

2023-2024 HANDBOOK



INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS, CATECHISTS,
& MISSION MODERATORS



“Children Helping Children”

1. WHAT IS THE MCA?

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) is one of the Pontifical Mission Societies that operate in every diocese of the world under papal statute:

“Convinced that children can be a spiritual and social force for a real transformation of the world, this Society aims at creating a movement of ***Christian children committed to helping other children.***”

Pontifical Mission Societies Statute 1-13

Through this Society, the Holy Father elicits the zeal, love, and generosity of students to share their faith with young people in more than 1,110 mission dioceses throughout the world. MCA offers the opportunity for young people to spread the Good News of God’s love and salvation. Children learn about their brothers and sisters in mission countries—children just like them. And they also discover that their own prayers, personal sacrifices, and financial help make a faith-filled difference for their mission family—and make them missionaries today.

MCA helps young Catholics to become more aware and appreciative of the multicultural dimension of the Church. It will ideally stress the connection between action, reflection and prayer. It should motivate youth to reject the values of the culture (individualism and materialism) and to appreciate and implement the values of Jesus (compassion and generosity).

Missionary initiation is also one of the six tasks of catechesis as identified in the *National Directory for Catechesis* (2013, pg. 62). All Catholics have a baptismal responsibility to make Jesus Christ and His love known to others. But as children grow, their understanding and living out their Christian responsibility—to be evangelizers—does

not magically appear when they reach adulthood. Faith and missionary discipleship must be nurtured in the same manner as reading or math.

2. MCA IN THE DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, the Missionary Childhood Association is the official mission project in our schools. All elementary schools are required to participate in this program (*Policy #1324*). The program also shapes the religious growth of children in parish religious education programs and in high schools. Without faith, we shall see nothing of importance in mission work; with it, we see everything. This conviction is what we want to transmit to students in religious education classes as well as those in parochial schools.

From Policy #1324

STUDENT FUNDRAISING AND THE MISSIONS

“Students should be encouraged and educated to make personal sacrifices for the Church and for the missions. All elementary schools are required to participate in the Missionary Childhood Association program sponsored by the Diocesan Office for the Missions.”

3. MORE THAN A CHARITY

Many local charities and outreach programs exist to relieve the pressing needs of the poor and marginalized in our country and abroad, and these are noteworthy projects to which Catholics respond with love and generosity. However, MCA programs are not in competition with other social services programs. MCA is unique to other organizations that assist children in that its primary aim is to encourage children to share their faith with children in the developing world through their prayers, personal sacrifices and financial offerings. MCA focuses on the spread of the Gospel and the importance of prayer, and helps to instill in our young people a desire to share their faith and the healing message of Jesus with other children who need it most in missionary lands.



4. A BRIEF HISTORY



The Association was founded by Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson. He was born of nobility in France, and as a youngster, he was deeply concerned about the plight of unwanted infants abandoned by their parents in China, a practice that was prevalent in that country during the early 19th century. As a young priest, he requested permission to be sent to China where he planned to devote his life to alleviating any condition of child abuse. His request was denied. Later, he again appealed to the Holy Father for an appointment to China. Instead, he was urged to apply his energy and zeal to home mission services in France.

The welfare and education of mission children remained foremost in his mind. After extensive discussions with missionaries and Pauline Jaricot, foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Bishop de Forbin-Janson conceived the idea of an organization made up of children in Christian countries helping, through prayers and alms, these abandoned children of China.

In 1843, he formally organized his "children helping children" society and called it the Association of the Missionary Childhood. Members were asked to pray a daily Hail Mary for mission children and contribute one penny in monthly dues which would be given in direct aid to assist those children.

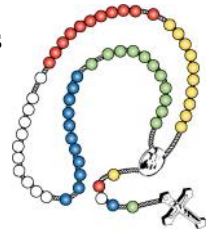
The movement flourished and spread to other countries, arriving in the United States in 1846. Called the Holy Childhood Association, it enjoyed papal approval from its inception, and was formally designated a Pontifical Association in 1926. Its name was changed to Missionary Childhood Association in 2011 to closer align its identity with the Society worldwide. Today, children in over 110 countries are being helped through the prayers and sacrifices of Missionary Childhood members throughout the world.

5. THE PROGRAM

Materials from the diocesan Missionary Childhood Association office assist educators in teaching children about the realities of the developing world through stories, activities and prayer.

Teachers and catechists are encouraged to use whatever MCA resources they can best fit into their individual schedules. All materials are free and will be sent in the appropriate time frame. Please check with the diocesan Missions Office or see our website (www.hbgdiocese.org/MCA) for an order form.

- Monthly activity packets with calendar, mission country, and mission saint.
- Aids for the classroom including mite boxes for collecting donations, poster, prayer card.
- A World Mission Rosary for every child, to teach prayer for the missions.
- National MCA Christmas Artwork Contest.
- Links to other sites offering mission-related activities and stories.
- Recognition: Students' contributions to the missions are personally acknowledged by a letter to the class from Father Sharman, the Diocesan Director.



6. USING A MISSION MODERATOR IN YOUR SCHOOL/PARISH

A Mission Moderator for the Missionary Childhood Association is a particular member of the school faculty or a parish catechist whose task is to raise the level of mission consciousness among the students and teachers. The Moderator is supported in this work by the staff of the Pontifical Missions Office. If he/she has had mission or trans-cultural experience, it would be an added benefit. *However, that is not essential to fulfillment of this task.* The most important qualification is an appreciation of the importance of a missionary spirituality in the life of the Church and school, and an understanding of what it means to be “missionary.”

What does a Mission Moderator do?

- Reads the MCA materials and makes decisions regarding ordering free materials.
- Develops a goal-oriented plan for the year to foster mission awareness among students and faculty.
- At the beginning of the new school year, meets with the principal or pastor/DRE to enlist their cooperation and input in planning the mission projects and programs for the year.
- Receives, throughout the year, all mailings from the Missionary Childhood Association coordinator and disseminates them to the faculty.
- Includes, if possible, a central place in the school or parish for display of mission materials, such as pictures, certificates, mission articles from *The Catholic Witness* and other newspapers and magazines.
- Plans and coordinates an annual Mission Mass, World Mission Rosary, or Prayer Service in the school or parish religious education program to celebrate mission awareness.
- Acts as a liaison with the diocesan MCA office.
- Works with his/her office (principal, accountant, or bookkeeper) to ensure that monies collected for the Missionary Childhood Association are correctly forwarded to the Diocesan Office of Pontifical Missions.

7. SACRIFICE FOR THE MISSIONS

Sacrifice is part of our commitment to be missionaries.

Whether it is a lesson on a mission saint, stations of the cross with a mission theme, or encouragement to pray the World Mission Rosary for mission children, membership in MCA brings our children to a greater understanding of not only how blessed they truly are but also how, through their Catholic faith, they are called to love and care for the less fortunate. MCA teaches them basic stewardship: each Catholic, regardless of age or station, has a responsibility to others. Certainly, prayer is something of which even the youngest is capable—but this is only one of the two pillars of MCA. The second, true sacrificial action, must follow.

How do children raise money for MCA?

Some children work in groups sponsoring walkathons, dress-down days, raffles, etc. Some make personal sacrifices by sending money that they received for chores or babysitting; others share their allowances or birthday gift money. Contact the Missions Office for a list of fun fundraising ideas. Contributions should come from the student's own sacrifice of time, talent, and treasure.

MCA offers mite (coin) boxes and envelopes to students to encourage a spirit of sacrifice, but the fundraising component is secondary to catechesis and must always be combined with formation. Fundraising without faith formation does little to form life-long missionaries.



What to do with monies collected for the missions?

Please send in contributions, no matter how small, by the end of the month in which they are collected, so that Father Sharman can personally thank the students in a letter to the school. Your school/parish has an established method for remitting contributions to the Missions Office; if you are unsure of what to do, please contact us for the flyer “How to Remit MCA Contributions.” We always appreciate extra information, such as what activities your students did to raise MCA funds.

How are contributions to MCA distributed?

Contributions are allocated to children's projects such as orphanages, schools, and clinics in mission dioceses throughout the world. Twice each year, national directors of the world's Pontifical Mission Societies meet in Rome to review requests for funding from mission dioceses throughout the world. This system of allocating funds helps to ensure that aid is distributed fairly and that those who are most desperately in need receive enough support.

Can we designate a particular missionary organization or school as the recipient of our donations, or sponsor individual children?

Per MCA statutes, diocesan missions offices are not permitted to consider individual requests for funding. Instead, all donations are sent to the National MCA Office in New York to be added to the General Fund in Rome. This General Fund is important because it supports mission dioceses and schools that may be unknown and overlooked. It assists struggling institutions that do not have private support.



8. CONTACT INFORMATION

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