

# WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

World Mission Sunday is a special day celebrated by the Catholic Church around the world to recognize and support the Church's missionary work. Each year, the Pope chooses a theme for World Mission Sunday. For 2026, the theme is: One in Christ, United in Mission. This theme calls all Catholics to be in communion with Christ and one another.

The **Missionary Childhood Association** (MCA) celebrates World Mission Sunday throughout the month of October by joining other children around the world to offer their prayers and their sacrifices in order to bring hope, healing, and the love of Jesus to mission places. This resource is a World Mission Sunday lesson plan rooted in the Gospel story John 15: 1-5, the Vine and the Branches. It can be used by religious education teachers or catechists.

We hope this lesson can ignite a missionary zeal in your students leading up to this worldwide celebration of our mission church!



ONE IN CHRIST,  
*United in Mission*

100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

October 18, 2026



# One in Christ, United in Mission

## Objectives

- Understand the meaning of World Mission Sunday and this year's theme.
- Reflect on how Jesus connects us to one another and to our global Church.
- Identify ways students can be missionaries through the Missionary Childhood Association.
- Commit to one concrete action to support children in mission countries.

**Grade Level:** 5–7

**Time:** 45–60 minutes

**Scripture:** John 15: 1-5  
The Vine and the Branches



## Welcome & Theme Introduction

Begin by writing the World Mission Sunday theme on the board: One in Christ, United in Mission

### Ask:

- What is “unity?”
- What do you think it means to be part of the Body of Christ?
- Is there one mission of the Catholic Church? Several? When you think of the Church's mission, what comes to mind?

Briefly explain that World Mission Sunday is a special day when Catholics around the world focus on praying for and helping others in mission lands — people who are far from home, struggling, or in need of the Gospel.

Introduce or remind your students about the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA).

MCA's motto is “children helping children.” Kids around the world join together to bring hope, healing, and the love of Jesus to mission places. Through prayers and sacrifices, we can be missionaries in our own homes.

## Connection Detection

Form students into pairs and have each pair sit on the floor, partners facing each other.

**Tell students:** Time to see how closely we're connected together. When I give the signal, see how quickly you can find three things you have in common. When you've got three, call out, “Connected!”

Instruct students to dig a bit. It doesn't count that you both have noses! Look for things like both your birthdays are in the spring or you each have a middle name with five letters.

After students complete the first round, play three more rounds, looking for four, five, and six new connections. This game becomes increasingly difficult as the easy connections are covered. After students either struggle through the third round or abandon hope, **say:** Let's change the rules a bit to see if it helps. This last round you only need to find two connections—but you have to sit back-to-back with your partner. Move into that position now.

**After your students move, continue with this instruction:** Now, you can't talk either. Ready? Go! It won't take long for students to realize they're stuck and to give up. **Then, instruct students** to gather in a large circle for a discussion.

**Ask:**

- What was easy or hard about this connection challenge?
- What would have helped you succeed during the last round?

**Tell students:** Finding things you have in common with your partner couldn't happen unless you were connected! It didn't help when I cut you off from the only source of information you had! Today we'll dive into a story Jesus told about staying connected. We'll discover that when we stay connected to Jesus, great things can happen.

## Scripture Activity

Gather students in a circle, seated close enough to hold hands when you ask them to do so.

**Say:** When Jesus was on earth, there were lots of vineyards in the area where he lived. People who heard Jesus speak knew how to care for a grapevine so it would produce a healthy harvest.

One thing people did very carefully was to cut branches from the vine. Prune too much and there were no branches left to produce grapes. Prune too little and the grapes were small. But this was always true: once you cut a branch from the vine, that branch couldn't produce fruit! I'll read aloud a story Jesus shared about a grapevine.

This type of story is called a parable. Jesus shared real life examples with his followers so they could connect their life experiences with God. Jesus wanted his listeners to see his stories in their imaginations. When you listen and read, imagine what the vines looked like and how the vine grower, or gardener, worked with them.

**Tell students in this activity** the teacher will be the vine grower and the students will represent the branches—except for the last child sitting next to the teacher. That child will represent the fruit. See the diagram for positioning: G (gardener), F (fruit), and X (branches).



Project the following Scripture passage so everyone can see it:

### **John 15: 1-5**

#### **The Vine and the Branches**

**I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.**

With your hand, hold the hand of the child next to you who is the child playing the branch, not the fruit. Ask children to form a “vine” by holding the hands of students next to them. Only you (the gardener) and the child playing the fruit will each have a free hand.

**Say:** When your hand is squeezed, “pass along” the squeeze as quickly as possible to the next person in line. When the child playing the fruit feels his or her hand squeezed, that child will call out, “Fruit!”

After everyone’s connected, read aloud John 15: 1-5. Squeeze a hand where indicated and wait until “Fruit!” is called each time:

**I am the true vine (squeeze) , and my Father is the vine grower (squeeze).**

**He takes away every branch (squeeze) in me that does not bear fruit, (squeeze) and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. (squeeze)**

**You are already pruned (squeeze) because of the word that I spoke to you. (squeeze)**

**Remain in me, as I remain in you. (squeeze) Just as a branch cannot bear fruit (squeeze) on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. (squeeze)**

**I am the vine, (squeeze) you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, (squeeze) because without me you can do nothing. (squeeze)**

**Ask** children to release their hands but stay in a circle.

#### **Discuss:**

- What would have happened had someone dropped out of our vine?
- What kinds of good fruit do you think Jesus is looking to find in his followers?
- What kind of good fruit is growing in you? How do you know?

**Say:** Jesus is clear. When we stay connected to him and let him lead us, great things happen. When we disconnect from Jesus it is harder to stay connected to one another. One of the ways we "bear fruit" is through our missionary witness. When we are positive examples to people, we reflect Jesus' love to others. This is one way we can be missionaries in our communities. What are some other ways?

**Ask:**

- Where in the world today are people suffering?
- What happens when you feel connected to Jesus? What about when you feel disconnected?
- How are we connected to people living in far away countries? How are they connected to us?

## **"Hands of Hope" Activity**

**Materials:** Colored paper, scissors, markers

1. Each student traces their hand on a piece of paper and cuts it out.
2. On the palm, they write one way they can be a missionary of hope this week (e.g., pray for a country, give up a treat to donate, write a card to someone who feels alone).
3. Around the fingers, students write five words that describe what hope feels like (e.g., peace, love, healing, welcome, joy).
4. Decorate with the colors of the World Mission Rosary.
5. Complete the activity by projecting and, as a group, praying the prayer from Pope Leo XIV below.



**Holy Father, grant us to be one in Christ, rooted in his love  
that unites and renews.**

**Make all members of the Church united in mission, docile to  
the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel,  
proclaiming and embodying your faithful love for every  
creature each day.**

**Bless the missionaries, support them in their efforts, and  
preserve them in hope.**

**Mary, Queen of the Missions, accompany our evangelizing  
work in every corner of the earth. Amen.**