



Holy Childhood Association

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JUNIOR GUIDE for TEACHERS/CATECHISTS (Advent 2021)

Dear Teachers/Catechists,

Welcome to our Newsletter for the Advent season of 2021. At this stage, schools will be opening as normal after the summer holidays and parish groups will be meeting as in the past. We pray that our publications continue to meet your needs as the new school year progresses.

The Holy Childhood Association (HCA) is fortunate that much of what we produce for schools and parish groups has been available online for the past couple of years. As such, not much has changed in terms of the production of our mission Newsletters and educational resources. As was the case last year, the only change could come in what is available through the mail. Some of our resources work best as “hard copies”, and at this stage, we anticipate that these materials will still be available through the post. We will do our best to keep you informed on our website of any changes that occur.

Your role as a Catholic educator continues to be more vital than ever. The pandemic has presented difficulties for everyone and as we have been able to see in the media, children in mission countries have experienced even more hardship. We know that these young people already suffer because of inadequacies in several areas of their lives: health care, malnutrition, poor housing, lack of education facilities, poor care for orphans and other factors. These make the contraction of COVID-19 more possible and more difficult to treat. Our students need to learn about them and realise that the need to send financial assistance is as strong as ever. As members of the HCA, we need to continue and perhaps increase our efforts to help these children around the world. Your role in guiding the students under your care in this mission is important.

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY is October 24, 2021. The theme is: *“We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20)*. This has been mentioned in the Newsletter. You can download the children’s animation for this occasion from our Education Resources on the website. The activities are suitable for use in the classroom.

In the Apostolic Letter “Patris Corde” (“With a Father’s Heart”) on Dec 8, 2020, Pope Francis proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from 8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021. Saint Joseph is described as “a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows.” (Vatican News). He was chosen as the patron saint of Canada by the first Recollect Franciscan missionaries in 1624. The Jesuit missionaries who followed the Franciscans named several of their missions for St. Joseph. He has two feast days: St Joseph Husband of Mary on March 19 and St Joseph the Worker on May 1. You could discuss with your students what we know historically of St Joseph and the background of these days.

Once again, the Season of Advent approaches. The First Sunday of Advent occurs on **November 28**. Your children should observe this season and the coming of Christmas with hope. See the suggestions below for using HCA resources with your students.

Holy Childhood Mission Focus

In this issue, we are making our missionary focus the country of Thailand. This Southeast Asian country has the distinction of being the only one in the region not to have been colonized by a European power. For several centuries, the country was known as Siam, but has been called the Kingdom of Thailand since 1946. It was allied to Japan during the war but acted primarily in a neutral way.

There have been several periods of military rule since then. Presently, the country is a constitutional monarchy with the King as head of state.

Thailand is predominantly Buddhist and is famous for its temples and shrines. Tourists are often attracted to the many cultural festivals that occur. The country is also well known for its variety of foods, exotic fruits and animals not seen in Canada. Outdoor markets are very popular. Tropical beaches and holiday places make it a holiday destination. Many of these features will be of interest to Junior aged students.

Thailand is a developing country. It does not suffer from the extreme poverty of the most needy mission countries, but many people are still need assistance in attaining better living conditions for their children.

There are two recent projects in Thailand supported by the HCA. A Congregation of Dominican sisters operate the Our Lady of the Rosary Boarding House for girls in Udon Thani in northern Thailand. This house supports access to educational facilities in the area so that poor families can have their girls receive adequate education. The goal is to allow girls access to realistic life choices that allow them to avoid being absorbed into one of the many child prostitution networks in the country.

In nearby Nong Bua Lamphu, the HCA has supported the Mother of Perpetual Help Aids Centre. Assistance has been given to poor children either infected with AIDS or in families that have been affected. Help has been given in the form of food, milk and educational requirements, in particular school uniforms and stationery requirements.

For further information on mission activities, we recommend www.missionsocieties.ca where you can find World Mission TV for inspirational mission stories and lesson plans featuring projects we support around the world. We also suggest that you visit our partners in Australia at www.catholicmission.org.au. In addition, you can find videos and information on Thailand by searching You Tube and Google. There are many excellent resources available that are suitable to use with your students.

Suggestions for using the Newsletter

1. Always begin your lesson with the HCA prayer. Each student should have their own prayer card. (Additional cards are available from the National Office.) They can recite the prayer as a group, or have a student lead the prayer. Remind students of why they are members of the HCA.
2. Using a globe, atlas or the internet, find Thailand. Locate its immediate neighbours: Myanmar (featured in a recent Newsletter), Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam (featured in our last Newsletter), Malaysia. Find Canada and how far away we are. Read together the information provided in the Newsletter and discuss at their level.
3. Look at the Advent section of the Newsletter. Structure a class, or several of them, around the activity involving the **Advent Calendar** and **Prayers and Reflections for Children**. Ideally, this would occur each day in Advent. Junior students are capable of developing their understanding of the Advent season.
4. Refer to the locations of the HCA projects: Udon Thani and Nong Bua Lamphu. Use the internet to look up these areas and find out as much as possible about the people and the economy.

5. Look up and watch the various You Tube references to Thailand. There are several.
6. Use the Newsletter as stimulus for research investigation. Junior students are capable of projects about the unique cultural and geographical features of Thailand, especially food, flora, fauna, wildlife and its unique dance. They could colour pictures of some of the many temples and shrines. You could show them videos of the devastating 2004 tsunami that resulted in the deaths of thousands of people in the region, if you think suitable for your group.
7. As mentioned in the Newsletter, the theme for Mission Sunday on October 24 was: “*We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20). Assist your students to understand the context and meaning of this text. For ideas, refer to the Mission Sunday animation on our HCA website.

Religious Education Applications

1. Throughout Advent, say the Mission Prayer daily. Add it to the prayers already said each day within your classroom, school or community. Make use of your prayer table, which usually consists of a candle, a children’s version of the Bible, a Rosary and appropriate pictures, photos or other relevant books. Use the colour purple on your table. Purple is a symbol of penance and is used by the Church during Advent.
2. Say the ***Advent Prayer*** with your students.
3. Discuss with students ideas for what they can do to prepare for Christmas during the season of Advent. What positive things can they do?
4. Advent begins on Sunday, November 28. Encourage students to attend Mass not only on Sundays, but during the week, if possible.
5. Involve your students with the unique and special Advent traditions such as the Advent Wreath, Advent Calendar and Jesse Tree. Encourage them to be made for their classroom or meeting place and also at their homes.
6. To repeat from above, look at the Advent section of the Newsletter. Structure classes around the activity involving the **Advent Calendar** and **Prayers and Reflections for Children**. Ideally, this would occur each day in Advent, and promote discussion.
7. Download the Advent Word Searches, Crosswords, information and activities from the website.
8. As Advent is a time for reconciliation, review what students know about the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). Encourage them to participate in this sacrament either within the Parish Community or the school, if it is offered. (Depending on your location and Diocesan customs, Junior children may or may not have received First Reconciliation. If some have not, your parish priest may be willing to conduct a non-sacramental rite for those individuals).
9. Familiarise your students with the special days that come after Christmas: Feast of the Holy Family (Dec 26), Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec 28), Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Jan 1), Epiphany (Jan 2) and Baptism of the Lord (Jan 9). Discuss their significance. All of these special memorials flow from the Nativity of Jesus.

REPEATING AN APPEAL!!

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we would like to devote the last page of future Newsletters to what is happening in Canada. Obviously, the events of the past several months have made it difficult for your operations and activities to occur normally. However, if you can, **please send us short descriptions/stories of what your HCA group is doing. Attach a few good photos that we can print.** You can send them to hca@missionsocieties.ca or post them to: **HCA, 2219 Kennedy Rd, Toronto, ON, M1T 3G5.** Let us show the world what the HCA in Canada is doing for children!

ADVENT ACTIVITIES

There are several activities relating to Advent that are available on our website <http://www.missionsocieties.ca/holy-childhood-association-hca/education-materials/>. Here is a list of them.

- Advent crosswords
- Advent word searches
- Advent Prayers and Reflections for Children – this booklet provides daily prayers and reflections based on scripture. It is highly recommended.
- Advent Discussion questions – 14 questions to stimulate discussion among students with teachers, catechists and parents
- Advent Wreath – information on the Advent Wreath: what it means and ideas for construction.
- Christmas timeline – put events in the correct order!
- How well do you know your Christmas carols? – match the title with the line from the carol
- Jesse Tree – what it is and ideas for making one
- O Antiphons – special Advent prayers, based on Biblical prophecies
- Advent quiz
- Simple Advent traditions for families – ideas for celebrating Advent with your family at home. They can be adapted for use in classrooms or catechist groups.