



MISSIO-Advent Giving Program

6-8

Cycle A

Missionary Childhood Association,

A Pontifical Mission Society

Welcome to the Missio Advent Giving Program

6-8

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 the *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.

Supporting the Missionary Childhood Association

Through MISSIO-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 the 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

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
- Small sheets of paper, a few for each student
- Pens or pencils, one for each student
- Newsprint and marker

Session Steps

1. 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.

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. Divide the students into groups of two or three. Provide each student with small sheets of paper, and a pen or pencil. Name an event for which people must prepare (first day of school, Thanksgiving, a birthday, vacation, summer camp, going to Mass, etc.). Ask each group member to write down what they think is the most important thing to do in preparation for that event. Have group members compare lists – are there matches? differences? Discuss. Have the group choose a different event, and play again. Conclude the game by asking them what they would do to prepare for the coming of Christ. Take a few minutes to let the students share their responses.

4. Tell the students that the Gospel reading for the first week of Advent comes from St. Matthew. Read Matthew 24:37-44, or invite a student to do so.

Ask what it means to “stay awake.” Allow for some responses. Note that the Gospel reminds us that we need to be alert and to keep our eyes open to all that is happening in and around us. Jesus tells us to keep watch and be ready. He wants us to be prepared for His return by putting God and others first.

5. 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.

6. Ask students to think about ways they can collect money. 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. 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.
4. 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 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.

5. 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.

John the Baptist in this Gospel reminds us that we can sometimes lose sight of God's way. Advent is a time for us to turn back from thoughts, habits, and actions (such as dishonesty, selfishness, lack of caring or concern for others, etc.) that take us out of step with God. During Advent we seek ways to clear a path for Jesus to come into our lives and hearts more fully.

6. The missionaries featured in the stories 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, especially those in need - including our mission family.

7. Present the following scenario to the students: A local radio station has chosen them to create a short commercial to share the Good News of Christ's coming. Their commercial must include practical ways for the listener to prepare for this important event.

8. Divide the students into small groups, with four or five persons in each group. Tell the groups they will have 10 to 15 minutes to work together to create their radio message. Suggest that they look to the Gospel reading and the stories you shared as a basis for their message. Note that the commercials cannot be longer than 60 seconds. Allow time for them to prepare and practice. Invite each group to come forward to present their commercial. After each presentation, discuss the key points made, and the ideas suggested.

Conclude by discussing which of those ideas students might adopt in the coming week, as they continue to prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

9. 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.

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
- Index cards, 10 for each student

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. Recall last week's lesson about John the Baptist. Then note that this week they will hear more about John. We already know that John spent time telling people to prepare for the coming of Christ. He told people to repent and ask forgiveness for their sins - for the things they did to hurt others or themselves. Note that in this week's Scripture reading John is in jail. Ask how they might feel if they were in jail. Allow for a few responses. 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.
4. Read the Gospel of Matthew 11:2-11 or invite a student to do so.
5. Ask students to imagine that they are present while Jesus is healing people and sharing the Good News with the poor. What would they want to tell John who was in prison about what they had seen?
6. Divide the students into groups, with four or five in a group. Provide each group with a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Ask them to think about some ways they can bring the joy of Christ to others. Allow some time for them to brainstorm and write their ideas on the newsprint. Invite each group to share their thoughts.
7. Tell them to imagine they have the opportunity to create a brief television segment to share the message of the joy of "new life" found in Christ. Allow ample time for them to prepare their television segment, noting that it should be no longer than two minutes.
8. Have each group come forward and share their message. Invite comments from the remaining students after each presentation.
9. Ask the students to write on their index cards the ways they have tried to bring hope, joy, love and peace - and Jesus' message - to others this Advent. (Connect those actions with those of missionaries who proclaim the Good News of Jesus in word and deed.)
10. Now ask the students to turn their index cards over. Invite them to think about additional ways they can bring hope, joy, love and peace to others not only during the Advent and Christmas Seasons, but throughout the year. Ask them to write down at least one idea for each area: hope, joy, love and peace.
11. Connect the Gospel with the work of the missionaries in their project. Go to your chosen project on Mission 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

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. Divide the students into groups of three or four. Ask them to think about a time when they were really surprised. Allow some time for them to discuss.

Ask each group to choose one of the situations and plan a brief role-play of the event. Emphasize the need for their skits to be brief. Allow a few minutes for them to prepare, and then have each group present its scenario.

4. Discuss what students know about Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father. Allow for a number of responses. Then share Matthew 1:18-24.
How is the mission story about Father Emmanuel similar to the story of Joseph? Allow for several responses. Note that each of these people chose to follow God's call and, by doing so, they were pleasing to Him.
Ask students to imagine what it must have been like to be in Joseph's place.
5. Divide the students into groups of five. Provide each student with a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Then present the following scenario to the students:
You have been charged with the task of telling some people about the birth of Christ. But you can only use five sentences to do so. Ask the groups to discuss how they would convey the message, posting each sentence on a sheet of newsprint. Allow enough time for brain-storming and posting. Then invite each group to stand, show and read their message, each student reading the sentence on his / her newsprint during their group's turn.
6. Connect this sharing of the joyful Good News of Jesus' birth with what missionaries do every day. Emphasize that their prayers and sacrifices through the Missio Advent program put them there in the Missions, sharing that Good News right 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:

Recent daily newspapers or weekly news magazines.

1. 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 observes the Feast of Epiphany. This feast celebrates the revelation of God in human form in the person of Jesus Christ. The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek word meaning “to manifest” or “to reveal or show.” On Epiphany, we commemorate the visitation of the Magi (Three Wise Men) to the baby Jesus. When the Magi visit the baby Jesus with their gifts, they reveal Him to the world as King, Lord and Savior. As the first Gentiles to come to this realization, they also show to the world that Jesus came for all people and for all nations.

2. Allow a few moments of quiet, then lead a group discussion using the following questions:

3. Does anyone know the names given to the Three Wise Men?

Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar

4. Where did the Magi come from?

The Bible only tells us they are from the “East.” However, Venerable Bede (672-735) considered them representatives of the three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. They are often portrayed racially as white, Asian and black.

5. What were the three gifts they brought to the baby Jesus?

Gold, frankincense (incense) and myrrh (a scent often used in perfume). The gold is symbolic for the royalty of Jesus; the frankincense stands for His divinity; the myrrh, often used to scent the oils used to anoint a body for burial, points to His passion and death.

6. The Magi “made known” to the world that Jesus -- Lord and King -- was born. The Feast of

Epiphany reminds all Catholics that we are called to reveal Jesus as the Savior to all people. What are some ways that our parish or school reaches out to our community to bring the Good News of Jesus? What are some ways that we as a group can reach out to other young people?

7. Why is important to remember the story of the Magi each year?

Their story reminds us that Jesus came for the whole world, not just for the Jewish people.

8. Bring out the newspapers / magazines and ask volunteers to read major national and local headlines aloud be sure to look at the headlines and be able to connect them to God's presence in our world. Use as many of the following questions with the group as is feasible in the time allowed.

- Where is God in these headlines?
- What is God manifesting to us in this (these) headline(s)?
- How are you able to recognize that this is God made-manifest today?
- Where is God - Father, Son, and Spirit - present in these stories?
- Does it make a difference when you look at these headlines to know that God is present there?
- In your family, among your friends, in your school community, what signs do you have that God is revealing Himself to you? How have you responded? What risk did you have to take?

Finish with the following message: The important thing to notice is where these signs and "stars" lead us so that we can take the very next step in front of us with the assurance that we are not alone when we are following the lead of God Whom we have come to trust.

