



Holy Childhood Association



JUNIOR GUIDE for TEACHERS/CATECHISTS (Lent 2026)

Dear Teachers/Catechists,

Welcome again to a new calendar year of mission activity with the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). Special greetings to return teachers and catechists and a warm welcome to newcomers. It is hoped that you find our information about “*Children Helping Children*” a rewarding and useful resource. This year, continuing challenges around the world reinforce the need for our strong faith in the mercy of God. Escalating violence and warfare still force us to pause and consider our relationship with less fortunate people. Our contribution to the missions becomes more important every year.

The HCA is still as active as ever with the production of the educational work produced for use by Catholic Schools and Parish groups throughout Canada. As you know, many of our resources are available online. Hard copies of all our materials can be ordered, using the order form, and are available free of charge through the post. Specifically, Newsletters, Teachers’ Guides, general educational documents and specific Lenten/Advent support materials are at this moment available both online through the HCA section of our website missionsocieties.ca or through the post. Naturally, some items that are not normal document size, such as mission banks, stickers, prayer cards, membership cards and the poster continue to be available only through the mail. Having said that, we are aware of the ongoing difficulties working with Canada Post. We can only at this time continue what we are doing and monitor developments in case we need to alter our delivery.

As mentioned, our mission of “children helping children” continues to be as relevant as ever. Child poverty still exists in many parts of the world. Availability of education and facilities are still lacking for students in many areas. Children in some areas are exploited for their financial or military value. Increases in violence and conflict in certain areas of the world present challenges to innocent children. As members of the HCA, we need to continue our efforts to help these young people around the world. Your role in guiding the students under your care in this mission is significant.

In 2026, October 18th will be **World Mission Sunday**. Each year, we encourage teachers and catechists to examine with their students the World Mission Day theme for that year. The theme for 2026 is **One in Christ, United in Mission**. It is an occasion when the whole Church unites in prayer for missionaries. It is significant for the HCA because it concentrates on the meaning of the Holy Childhood Association and the role of Canadian students in it. How can our children be missionaries? Do missionaries necessarily have to travel overseas to spread the Gospel and help the poor? What is the potential for us to be active missionaries here in Canada in our own communities? These are important questions and impact on our understanding of the role of the Holy Childhood Association. Later in the Year, as World Missionary Sunday draws near, this theme will be highlighted on our website. We will expand on it in our autumn/Advent Newsletter. Look for it so that you can explore it more fully with your children.

Once again, the Season of Lent approaches. In 2025, **Ash Wednesday** is on February 18, with **Easter following on April 5th**. This is noticeably earlier than last year, meaning that there is less time to recover from Christmas before getting serious about the approach to Easter. Your role in preparing your students for this sacred time in the Church Year continues to be crucial, especially in today’s increasingly secular world.

Holy Childhood Mission Focus

In this issue, the missionary country of focus is one that we have not presented in the past: the African country of **Egypt**. At first, one could be forgiven for questioning whether or not Egypt should be considered a missionary country comparable to the many we have previously presented in the past.

We must conscientiously remember that our focus is on children in need. Although Egypt does not suffer some of the extremes of poverty that other African states do, the following conditions that affect children do exist: areas where adequate food and nutrition are lacking; health concerns among children, especially in remote areas; inadequate educational opportunities and facilities; exploitation of child labour; the proximity of countries involved in warfare causing kidnapping and the use of child soldiers; unequal economic opportunities and conditions.

However, unlike other countries we have considered about which many people originally know practically nothing, almost everyone knows something about Egypt. Whether it be historical knowledge, ancient artefacts, fascination with stories about uncovering tombs containing fabulous treasure or superstitions involving mummies, your students will surely know something. Let's see if we can expand their knowledge using this Newsletter.

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, the internet or all three, have children find Egypt. Locate its immediate neighbours: Libya, Sudan, Jordan, Israel, Gaza, Saudi Arabia. Find Canada and observe how far away (or close!) we are. Read together the information provided in the Newsletter and discuss. Resist just giving it to students to read on their own time.
3. Look at the Lent section of the Newsletter. Assist students in discussing the important Lenten features mentioned and help them discover others. Junior students should have some knowledge of Lent from previous years.
4. Refer to the current projects in Egypt. Use the internet to look up the area and find out as much as possible about the people. Use the project information to stimulate the raising of funds for these projects.
5. Look up and watch various You Tube references to Egypt. There are several.
6. Use the Newsletter as stimulus for research projects, as outlined later in this Guide. There are many possibilities for Junior students on some aspect of Egypt.
7. Be inspired by the work of the HCA organisations during the Jubilee Year and Mission Month last October. Take photos of mission activities in your school/parish and send us feedback on activities from your group.

Religious Education Applications

1. Throughout Lent, 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. The Scriptures tell us that a purple garment was placed on Jesus during his passion as an act of mockery.
2. Say the *Lenten Prayer* with your students.

3. Ask the students for their understanding of “giving up” things for Lent. What is relevant for them to “give up?” Discuss the positive way of “giving up”. What positive things can they do throughout Lent in preparation for Easter?
4. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18. Encourage participation in the distribution of Ashes either at school or in your parish. Discuss why ashes are used on this day.
5. Read and discuss the Pope’s Lenten message with your children.
6. Download the Lenten Word Searches and Crossword from the web site.
7. Download the Lenten Calendar, found in the Educational Resources section of the website, <http://www.missionsocieties.ca/holy-childhood-association-hca/education-materials>. Follow the calendar daily, or weekly, as appropriate.
8. As Lent is a time for reconciliation, review what students know about the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). Encourage students to participate in this sacrament either within the Parish Community or within the school, if it is offered. (Depending on your location and Parish customs, 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. Be sure that your students are familiar with the special days and events of **Holy Week**. Prepare them as appropriate to their age before this special time arrives. Go over the readings and discuss the events that culminate with the Resurrection. Students need to be aware of these in order to attend and participate actively in these unique celebrations.

LENTEN ACTIVITIES

Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary Scripture Search

- During the season of Lent, we reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus.
- This is a good time to introduce/review the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary – “scenes” that help us to meditate (reflect) on the Passion of Jesus.
- For directions on how to pray the Rosary, download *The Missionary Rosary* brochure from HCA Educational Materials on our website.
- Describe the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary and list them on the board:

1. The Agony in the Garden

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before he dies.

2. The Scourging at the Pillar

Jesus is lashed with whips.

3. The Crowning With Thorns

Jesus is mocked and crowned with thorns.

4. The Carrying of the Cross

Jesus carries the cross that will be used to crucify him.

5. The Crucifixion

Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies.

Sorrowful Mystery	Matthew 26-27	Mark 14-15	Luke 22-23	John 18-19
The Agony in the Garden	Mt 26:36	Mk: 14:32	Lk 22:39	Jn 18:1
The Scourging at the Pillar	Mt 27:26	Mk 15:15	Lk 23:16	Jn 19:1
The Crowning with Thorns	Mt 27:29	Mk 15:17	Lk 23:11 (a crown of thorns is not specifically mentioned)	Jn 19:1
The Carrying of the Cross	Mt 27:31	Mk 15:20	Lk 23:26	Jn 19:17
The Crucifixion	Mt 27:33	Mk 15:22	Lk 23:33	Jn 19:18

- Next, provide the young people with Bibles and arrange them into 4 groups: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- Have each group search through specific chapters of their Gospel to locate the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary:

(Answers provided for teacher/catechist use)
- Allow sufficient time for them to locate the Scripture passages and then have each group report to the large group, reading their passages aloud.

PALM CROSSES

Children can make Palm Crosses from palms collected on Palm Sunday. There are many instructions on YouTube as to how to make them, so have a quick look.

SISTER FAUSTINA AND THE DIVINE CHAPLET OF MERCY

Sister Faustina is responsible for the special Lenten prayer, the Chaplet of Mercy. She was canonized a saint in 2000 by Pope John Paul. Research her life and the events and occurrences leading to her sainthood. Describe the meaning of her special prayer, the Divine Chaplet of Mercy, which is shown in the Educational Resources for Lent on the HCA web site.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Egypt offers many opportunities for research projects for Junior students:

- There are possibilities for historical research about the Pharaohs, pyramids, mummies, the Nile River, ancient Egyptian culture, and much more.
- Students can do a project on Egypt's unique geography, flora and fauna instead of focusing on ancient themes.
- Be a tourist agent and present a unique holiday excursion to Egypt!
- Look at the several Lenten activities in the Educational Resources section of the HCA on our website. There are several challenging and interesting things for Junior students.