

**Missionary Childhood Association**  
**“Children Helping Children”**  
*Mission Office Archdiocese of Los Angeles*

By our baptism in a missionary Church, we are all missionaries.

Youth are a vital part of the life of the church today, they must be engaged and challenged to live out their baptismal call to the principal mission of the church as expressed by Pope Paul VI “The Church exist in order to evangelize”  
*(Evangelii Nuntiandi 14)*

*“The pilgrim Church is missionary by its very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that it takes its origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father”* Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Second Vatican Council, 1965)

### **What is Missionary Childhood Association?**

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) is one of the Pontifical Mission Societies that operates 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 share the Good News of God’s love and salvation. Children learn about their brothers and sisters in mission countries—children just like them. Discovering 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).

### **How are we different form other outreach programs?**

Many local charities and outreach programs exist to relieve the pressing needs of the poor and marginalized in our country and abroad. Catholic students respond with love and generosity to these noteworthy projects.

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. Responding to the call we all receive at our baptism to be missionaries.

## **Brief History of MCA**

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Missionary 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.

Although he was denied being a traveling missionary to China he still practice his call to be a missionary, right where he was.

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. Thereby designating it as the Holy See's official agency for mission for children – providing substantial support for children's most basic human needs while offering them hope in the person of Jesus Christ. 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.

## **How are contributions to MCA distributed?**

Contributions to MCA are allocated to mission dioceses throughout the world according to need. Once 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.

Today, through our network of national directors and local churches in 1,150 dioceses throughout the Developing World – including those in the most remote areas of the world – the Pontifical Mission Societies help support, day in and day out: 9,000 clinics caring for the sick and the dying. 10,000 orphanages providing a place of safety and shelter. 12,000 schools educating children in some of the poorest parts of the world. 9,000 religious sisters and brothers in formation programs. 80,000 seminarians in training for the priesthood.

