

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

ADVENT—EPIPHANY 2021 • MONTHLY MISSION RESOURCE



MCA's NATIONAL Contest Winner: Benjamin Robbins - St. Teresa of Calcutta, Schwenksville

Missionary Prayer for a Giving Heart during Advent

Good and gracious God,
You have always been so generous to us.
Teach us what it means to give
without expecting anything in return.

Make each one of us grateful for all we have.
Create in us, Lord, a heart that gladly gives.
May the hope of Jesus be seen in
our hearts, our words, and our actions,
throughout this Advent Season.

Help us remember the greatest gift shown
to us – the Christ Child.

Inspire us to respond to the needs
of those around us.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Congratulations! to our 2020-2021
Christmas Artwork Contest Winners who
were recognized at this year's World
Mission Sunday Celebration.

Students with their artwork shown above!

Page 2: Mission Activities for Advent
Page 3: Advent Prayer Service
Page 4: Epiphany Prayer Service
Page 5: Advent Activity
Page 6: January Mission Saint Spotlight
Page 7: Mission Focus: El Factor
Page 8: December Mission Photo Page

This Season of Advent

Week and Theme	Prayers	Bible Stories To Read	Activities
HOPE Week 1: 	Missionary Prayer to Saint Joseph found HERE	The Annunciation • Luke 1: 26-38 Questions to Ponder: • In what ways does Gabriel describe Jesus? • What is Mary's response to God's question?	<i>Have your students engage their families in the Activity on</i> PAGE 5
PEACE Week 2: 	Pray the World Mission Rosary . Praying the Rosary is a great practice for younger students to learn the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be. They will know it by heart in time for Christmas!	The Visitation • Luke 1: 39-56 Questions to Ponder: • How do Mary and Elizabeth rejoice when they seen one another? • What is your favorite line from Mary's prayer?	<i>Advent Activity found</i> <u>HERE</u>
JOY Week 3: 	Pray the Apostles Creed , another prayer helpful for children to learn so they can master the Rosary by Christmas! 	The Preaching of John the Baptist • John 1: 6-8, 19-28 Questions to Ponder: • How does John prepare the way for Jesus? • How can we prepare our hearts for Jesus to come?	<i>Advent Activity found</i> <u>HERE</u>
LOVE Week:4 	What better time to pray the Hail Holy Queen prayer then on the week the Blessed Mother gives birth to baby Jesus? 	The Nativity • Luke 2: 4:-15 Questions to Ponder: • What surprises you about how Jesus was born? • What gift would you have brought to baby Jesus?	<i>Advent Activity found</i> <u>HERE</u>

Mission Prayers for each week of *Advent*

Click [HERE](#) to access a virtual
Advent Wreath to light with
your students each week



Week 1: Light the first purple candle.
The first PURPLE candle represents HOPE.

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.

Week 3: Light the only pink candle.
This PINK candle represents JOY.

Father in Heaven, we know that you love all of your people. Your love brings the gift of joy to our hearts. We think of all the unhappy children in the world today. We ask you to bring a little **JOY** to their hearts this Christmas and we hope that someone can provide for all their needs. Thank you for the joy we feel as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Week 2: Light the second purple candle.
This PURPLE candle represents PEACE.

Father in Heaven, very soon the birth of your Son, Jesus will light up the world. May his quiet coming bring us true inner **PEACE**. Dear God, help us to bring peace to those around us. Look after children who live with conflict at home, at school and in their country. Help us to throw your blanket of peace around their shoulders and comfort them with our friendship. Amen.

Week 4: Light the third purple candle.
The third PURPLE candle represents LOVE.

Father in Heaven, bless our families and bring us the spirit of understanding an **LOVE**. May our homes be places of peace and laughter and may your love shine from our eyes. In everything we do and say, help us to show love to others. Today we ask your blessing on our circle of love and prayer. Keep us forever safe in the warmth of your love. Amen.

**“Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem, may we let ourselves
be drawn by the light of God made man.” - Pope Francis**



Epiphany Prayer Service

When writer Robert Louis Stevenson was a little boy, he lived in a house on a hillside in Scotland. Every evening, he would watch the lamplighter walk through the streets in the valley below, lighting each of the village street lights. *"Look, Mother,"* he would say. *"Here comes the man who punches holes in the darkness."*

Epiphany celebrates the time when God punched a hole in the darkness. The story tells us that Magi in the East **saw a sign of God – a bright star** – and left everything to follow the star. The Gospel tells us that this star *"filled their hearts with delight"* and that they delivered their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh to the Newborn King.

Leader:

Read: Matthew 2:11

As we celebrate the Epiphany, we are reminded that **We are Missionaries** through our prayers, sacrifices, acts of kindness and through our financial gifts to the **Missionary Childhood Association**. We help to bring the light of Christ through our efforts to be *"children helping children"* in the Church around the world. Like the Magi, we offer special gifts to our Savior. Song: We Three Kings *[TO DO: Representatives come forward from the back of the church and process to the manager scene on the altar to present the offerings. Use decorative containers to represent each of the three gifts of the*

READER 1:

Frankincense recalls how Jesus lived His life as **One with the Father**, always seeking to do God's will. Our prayers rise like sweet-smelling incense before God. The thankfulness of our hearts and the holiness of our lives make us like frankincense to God and to the world.

[TO DO: Bring up all the prayer offerings we made during Advent for the Missions.]

READER 2:

Gold is a precious metal, considered worthy of a king. It was used to barter and make purchases. As we prepared for Jesus' birth, we put aside money from little jobs we had performed or from sacrifices made by not eating a piece of candy.

[TO DO: Bring up our MCA mission money to make a difference in the lives of children.]

READER 3:

Myrrh is part of the compound in anointing oil. It has been used as medicine, a preservative and perfume. Frequently it is associated with death. In preparation for Christmas we were encouraged to give of ourselves, to volunteer, and to offer service hours expecting nothing in return. We had to die to self to help others. Let us bring these sacrifices to the Infant King.

[TO DO: Here particular students can be highlighted to say a few words about their personal efforts. For example: I watched my baby brother without asking my mom for money; I went to Mass every Tuesday during Advent; I gave my candy money to the Missions, etc. Then, announce the total money collected for the Missions during Advent.]

Leader: Thank you girls and boys for this **Epiphany**, making your love visible with the Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh of your life. Continue **to be Missionaries** and let your light shine everywhere. Continue to punch holes in the darkness of our world, even to the ends of the earth, letting the Light of our Lord shine through our words and actions. **Now let us join together as one family in faith and pray Our Father...**

Closing Song: Joy to the World

An Advent Activity for the Entire Family

It's far too easy to get far too busy far too quickly at this time of year. You may be feeling stressed already.

So how about an Advent tradition that brings you and your family back to the true purpose of this season—not so much preparing a house for guests (*though that's important, too*), but preparing our **hearts for Christ Himself**, the most important Guest of all?

In order to keep the focus on Christ, many families have an annual tradition of “preparing the manger” for Him. This is not a one-time activity, but a simple daily routine throughout Advent that helps keep Christ at the center of everyone's day. It is an especially suitable tradition for children, but everyone can participate.

Here's how it works:

- † You start with an empty manger, and for every good deed you do throughout the day, you add a piece of straw.
- † If you are rich in good deeds during Advent, the manger will be full of soft straw when the Divine Guest arrives. The more good deeds you do, the softer the manger will be.
- † On Christmas Day, place a figure of the Baby Jesus in the manger, made soft and comfortable by all those good works.
- † You can use real straw, paper strips, yarn, or another material for the straw. For the manger, you can use a basket or box, or build one yourself.
- † You can get creative with this wonderful tradition and add your own elements—some families take straw *out* if one of them does something bad, which works as a teaching tool!



Mission Saint Spotlight

Saint Paul

Paul the Apostle, who we meet initially in the Bible, as Saul, who was persecuting the followers of Jesus, took a dramatic turn on the Road to Damascus. If you need a quick refresher, you can read Acts 9: 1-22. God used the Apostle Paul as an influential voice in the New Testament. Saint Paul sets a perfect example for Missionaries, *then and now*. For this month's Mission Spotlight, instead of focusing on the life of Saint Paul, we will instead explore what we can learn from *his life as a Missionary*.

1. Learn!

Paul didn't dive into his ministry right away. Although he was a trained Pharisee and knew the Old Testament inside and out, he intentionally took time to study and pray. To be great Missionaries, we too must come to know Jesus so that we can *learn more to tell others!*

2. Pray!

Paul instructed the to *"rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* Not only did he give the instruction, but he embraced it himself. Paul exemplifies a faithful prayer life. He continually thanked God for his Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. Like the Patroness of the Missions, Saint Thérèse, *we can be Missionary*, and pray for the Missions.



3. Invite Friends!

Being a Missionary is an incredible vocation and one meant to share. Paul often traveled with a companion. On his first Missionary journey, Paul started with Barnabas, later, he partnered with Silas. We should *encourage our friends to share* and tell others about the Good News of the Lord alongside of us.

4. Understand Other Cultures!

Paul recognized *"there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* Paul understood the common denominator of humanity: everyone needs Jesus. Missionaries travel to the far outreaches of the Earth learning new languages, but also eating different foods and living in different climates. *Opening our hearts and minds to new cultures* is just one important aspect of being a great Missionary for God.



6. Work Hard!

Mission work is not the safest or easiest occupation. Paul accounts his many sufferings for Christ to include; persecution, dangerous conditions, threatening thieves, sleepless nights and starvation. Even so, Paul praised the Lord, *never losing hope*. God always listened. Now more than ever, we need to put God first in our lives, and even though this may be hard, *we must endure!*



7. Teach Others!

Paul was many things, but maybe most notably, he was a teacher. Paul mentored Timothy and wrote at least two letters of encouragement to the young preacher. Paul invested in Timothy, recognized his gifts and talents and encouraged him to stand firm as a faithful witness to Christ, even while Paul was in prison. *We too can inspire others with our Missionary work!*

Mission Focus: Bring Comfort & Peace to this Advent to the children of El Factor



The Mission focus of this resource, is a story that is very near and dear to the heart of Ali Holden, Philadelphia's own MCA Education Manager!

In January of 2019, Ali Holden traveled to the Mission area of El Factor in Dominican Republic with Sister Lisa Valentini, a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They were there during a very special time of year, **Día de los Reyes**, or as we call it, the Epiphany, or the Feast of the Three Kings!

Here in the United States, Christmas is not only a celebration of the birth of Jesus, but has become a huge commercial holiday. People put flashing lights on their houses, blow-up figures, put up Christmas trees and the biggest tradition—they exchange gifts!

In the Dominican Republic, you definitely will not see the same Christmas celebrations. There are few flashing lights, trees, blow-up figures and *they exchange gifts on the Feast of the Epiphany*. People receive gifts, just as Jesus received his gifts from the Three Wiseman.



In the town Ali visited, they faced many hardships. El Factor is faced with poverty, unreliable electricity and plumbing, so unfortunately, exchanging gifts on **Día de los Reyes**, was not something that the children experienced. To the joy of the children in El Factor, Sister Lisa and her crew of Missionaries brought as much for the children as they could! Most of the children were able to receive one toy: a doll, a toy car or one of the most popular; a tennis ball!

Some of the children were SO excited about the tennis ball, they would chase the van Sister Lisa and the Missionaries drove around in calling out "*Pelota, Pelota, Pelota! Uno más, por favor!*" [Ball! Just one more please!]

Have you ever lost a ball over the fence, never to get it back and just replace it with a new one you have laying around? For most of these children, this was the only toy they would receive for a long time, so they were pleading for just one more. Most of us receive MULTIPLE gifts under the tree each year.



Remember, **It is so important that during the season of Advent, leading up to Christmas and **Día de los Reyes**, to thank God for the how many blessings we receive each and every day! With our prayer of thanks, ALSO pray for the children in Mission lands that are less fortunate than we are.**

WILL YOU...

Give \$1 to help support the families in El Factor?

Give \$5 to support Missionaries that visit places like this one in even more impoverished areas?

Give \$25 to help the schools in El Factor get supplies for their classroom after they returned to school following **Día de los Reyes**?

All over the world, children are celebrating the Birth of Jesus!



Christmas Play in Ghana, Africa



Getting a Christmas Snack at an Orphanage in India

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish, but might have eternal life."

John 3: 16



Nativity Play practice in the Dominican Republic



Delivering Christmas Gifts in Mongolia

The **Missionary Childhood Association** wishes you a very *Merry Christmas* and a *Happy New Year!*

