

GUIDELINES for MISSION DAYS

*This is what God asks of you:
Only this,
to act justly,
to love tenderly and
to walk humbly with your God*

Micah 6:8

HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION
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INTRODUCTION:

What is a Mission Day?

A ‘Mission Day’ is a day set aside to invite missionaries into the parish or school to share their experiences with staff, students, and parents. The missionaries who are invited may be from ***Religious Congregations, Sisters, Brothers, Priests (diocesan and religious), and Laity*** from all walks of life and all ages. Some have spent most of their lives in developing countries. Many have given a year or more to live and work in another country and culture, and some are students who have had a few weeks or months mission exposure.

The purpose of a Mission Day is in response to the call to the ***New Evangelization***, a term introduced by Pope Paul VI and broadened by Pope John Paul II. Pope Francis recently said: The Church is not a relief organization, but a community of people, animated by the Holy Spirit, who have lived and are living the wonder of the encounter with Jesus Christ and want to share the message of salvation that the Lord gave us. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church in this path.” In these early years of the twenty-first century, we have a new understanding of Mission. Believing that God is Love and Creator, we understand that God is already present in other cultures and religions. By virtue of Baptism, we are all missionaries and we are called to give visibility to God’s presence in our world. Respect for religious freedom is marked by ***dialogue***: we listen with our hearts and speak frankly about our beliefs. This is done in both the local and global levels. We are, each of us, called to become missionaries in order that people having heard about Jesus may choose to embrace the Gospel.

In Pope John Paul II's 1999 Apostolic Exhortation, ***“The Church in America”*** he stated, “In the overall work of the new evangelization, the educational sector occupies a place of honour. For this reason, the activity of all Catholic teachers, including those working in non-denominational schools, should be encouraged. It is important, that all Catholic schools...work to maintain a Catholic identity.”

Meeting and visiting with missionaries can act as a catalyst in awakening a missionary awareness in our children. In turn, this will lead them to a sharing of spiritual and material resources with those less fortunate than themselves. The formation of missionary conscience is a part of religious education and an integral part of the Canadian Catechism.

Some facts about the state of the world's children:

- Of the 12 million children (under 5 years of age) who die each year in developing countries because of preventable diseases
- 7 million (55%) can be attributed to malnutrition.
- There are more than 200 million (40%) undernourished children under age 5 in the developing nations.
- 140 million children do not attend school.
- More than 1 million children are exploited sexually and compelled to go into prostitution.

HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION (HCA) MISSION CLUB FOR CHILDREN

Hundreds of thousands of children live in the streets of the large and small cities of developing countries and these children must invent ways of surviving. HCA is an international Mission Club for elementary schoolage children. It exists in over 120 countries. Child members are asked to:

- Pray for children in other countries knowing that these children are also praying for them (reciprocal action)
- Learn about the lives of children in other countries
- Make monetary sacrifices to help other children.

HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN®

Encourages children in their prayer life

Fosters vocations of both religious and laity
to mission territories

Helps children recognize their responsibilities to
the local and global community

Helps catechists awaken a missionary
awareness among children and youth

A “Mission Day” can be used to launch the involvement of your parish or school in the Holy Childhood Association (HCA) or it may be used as part of your ongoing partnership with the HCA.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL/PARISH MISSION DAYS

Parish/School Mission Days are an important curriculum activity to awaken the missionary awareness and spirituality in children and youth. As they pray for, learn about and sacrifice for others, children come to know and love one another as equals. They learn that children in other countries are praying for them as well.

The following guidelines have been developed to help you organize such a day.

PREPARATION

1. THREE MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Discuss the concept of “Mission Day” (or half-day) with Parish Council/School Staff
- Assign a contact person (Catechist, Priest, Deacon, Parishioner, Teacher, Educational Assistant, Vice Principal, Principal, or Parent volunteer – someone to make the contacts, take phone calls and respond to questions)
- Using materials provided free of charge by the HCA National Office, educate students regarding HCA, missionaries and their work:
 - Brainstorm: “What do you know about Missionaries and Missions?” Record and save the students responses for follow-up comparisons.
 - Order HCA newsletters, Catechist guides, free of charge

[email: hca@missionsocieties.ca or call 1-800-897-8865]

- Select date and reserve location (parish hall or gym) for that date
- Contact missionaries (at least 5, if possible – see: Sample Letter attached) The HCA National Office or your diocesan Pastoral Centre may be able to assist you by suggesting names as well as providing contact addresses and telephone numbers
- Notify Parents and invite them to visit the displays with their children
- Notify and invite Parish Priest (see Sample Letter)
- Notify and invite your School Trustee(s) (if school event)
- Arrange billets for those visiting missionaries who may be travelling from a distance
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2. **HOSPITALITY** (ONE WEEK PRIOR TO AND DAY OF EVENT)

- One week before event, confirm location of Mission Day and ensure that any and all staff who need to know about the day and your needs have been advised.
- Confirm attendance with visiting missionaries
- The evening before or early on the day of the event have custodial staff or volunteers help set up stations (1 large table per Missionary). Missionaries may bring display boards
- Assign two senior students to each Missionary (**carrying displays to and from car, orienting to school, etc.**)
- Provide coffee, tea, juice, muffins etc. at beginning of the day
- Provide lunch for visitors
- Assign students to thank the missionaries, and other guests, at the end of the day

3. ORGANIZATION OF MISSION DAY

- Divide children into small groups to coincide with the number of stations in the hall/gym (e.g. 5 stations – 5 groups)
- Rotate one or two groups/classes at a time through the stations in the hall/gym. Do not mix divisions (except for split classes), as information is age appropriate. (For parishes, try to keep the same ages together where possible.)
- Allow some time for Kindergarten children to see the displays.
- If possible, organize the day so that the Intermediate level students have at least one hour in the hall/gym. This will give them the opportunity to rotate through the stations after which missionaries will present information in a panel discussion and provide time for questions from, and dialogue with, the whole Intermediate level.

4. OPTIONAL

You might wish to have a Discussion Panel with the visiting missionaries the evening before for Parents/Parishioners and/or your School/Parish Council. If your parish has a CWL or Knights of Columbus group, and they have enough advance notice, they may wish to have an evening presentation by the missionaries.

5. FOLLOW-UP

- Have students/class write a thank you note to each of the missionaries.
- Process the information about the Mission Day with the students as soon as possible after the event (**or at the next meeting in the parish**):

- Brainstorm “What do you know about Missionaries and Missions now?”
- Compose a Journal reflection about the visit
- Create posters, collages about ‘mission’
- Collect newspaper and magazine articles for ongoing scrapbook or bulletin board displays
- Research one of the Holy Childhood Association focus countries. Learn more about the lives of children and youth in that country
- Write reflection paper about the importance of the HCA in today’s world.
- Ask students for their ideas for follow-up i.e., community initiative –soup kitchen, become a volunteer with St. Vincent de Paul Society, visit the elderly, etc.
- Consider staging a Mission Fun Fair, or a Walkathon or some other fundraising activity for the HCA

SAMPLE LETTERS

Sample Letter to Invite Missionary Guest

Dear _____,

Our school/parish is trying to educate and awaken a missionary awareness and spirituality among the staff, students and parents. We are planning a Mission Day on _____ at _____ School/Parish as one of the educational activities.

Would you be able to help us? We invite you to spend the day with us in order to share your experience with our parish/school community. We would like you to set up a display about the country you worked in and talk to our students about your missionary experiences. The students would visit your display in small groups by grade so your information can be related to their age. We would ask that you be part of a Panel Discussion with other Guest Missionaries for grade 7 and 8 students. This would take about one hour at the end of the day.

If you need a place to stay we will arrange for a billet for the night with, of course, a light breakfast and lunch provided during the day. If you can attend, please complete the form below and send it back to us by _____. In this way we will know what you need. Please be aware that since all displays are in the parish hall/gym, audio-visual presentations may not be heard. However we may be able to accommodate a small space if a video is vital to your presentation. Simply let us know.

Thank you for your interest in our work. If you cannot attend, we ask for your prayers for the success of our day. Sincerely yours,

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

FAX: _____

I will need: (Please check the appropriate boxes)

Projector / Laptop

TV/VCR

Extra Table

Billet Food Allergies Overhead Projector

Sample Letter to Parents/Parishioners

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Our parish/school is trying to educate and awaken a missionary awareness and spirituality among the staff, students and parents of _____

Parish/School. We are planning a “Mission Day” on _____ at _____ Parish/School as one of the educational activities.

We have invited missionaries to visit and set up displays for our children. They will talk about their experiences in the mission field emphasizing their work with children. Students will have an opportunity to dialogue with the missionaries throughout the day.

Since some of the missionaries might have to travel a longer distance, we will be looking for billets for one night. If you could accommodate one of our guests, please contact (Name)_____ at (Telephone)_____ by (Date)_____.

We are looking forward to this day of new learning with our staff and students. We invite you to join us when your child visits the church hall/gym to visit with our guest missionaries (or in the evening before our Mission Day at _____(time).

We hope you will continue to talk about this experience with your children. Thank you for your interest and anticipated participation. Sincerely yours,

Please return this form with your child. This will help us with our seating arrangements.

- I will be able to visit with my child.....
- I will attend the evening before.....
- I will be able to accommodate a missionary.....
- I will not be able to visit.....

Letter to Parish Priest (not necessary if this a Parish event)

Dear Father _____

Our school is trying to educate and awaken a missionary awareness and spirituality among the staff, students and parents.

We are planning a “Mission Day” on _____ at _____ School as one of the educational activities.

The daylong event begins at _____ and will end at _____.

We have invited missionaries to visit and set up displays for our children. They will talk about their experiences in the mission field with an emphasis on their work with children. The classes will have the opportunity to dialogue with the missionaries throughout the day.

We hope you will be able to join us to visit with our guest Missionaries.

Thank you for your interest in our school activities. Sincerely yours,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Some suggestions on how to contact missionaries in your diocese.

Contact your:

1. Diocesan Pastoral Centre for a list of Religious Congregations, Lay Mission Organizations, Mission Councils,
etc. [**Request that they fax or email the information to you**]
2. Catholic School Board (in applicable provinces) to see if there is Mission Outreach through the Religious Education department.

3. Holy Childhood Association Diocesan Director: The National HCA Office can provide this information. Call, toll-free, 1-800-897-8865 or email hca@missionsocieties.ca
4. Parish Priest
5. Look in: Canadian Church Directory under Missions for your province
6. Go to www.cccb.ca (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops) to access information about parishes in your diocese.

IMPORTANT REQUEST FROM THE HOLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

Please be sure to take pictures and have students write stories about the event. Mail the photos and stories to the National Holy Childhood Association office for possible publication in future newsletters and/or MISSIONS TODAY magazine. E-mail to: hca@missionsocieties.ca or post to: Holy Childhood Association, 2219 Kennedy Road, TORONTO, ON M1T 3G5

**GOOD LUCK
&
HAVE A GREAT MISSION DAY**

