



# Holy Childhood Association

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## JUNIOR GUIDE for TEACHERS/CATECHISTS (Lent 2025)

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, challenges around the world continue to increase 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](http://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.

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.

Last year, October 20th was World Mission Sunday. The theme of this day was: ***Go and invite everyone to the banquet!!*** What we do in our schools and parishes should be a reflection of this theme and a manifestation of Christ’s work in our world. The theme suggests active involvement in mission activity everywhere. Find the World Mission Sunday Youth Guide in the Educational Materials section of the HCA section on the Pontifical Missions website. This is a useful resource to share with your students and a good introduction to the work of the HCA.

Once again, the Season of Lent approaches. In 2025, **Ash Wednesday** is on March 5, with **Easter following on April 20**. This is almost three weeks later than last year, meaning that there is a longer period of 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 the South American country of Colombia. Colombia is the first access point to South America from North and Central America. It is a land of geographical extremes. The Andes mountains run through the centre of the country while there are tropical beaches in the north along the Caribbean Sea. Large areas of grassland and desert dominate the interior with nearly half of the south being part of the Amazon basin with its vast dense rainforests, unique wildlife and jungle areas. This diversity makes it difficult for many people to make a sustainable living and contributes to families experiencing extreme poverty.

Modern Colombia has evolved from the colonial era. The Spanish arrived in the 1500s and for approximately 250 years the native population was exploited as the Spanish hunted for gold and other treasures. By the late 1700s, people in Colombia rebelled against the Spanish.

Several years of conflict resulted in Independence for Columbia in 1835. However, there have been years of conflict and civil war as various groups have fought over the right to rule the country. The present population is descended from three ethnic groups: Indians, African people brought to Colombia to work as slaves and European settlers. While this contributes to a vibrant cultural atmosphere, it has contributed to ethnic rivalries for political power.

Columbia is rich in natural resources. Ten percent of animal species in the world live in Colombia. It is famous for its coffee, bananas and oil, but also sends overseas, coal, gold, platinum and emeralds. The most controversial export products, though, are illegal drugs. The Colombian government is trying to rid the country of the gangs, called cartels, that produce drugs for sale around the world. However, narcotics have been central to the presence of crime and political unrest that threaten safety and ultimately contribute to child poverty.

### **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 Colombia. Locate its immediate neighbours: Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela. Also point out near countries in Central America and the Caribbean. 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. Junior students will need guidance.
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 Colombia. 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 Colombia. There are several.
6. Use the Newsletter as stimulus for research projects, as outlined later in this Guide. There are many possibilities.
7. Be inspired by the work of the HCA organisations during Mission Month last October. Take photos 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, March 5. 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.
10. As you may have noticed from the back of the Newsletters, we have entered a Jubilee Year, as proclaimed by Pope Francis. Years of Jubilee are somewhat obscure, as traditionally they do not occur very often and usually events are far away. Today's methods of instant communication bring occasions such as the Jubilee much closer than ever before. This presents an occasion when you can learn together with your students about the history of the Jubilee, what it is, what happens and why it is significant. It could be a very enjoyable unit in your Religious Education curriculum.

## **LENTEN ACTIVITIES**

### **LENTEN SIGNS**

**Objective:** To allow students to understand the meaning of “giving up”.

**Lesson Outcome:** The children will have a good understanding of what it means to “give something up”.

#### **Materials:**

- Poster paper
- colours

#### **Directions**

- Students discuss what it means to give something up
- Students choose positive ways of “giving up” (being helpful, friendly, generous, etc)
- Students label their poster: I AM GIVING UP .... I AM BEING .... (Wording can vary)
- Students draw a relevant picture from their everyday experience.

#### **Follow-Up**

- Students display their poster to the class and talk about their message.
- Display the posters in the classroom, school halls, gymnasium, meeting room or church during the season of Lent.

## **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 as 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**

Colombia offers many opportunities for research projects for Junior students:

- Students can do a project on Colombia's unique geography, flora and fauna.
- Be a tourist agent and present a unique holiday safari!
- 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.