



Holy Childhood Association



JUNIOR GUIDE for TEACHERS/CATECHISTS (Advent 2026)

Dear Teachers/Catechists,

Welcome to this 2026 Advent/Christmas season of mission activity with the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). As always, we offer a special greeting to return educators and a warm welcome to newcomers. It is hoped that you find our information about “*Children Helping Children*” rewarding and useful. We encourage you to include the Newsletter and our online resources to support your Religious Education (RE) program. The purpose of the Newsletter is to provide our Canadian students with information about activities involving children in missionary countries around the world. It is hoped that this will stimulate interest in our children so that they become involved in missionary activity at their level. We encourage our students to pray for children in need throughout the world and encourage them become informed Catholics regarding the Pontifical missions.

The HCA is part of the larger body known as the Pontifical Mission Societies. As such, we are under the direct sponsorship of the Holy Father. Pope Leo has only been recently inaugurated as Pope and has taken over sponsorship for the Pontifical Missions, and therefore the HCA. We pray for Pope Leo as he begins his pontificate.

What can the HCA do for you? Hard copies of all of our materials can be ordered, using the order form, and are available **free of charge** through the post. In addition, Newsletters, Teachers’ Guides, general educational documents and specific Lenten/Advent support materials are available online through the HCA section of our website missionsocieties.ca. Naturally, some items that are not normal document size, such as mission banks, stickers, prayer cards, membership cards and the poster can only be sent in the mail. As mentioned earlier, all of these materials can act as supplements to the resources you already possess for your RE program.

Our mission of “children helping children” is as relevant as ever. Mission countries continue to experience health issues. Child poverty increases in many parts of the world. Availability of education and facilities are lacking for students in many areas. Children in some countries are exploited for their financial, sexual or military value. Violence and warfare are realities for many, especially as unrest in the Middle East, Ukraine and areas of Africa continue at the time this Guide is being written.. As members of the HCA, we need to continue our efforts to help these children around the world. Your role in guiding the young people under your care in this mission is significant.

Once again, the Season of Advent approaches. The first Sunday of Advent is Sunday, November 29. As usual, this season arrives while you are involved with end of term activities, assessment tasks and Advent/Christmas preparations. It is always a challenge to observe this season with young people at such a time.

Holy Childhood Mission Focus – Sri Lanka

In this issue, the missionary country of focus is **Sri Lanka**, formerly known as Ceylon and still referred to as such, especially by elderly immigrant Sri Lankans. Situated to the south-east of India, it is sometimes referred to as the teardrop of India. One look at a map will provide you with the reason for this. Despite the physical and cultural similarities to people in India, Sri Lankans are very distinct from Indians. In the 6th C BCE they developed a Buddhist culture which became known as Sinhalese. Around 900 BCE Tamils from India set up a kingdom in the north of the country. Portuguese and Dutch settlers arrived in the 16th and 17th century before the British arrived on the island. In 1802 Sri Lanka became a British crown colony. It was granted independence on 4 February 1948 and became a republic in 1972. In the 1980s, fighting began as the Tamils in the north tried to form their own kingdom. This strife resulted in many deaths and did not end until 2009.

Sri Lanka is a fertile, beautiful island famous for its tea industry and exotic animal, bird and marine life. However, many people live close to the poverty line and children can suffer from lack of essential resources. The unrest in the North a decade ago still has ramifications for the people. The country has a large Catholic population. Many people from Sri Lanka have emigrated to Canada over the past decade, and it is highly probable that your students have met some or are school mates with some of them.

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 Sri Lanka by searching You Tube and Google. There are many excellent resources available that are suitable to use with your Junior 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, the internet or all three, find Sri Lanka. Observe its geographical position, especially where it is located in relation to India and the Indian Ocean. Find Canada and how far away we are. Read together with the students the information provided in the Newsletter and discuss. This may require some prior research on your part, as the political history of the region is complicated and ever changing. **Resist just giving it to students to read on their own time.**
3. Look at the Advent section of the Newsletter. The information is brief, but the assumption is that Junior students are already familiar with many Advent concepts and that you can work on these themes in class as part of your Religion program. Advent should always occupy space in the Religion curriculum, even though curriculum design cannot always follow the Liturgical Year.
4. Refer to the project in which the HCA is involved in Sri Lanka. Use the internet to look up the diocese involved and find out as much as possible about the people. Use project discussion as stimulus to how funds may be raised to contribute to the HCA at your school/parish.
5. Look up and watch various You Tube references to Sri Lanka. As stated earlier, there are several.
6. Use the Newsletter as stimulus for research projects. The geography, flora and fauna can provide many topics and areas of interest. The history of the country can also provide research topics, particularly the recent unrest in the north of the country involving the Tamils.

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. Discuss with students ideas for what they can do or give up to prepare for Christmas during the season of Advent. What positive things can they do?
3. As mentioned above, Advent begins on Sunday, **November 29**. Encourage students to attend Mass not only on Sundays, but during the week, if possible.
4. 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.
5. Look at the Advent section of the Newsletter. Structure RE classes around the Advent information that comes from your discussions. Make Advent projects a part of your Religious Education curriculum.
6. Download the Advent Word Searches, Crosswords, information and activities from the website.
7. 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, 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).
8. Familiarise your students with the special days that come after Christmas: Feast of St Stephen (Dec 26), Feast of the Holy Family (Dec 27), Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec 28), Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Jan 1, 2027), Epiphany (Jan 3, 2027) and Baptism of the Lord (Jan 10, 2027). Discuss their significance. All of these special memorials flow from the Nativity of Jesus.

ADVENT ACTIVITIES

There are several activities and pieces of information related 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 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.
- ♦ Blessing of the Christmas Tree
- ♦ The Christmas Creche
- ♦ The Epiphany: The Adoration of the Magi
- ♦ Significant Feast Days during the Christmas Season
- ♦ The Advent Calendar – Historical Anticipation