of his time to bring them the love and forgiveness of Jesus. The missionaries in your project bring the Good News of Jesus to the people they serve. We bring the Good News when we help others, when we pray with and for others, and when we care for and love others. This is especially true for those in need - including our mission family.

## Week Three

### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew (11:2-11) reminds us that the only true joy is the joy that comes from knowing Jesus and sharing the love of Christ with others. We are called to be missionaries.

### Materials and Preparations Needed

- Advent wreath and candles
- Newsprint and marker

### Session Steps

1. Check on students' progress with the MISSIO Advent program. Invite a few to share ways in which they are collecting funds for their project.
2. Invite the students to join you around the Advent wreath. Note that for this third Sunday of Advent, we light the pink candle, in addition to the two purple candles. This week of Advent is referred to as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is Latin for rejoice. The pink candle symbolizes joy. The candle reminds us that we do not have to wait until Christmas to rejoice. Light the first two purple candles and the pink candle. Then offer the following prayer:

As we light these candles for this third Sunday of Advent,  
let us give thanks for the Child whom we celebrate this Advent Season.

Let us also be reminded of our baptismal call to care for others.

All loving and powerful God, we shout for joy for the gladness

You have placed within our hearts.

As we continue to celebrate, remind us that we await a mighty Savior,  
an Infant Child Who will bring gladness to all.

We will walk with You today Lord, with confidence in the promise  
of Your love.

We will show Your kindness to all people,  
especially those who have yet to know the goodness of Your Son.

We pray this in the name of the Christ Child. Amen.

3. Ask students to raise their hands if they have seen a **Baptism**. Invite a few students to share what happens at a **Baptism**. Ask others to share stories about their own **Baptism**. Ask why they think people are baptized with water. Be sure to note that water makes us feel fresh, clean and alert. Water is a good sign for **Baptism** because it is a part of our everyday lives. Whenever we see it, taste it or hear it, we are reminded of the “new life” we find in **Christ**. When we are baptized, we become members of the **Body of Christ**, the **Church**. Through **Baptism**, we are also called to share in the missionary work of the **Church** and to serve others.
4. Recall last week’s lesson about **John the Baptist**. Then note that this week they will hear more about **John**.
5. In this week’s Gospel **John the Baptist** is in jail. Ask how they might feel if they were in jail. We also learned that while in prison **John** sent a message to ask **Jesus** if **He** is the **Messiah**, or if **John** and his friends should watch for someone else. When asked the question, **Jesus** told **John’s** friends to say what they themselves saw and heard: that the blind received their sight, the crippled and lame walk, those with leprosy were cured, the deaf could now hear. Even the dead had been raised and the good news was preached to the poor. Even though **John** was sad about being in prison, he could be happy that he had prepared so many for the coming of **Jesus**. This was especially so after **John** heard about the good works **Jesus** was accomplishing. True joy comes only from knowing **Jesus** and sharing **His** message of love with others.

Divide students into two groups: “Team One” and “Team Two.” Share a number of scenarios with them. Each group should discuss the situation and determine an appropriate response, but that group’s response should differ from the solution proposed by the other group.

- An elderly person in your neighborhood has been ill and unable to get out of the house for a few days. What should you do?
- A student at school is not very popular. Other students are always teasing and making fun of him. What should you do?
- At Mass on Sunday your pastor tells about missionaries in other parts of the world. What should you do?
- A new family has just moved in a few doors down. You notice that there are kids in the family who are your age. What should you do?
- You find out that the grandfather of one of your classmates recently died. Your classmate seems really sad these days. What should you do?
- Your younger sister is struggling to learn how to read. What should you do?
- A tornado has caused destruction in a nearby town. What should you do?
- A friend asks you about being Catholic. What should you do?

Explain that the game students played reminds us that the “new life” in Christ we receive at Baptism requires us to make good decisions and to seek out ways to bring God’s love to others. When people see us, who do they see? If we are kind and helpful, they can see Jesus alive in us - they can see that we are missionaries eager to share the Good News of Jesus!

6. Read the Gospel of Matthew 11:2-11 Connect the Gospel with the work of the missionaries in their project.

7. Go to your chosen project on MISSIO and send a message or post pictures to show your activity, prayers and union with the people you are helping. Ask them to share stories of how they bring joy or someone has brought joy to them.

## Week Four

### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew (1:18-24) reminds us of that like Joseph, we, too, must make choices pleasing to God.

### Materials and Preparations Needed

- Advent wreath and candles
- Newsprint and marker
- Small-boxes, one for each student
- Gift wrap, tape, ribbons, and bows ,enough for each student to wrap a small box.
- Small-index-cards,-two-for-each-student

### Session Steps

1. Ask how they are doing with the MISSIO Advent program. Invite a few students to share the ways in which they are collecting funds for their project.
2. Gather students around the Advent wreath. Light all four candles and then pray:

As we light these candles, let us give thanks for the Child Whom we celebrate this Advent  
Season.

We thank you for the  
gift of Mary, our example of what it means to be pleasing to you.

All-powerful God, we wait in anticipation of the arrival of Your Son as an infant child.

In Mary's "yes," your Word took  
flesh on earth. In these last days of Advent, help us to be strong in our prayer.

Help us to be kind and gentle with one  
another and with those we meet.

Help us to continue to extend our love and prayers to our brothers and sisters in the  
Missions, in this Advent Season and throughout the coming New Year.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

3. Discuss what students know about Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. Allow for a number of responses. Then share Matthew 1:18-24.
4. Distribute an index card, pen or pencil to each student. Ask them to write down at least four things about themselves that they think are pleasing to God. Tell them you will read out the answers. When everyone has at least four things, collect the cards. Then read them one by one and have the students try to guess who it is. After everyone has guessed, let the owner of the card identify himself/herself. Depending on the size of your group, this activity may be divided throughout the day or over more than one day.
5. Note that just like Joseph (and Mary) God wants us to be happy about His message. He wants us to be so filled with joy that we will go and tell it to someone! Ask them to think of someone they know to whom they can tell today's stories. It can be someone in their family, school, neighborhood, sports team, etc.
6. Provide each student with a small box, some gift-wrapping, tape, ribbons or bow, a marker and a small index card. On the index card invite them to write: Jesus is the greatest gift. Allow time for them to wrap and decorate the box. Then tell them to share the gift with the person they chose above.
7. Connect this sharing of joy from our knowledge of God's love and Jesus' birth with what missionaries do every day. Emphasize that the students' prayers and sacrifices through the Missio Advent program put them in the missions, sharing that Good News alongside missionaries every day. End with a prayer for all missionaries – and all who hear the Good News of Jesus.

## Feast of the Epiphany



### Overview

The Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 2:1-12) reminds us that Jesus came for the whole world and that we are called to continue to follow the light of His message and share it with others; to live fully in and for Christ, and to be His missionary by sharing the gift of the Gospel.

Materials needed:

- Heavy, white card stock paper
- Glue sticks and white craft glue
- Silver glitter
- Clear fishing line (one roll)
- Scissors

1. (Prepare materials in advance and visit <http://hinzpired.wordpress.com/2007/11/06/how-to-make-paper-star-ornaments/> for directions on making a paper star ornament.)

2. Read the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 2:1-12) and explain in your own words or with the following: Twelve days after Christmas, the Church celebrates the Feast of Epiphany. An “epiphany” is a moment of sudden revelation or meaning. On this day, we remember the Three Wise Men who went to visit the baby Jesus. They found Him by following a star. In the moment they saw the star and the moment they saw Him, they came to know that Jesus was born for everyone. Like the Wise Men, we need to share this with all people.

3. Tell students that they will make paper star ornaments. On each paper strip, ask students to write one way they can reveal Christ to others during this New Year (e.g., not gossiping about others, helping more around the house, donating clothes to the needy, etc.). Encourage them to think about specific actions – including prayer – that show their commitment to answer Christ’s call to be His missionaries. Once completed, ask volunteers to share their star and message/picture. Invite all students to hang them around the classroom or parish (perhaps the church vestibule). (If you have a large group, you may divide the sharing into various times throughout the day in order to avoid loss of focus.)