



Christmas Artwork Contest

Advent Lesson Plan

Introduction:

We are called to shine bright through prayer and sacrifice for the missions! As members of the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) prepare for the birth of our Savior, we welcome the small light of joy that begins to shine out on the world when children participate in the Mission of the Church.

Guided by the Blessed Virgin Mary, who brought Christ into the world, listen to the stories of children in the Missions and pray each week leading up to the nativity of our Lord. As you learn more about the Missions and the work of MCA during the season of Advent, we encourage your school and parish community to participate in our Annual Artwork Contest, which inspires children to use their artistic talent to tell the story of Jesus' humble birth through their own images.

SHINE Bright and PRAY!

MCA Members are encouraged to pray for the missions and actively participate in spreading the Gospel and bringing Christ to others. By praying for the missions, children can ask God to bless and protect missionaries, to touch the hearts of those who have not yet heard the Good News, and to bring the light of Christ to every nation and culture. Through their prayers, children can help bring hope to those in need. When we pray for the missions, we nurture our spirit of generosity and service, growing as missionary disciples!

Action: Pray one Hail Mary a Day for the children in the Missions during Advent

SHINE Bright and SACRIFICE!

In addition to prayer, we are called to make personal sacrifices in a spirit of love for God and kindness towards others. By making selfless sacrifices and giving this Advent season, children can grow closer to Christ and prepare for his coming in a tangible way. These sacrifices can include helping more around the home, skipping dessert or spending less time in front of a screen. On the next page, read about a special project that MCA supports in the Missions, for each week of Advent.

Action: Take up a collection for the Missions during the Advent Season. Order your mite boxes today!



A reminder: What is Advent?

Imagine you're getting ready for a very special guest to come to your house. You might clean your room, decorate, and maybe even bake some cookies. That's a bit like Advent!

Advent is like a big, exciting countdown to Christmas. It starts four Sundays before Christmas Day. During Advent, we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus, who brought love and joy to the world.



Week 1: Light the first purple candle.

The first **PURPLE** candle represents HOPE.

This week, we remember the Maids of the Poor Home For Orphaned or Abandoned Children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Father in Heaven, we need the warmth of your love in our hearts and the light of your Word in our minds. Help us to grow in our faith so that we will be prepared and filled with hope when Jesus comes. In our own little way, help us to bring HOPE to children who are afraid, sad or alone. We ask you to bring them hope for tomorrow. Through us, shine your light of Hope upon them. Amen.

As we prepare for final exams and anticipate our winter break, we look forward to the excitement that buzzes around the holiday season. Our family and friends gather around us to celebrate, and give gifts to one another in gratitude. Holidays make the love in our homes shine bright in our hearts. But what if we took a moment to pause, and reflect on our brothers and sisters in the Missions who have no cause for celebration?

Sister Miriam, a pillar of love and dedication, works tirelessly with young souls who are scarred by life's hardships. But at the Maids for the Poor home for Orphaned and Abandoned children, they can find solace. Recently, Sister Miriam shared, "we pray daily for their sustenance. But many evenings, as I gaze into their innocent eyes, my heart shatters. Often, we lack even the funds to buy them milk." Can you make a heartfelt sacrifice this Advent season to share the love you feel in your own home, with these children in the Missions who don't have one? Just 25 cents each week in Advent, can send a dollar to the Missions and help buy milk for one of these children.

Sister Miriam and the children of the Maids for the Poor Home are most grateful to you and send their love and prayers! With your support, we can bring hope and shine the Gospel's light even brighter.



Week 2: Light the second purple candle.

The second **PURPLE** candle represents Peace.

This week, we remember the members of the Missionary Childhood Association in Burundi, Africa.

During this season of waiting and hope, We light candles in the darkness just as we want to be lights in our community. Help us remember that even small hands Can build a better tomorrow. Like seeds in the ground waiting for spring, may our prayers and actions grow into something beautiful.

Laumy Luncha Alda Igiraneza, 18, is inspiration for us all in making her own community and brighter place, because for years Laumy participated in the activities of the national Missionary Childhood Association (MCA), known locally as Holy Childhood, and then moved on to lead her parish's youth group. During her years at MCA, she said, "I learned how to live well with others: my parents, neighbors, siblings," she said. "And in a country marred by widespread poverty, corruption, instability, authoritarianism, and illiteracy, Laumy also learned that it is not enough to work hard to improve oneself. "MCA taught me not to join people in their bad behavior, and that it is not right to leave them behind either," she said. "Instead, we are called to lead them in change, see how we can help them see the errors of their ways, and lead a life in accordance with God's plan for us, coming together in unity, as a community, and praying for those people of bad behavior so that they convert, because God cannot say no to the prayer of children!"

Father Salvator Ngendabanyikwa runs the MCA program in Burundi. According to Father Salvator, Holy Childhood has a visible impact on the lives of children, helping them grow in their faith and giving them the courage to stand their ground while remaining polite, kind, and respectful of others. He wants to help them grow in their faith and also in responsibility, but needs our help! Bby printing the Bible for Children in the local language- Kirundi. This advent, let us pray for the children being formed in Burundi, and make sacrifices to help purchase their bibles.

Father Salvator Ngendabanyikwa and Laumy are most grateful to you and send their love and prayers! With your support, we can bring hope and shine the Gospel's light even brighter in Burundi!





Christmas Artwork Contest

Activities to do at home and in the classroom: As we prepare to celebrate Christmas and uphold family traditions, much can be done to remind children that there are millions out there who need their prayers and their sacrifices.

October: Celebrate Mission Month

Do This is the perfect time to introduce the Missionary Childhood Association. Go to pontificalmissions.org to gather resources for your lesson.

Pray "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

November: Gather Art Supplies

Do Children can use various mediums for the Art contest, including paints, crayons, markers and colored pencils. The artwork will be featured on 8x11 paper.

Pray "Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

December

Do Each week, when lighting an Advent candle, discuss different challenges faced by children in mission territories (like access to clean water, education, etc.). Offer prayers and discuss how to help. Throughout these weeks, allow the children to work on their artwork!

Pray "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him."

January: Artwork Submission

Do All artwork can be submitted virtually on www.pontificalmissions.org, or sent to your local mission office.

Pray "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."





MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

Christmas Artwork Contest

Announcing the 2025-2026 Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) National Christmas Artwork Contest! Twenty-four winners will be selected in this national competition, which includes two grand-prize winners.

All winners receive a commemorative plaque; grand-prize winners will have their artwork appear as the official Christmas card of the National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Winners are celebrated each December.

National contest winners will be notified in late spring 2026 and announced to Catholic media in fall 2026.

TO ENTER

Mail* entries to the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, Office for the Missions, 1615 West Washington Street, Springfield, 62702 before January 31, 2026

*All entries submitted through the mail must be accompanied by a completed entry form. The form should be attached to the artwork with tape or glue stick. Please do not staple the form to the artwork.

Please note, artwork cannot be returned.

Artwork that does not conform to the guidelines will be disqualified.

Please, no vertical designs.



www.pontificalmissions.org





Entry Form (Please print or type)

Student Name: _____

CHECK ONE: Boy Girl

CHECK ONE: Catholic School Parish RE/CCD Home School

Name of School or RE/CCD and Grade:

Grade: _____

Name of Principal, RE Director or Teacher:

School or Parish Name and Address:

School or Parish Phone Number:

(Arch)Diocese: _____

Student's Home Address (as of September 2025):

Parent / Guardian Name:

Student's Daytime Telephone Number:

E-mail address: _____



- Contest is open to young Catholics in grades K-8. Entries must be postmarked or received by your local mission office or via our online webform at no later than January 31, 2026.

- Each mailed entry (drawing) MUST be accompanied by an official entry form or submitted online. DO NOT GLUE OR STAPLE ENTRY FORM TO ARTWORK. DON'T FOLD ARTWORK! PLEASE WRITE THE STUDENT'S FIRST AND LAST NAME ON THE ARTWORK IN LEAD PENCIL SHOULD THE ENTRY FORM BECOME DETACHED.

- All entries become the property of the MCA national office, which reserves the right to depict all or part of the selected illustrations. It is not possible for the national office to offer any compensation for entries or to return them.

ARTWORK SPECIFICATIONS

- Artwork must be on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of WHITE paper — no construction or lined paper. White card stock is okay (Digital copies are permitted)

- The illustration must be depicted HORIZONTALLY.

- Students must illustrate one of the subjects listed under the heading "Subjects."

- Acceptable media includes crayons, pastels, markers or watercolor paints. PLEASE —NO LEAD OR COLOR PENCILS.

- Artwork must be the child's own. Tracings and direct copies of other art cannot be considered. Students selected as finalists will be asked to validate the originality of their artwork.

SUBJECTS

- The Nativity (a manger scene, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, animals)

- Three Wise Men (presentation of gifts or following the star)

- Shepherds (with sheep, in fields, seeing the angel, or visiting the manger)

- Mother and Child (Mary with her infant son)

- Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem
- Newborn Jesus in manger

- The Angel Gabriel

HELPFUL HINTS

- Use a lot of eye-catching color. Bolder colors reproduce best. Lightly colored artwork will not show up well if reduced.

- Be careful to erase or cover pencil outlines.

- Do not include text or lettering on the drawing.

- Fill up most of the page, being careful not to let the main parts of the drawing get too close to the edges of the paper.

- Make sure facial features on people and animals are bold (e.g. nose, eyes, lips, etc.) so they will reproduce well.

Please note: Due to the volume of entries received, we are unable to personally acknowledge entries