



Christmas Artwork Contest Advent Lesson Plan

Introduction:

The Advent season invites children to prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ through prayer, reflection, and acts of love. Our Advent lesson plan is designed to help children enter more deeply into this season—learning about the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love each week.

In addition, our annual Christmas Artwork Contest gives students the chance to share the fruits of their prayer and reflection in a creative way. Their art becomes an expression of faith, a witness to the Gospel, and a joyful celebration of the season. Together, the lesson plan and the contest provide both formation and celebration—teaching children to live the Advent spirit and then share it with the world.

PRAY During Advent!

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



SACRIFICE During Advent!

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 Mission during the Advent Season. Order your mite boxes today!

Reminder: What is Advent?

Imagine you're getting ready for a very special guest to come to your house. You might clean your room, put up decorations, and maybe even bake cookies to show how excited you are. That's a little like Advent! Advent is the Church's season of waiting and preparing for Jesus. It begins four Sundays before Christmas, and it's like a holy countdown to the day when we celebrate Jesus' birth. But Advent is more than just getting ready for a holiday—it's getting our hearts ready for Jesus. Just like you would make space in your room for a guest, we make space in our lives for Jesus by praying, showing kindness, and loving others. Advent reminds us that Jesus came into the world as a baby in Bethlehem, that He comes to us every day in the sacraments and in our hearts, and that one day He will come again in glory. So, during Advent, we aren't just waiting—we're preparing with joy and hope, because we know Jesus is the greatest gift of all.





Christmas Artwork Contest

Month-by-Month Guide

October: Animate Mission

- Do-**
- This is the perfect time to introduce the Missionary Childhood Association. Announce the Christmas Artwork Contest and Advent Lesson Plan to schools, parishes, and families.
 - Provide teachers/moderators with contest guidelines, deadlines, and Advent lesson plan resources.
 - Encourage moderators to set a contest timeline early (school-level deadlines before diocesan/national deadlines).

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, Prepare for Lessons

- Do-**
- Provide teachers and moderators with a short orientation on the Advent Lesson Plan.
 - Encourage them to schedule weekly Advent reflections (beginning the first Sunday of Advent).
 - Ensure all supplies (paper, art materials,) are ready before Advent begins

Pray

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

December: Present Advent Lessons

- Do-**
- Week 1: Hope – Light the first candle, share the reflection, and invite children to begin artwork.
 - Week 2: Peace – Teach about being peacemakers at home and school; encourage artwork that shows peace in action.
 - Week 3: Joy – Reflect on joy as God’s gift; use bright colors and joyful images in their art.
 - Week 4: Love – Celebrate Christ’s love; finish and submit artwork inspired by His love for us.

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-**
- Collect and review all student artwork at the school or parish level.
 - Send selected pieces to the diocesan/national level according to contest guidelines.
 - Consider hosting a small local exhibit or prayer service where children can share their artwork and reflect on what they learned during Advent.

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.”





First Week of Advent

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 and Abandoned Children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Prayer

Father in Heaven, fill our hearts with the warmth of your love and our minds with the light of your Word. Strengthen our faith, so that we may live in hope as we await the coming of Jesus. Inspire us to bring your hope to children who are afraid, sad, or alone. Shine through us, Lord, that your light of hope may brighten their lives. Amen.

Reflection

As we prepare for final exams and look forward to winter break, the joy of the holiday season surrounds us—family gatherings, gift-giving, and homes filled with love. But Advent is also a time to pause and remember our brothers and sisters in the Missions who may not have reason to celebrate.

Sacrifice

In Addis Ababa, Sister Miriam, a tireless servant of God's love, cares for children scarred by loss and hardship. At the Maids of the Poor Home, they find safety and comfort. Yet the needs remain great. Sister Miriam recently 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." **This Advent, can you make a small but heartfelt sacrifice? Just 25 cents each week—one dollar during Advent—can help provide milk for a child in need.** Your gift, though simple, brings nourishment, hope, and the light of Christ into their lives.

Sister Miriam and the children of the Maids of the Poor Home send you their love and prayers. With your generosity, together we can bring hope, share the love of Christ, and make the Gospel's light shine even brighter.



Second Week of Advent

Week 2: Light the second purple candle.

The second **PURPLE** candle represents Peace.

This week, we remember the children of the Diocese of Nouna in Burkina Faso, where insecurity and violence have forced thousands of children from their homes and schools.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace. In this Advent season, calm our hearts and fill us with your peace. Strengthen children who live in fear, and help us become peacemakers in our families, schools, and communities. Amen.

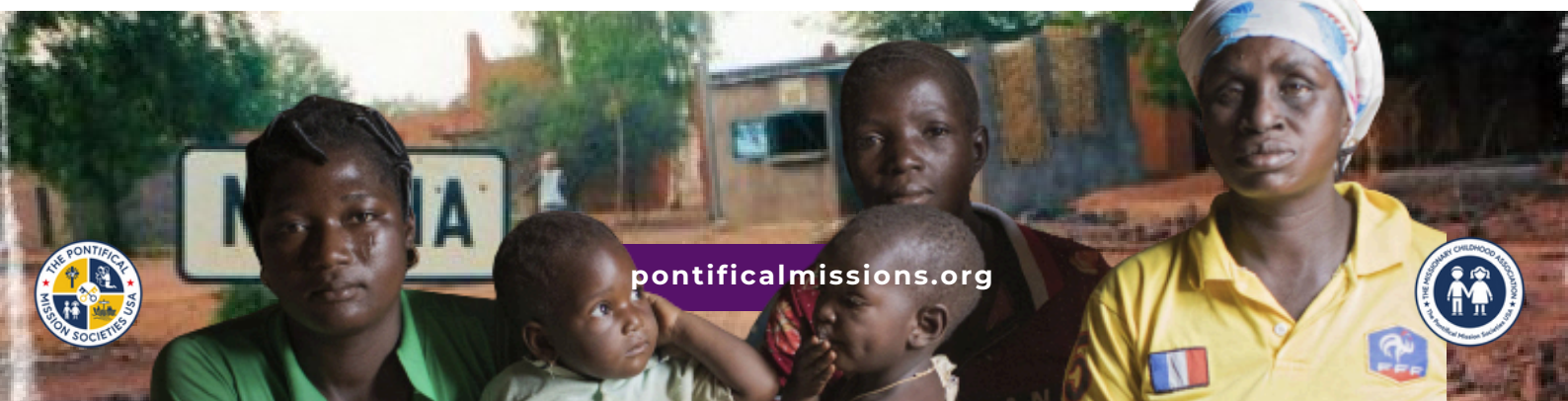
Reflection

In Nouna, Burkina Faso, Coulibaly Félicien, a fifth grader, remembers how armed men burned his schoolbooks. "I wanted to keep learning, but I had nothing left," he shared. Thanks to the Missionary Childhood Association, Coulibaly received school supplies and the hope to continue his education. Like him, thousands of children in Burkina Faso have been displaced, traumatized, or denied access to school because of violence and instability. Yet in the midst of fear, the Missionary Childhood Association brings peace. Through choirs, Bible lessons, and community activities, children are reminded that God is with them and that peace is possible. Bishop Joseph Sama emphasizes that forming children in faith is essential, especially when conflict surrounds them. This Advent, the Diocese of Nouna works to provide meals, school kits, and safe spaces so children may rest in God's peace and rebuild their lives with courage.

Sacrifice

As we light the second candle of Peace, let us pray for the children of Burkina Faso. **Let us also make a small sacrifice this Advent—perhaps 25 cents each week—to help provide food, school supplies, and safe spaces where children can learn, grow, and know the peace of Christ.**

May our prayers and sacrifices this Advent be seeds of peace—restoring hope, healing hearts, and shining the light of Christ into the lives of children who need it most.



Third Week of Advent

Week 3: Light the third pink candle.

The third **PINK** candle represents JOY.

This week, we remember the Andong Chroh Catholic Child Care Center in Kampong Cham, Cambodia, about 120 km from the capital, Phnom Penh.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the source of true Joy. As we draw near to Christmas, fill our hearts with gladness at your coming. Help us to find joy in serving others, and may the little ones of the world experience your joy through love, care, and kindness. Amen.

Reflection

Since 2004, the Andong Chroh Center—run by dedicated volunteers—has welcomed children whose parents work as street vendors, farmers, or taxi drivers. Each morning around 6:00 a.m., parents bring their little ones to the Center before going to work. Today, 30 children, ages 3 to 5, are cared for each day, receiving education, breakfast, and lunch. Over the years, the Center has supported more than 340 children, sending 280 on to public school with hope for a brighter future. For these families, the Center is a place of joy—where children are nourished, safe, and given opportunities to grow and learn.

Sacrifice

As we light the third candle of joy, let us pray for the children of Cambodia who are cared for at the Andong Chroh Center. **Out of joy and gratitude for Christ's coming, may we also make a small sacrifice this Advent—perhaps 25 cents each week—to help bring food, education, and joy to children in the Missions.**

May the joy of Christ, born in Bethlehem, overflow in our hearts and spread through our prayers, our gifts, and our love for children everywhere.



Fourth Week of Advent

Week 4: Light the fourth purple candle.

The fourth **PURPLE** candle represents LOVE.

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

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are Love made flesh. Teach us to love as you do—with patience, kindness, and generosity. May our prayers and sacrifices become seeds of love that grow into blessings for our families, our communities, and for children everywhere. Amen.

Reflection

One shining witness of this love is Laumy Luncha Alda Igiraneza, now 18, who grew up in the Missionary Childhood Association, known locally as Holy Childhood. In a country marked by poverty and instability, Laumy learned that love is not just about caring for herself but also about guiding others. “We are called to lead them in change and to pray for them—because God cannot say no to the prayer of children,” she said. Father Salvator Ngendabanyikwa, who directs MCA in Burundi, sees every day how children formed in faith can bring love and hope to their families and communities. Yet these children need Bibles in their own language, Kirundi, so they can continue to grow in Christ’s love.

Sacrifice

As we light the fourth candle of Love, let us pray for the children of Burundi. **Let us also make a small sacrifice this Advent—perhaps setting aside 25 cents each week—to help provide them with Bibles and the resources they need to share Christ’s love with the world.**

When we love generously, even in small ways, we become part of God’s great work—spreading His light and love to every corner of the earth.



From Prayer to Art: Sharing God's Love This Advent

Advent, the Missionary Childhood, and the Gift of Creativity

Advent is a season of waiting, hope, and preparation. As we light each candle on the Advent wreath—Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love—we are reminded to open our hearts to Christ and reflect on how His presence can shine through our actions. It is a time to pause, pray, and consider the needs of others, especially children around the world who may be facing hardship, loneliness, or uncertainty.

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) invites children to see themselves as part of a global family, united in prayer and love. Through MCA programs, children learn that even small prayers, sacrifices, or acts of kindness can make a real difference for their brothers and sisters across the world. The themes of Advent align perfectly with this mission:

- Hope reminds us that God is always present, even in difficult situations.
- Peace calls us to bring harmony and understanding wherever we go.
- Joy inspires us to celebrate God's love and share it with others.
- Love teaches us to care deeply for one another, offering our hearts in service and compassion.

Our annual Christmas Artwork Contest provides a beautiful opportunity for students to reflect on these Advent themes and express them creatively. As children paint, draw, and design, they consider how the light of Christ can shine through their own hands and hearts. Just as MCA encourages children to pray, give, and act for the missions, the contest encourages them to share their faith and imagination with their school, parish, and global community.

This Advent, let us remember that preparation for Christmas is not only about decorations and gifts—it is about living the Gospel. Through prayer, reflection, and creative expression, students can experience the joy of giving and the power of God's love in action. When we participate in MCA, when we pray for children around the world, and when we share our artwork inspired by Christ's light, we are joining in a mission that spans continents, age groups, and hearts.

May this season of Advent inspire children to see themselves as missionary disciples, ready to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to the world—one small act, one prayer, and one creative expression at a time.

2023-2024 Grand Prize Winners





Christmas Artwork Contest Entry Form

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 selected as the official Christmas card of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Each winner will also receive a \$250 award, and a matching contribution will be made in their name to the Missionary Childhood Association.** Winners are celebrated each December at *The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washinton, DC.*, where the artwork is on display during the season of Advent. National contest winners will be notified in spring of 2026 and announced to Catholic media in fall of 2026.

To Enter:

- Mail entries to your (Arch)Diocesan Office of The Missionary Childhood Association [your local mission office]. To look up the address of your (Arch)Diocesan Mission Office, please visit pontificalmissions.org/where-we-are/diocesan-offices
- **Submit virtually at pontificalmissions.org/mcacontest before January 31st.**
- 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.

2022-2023 Grand Prize Winners





Entry Form (Please print or type)

Student Name: _____

CHECK ONE: Boy Girl

CHECK ONE: Catholic School Parish RE/CCD Home School

School or RE/CCD 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 no later than January 31, 2026. For questions on where to mail your artwork e-mail contact@pontificalmissions.org

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