

Life Night

World Mission Sunday (WMS)

GOAL

For teens to grow in their identity as a missionary disciple and their understanding of the mission they have received from Christ.

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

This life night is designed to be used on or near WMS 2018 on October 21st.

GATHER

Welcome and Introductions (5 min.)

Gather the teens into the main meeting space. Welcome them to the Life Night and begin in prayer.

Icebreaker Activity: Play a short game of charades or Pictionary. The idea behind this icebreaker is that sharing the Gospel can sometimes be challenging, but we are called to use the gifts God has given us to share His message with others.

PROCLAIM

Mission Teaching (15 min.)

October is mission month in the Church, with World Mission Sunday (WMS) falling on the second to last Sunday of October each year. WMS is an opportunity for all the faithful of the Catholic Church to renew their baptismal call to be a missionary and to join in communion with missionaries and mission dioceses around the world.

The “missionary mandate” is given by Jesus in all the Gospels when he says, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28: 18-20). See also Mk 16:15-18; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-23. While there are variations between the Gospel accounts, the “universal dimension” remains in each. Furthermore, Jesus assures His apostles that they will not be alone (Redemptoris Missio 23).

We are able to say that the Church is “missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father” (Ad Gentes 2). The missionary activity of the Church continues through the guidance of the Holy Spirit as, “The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission” (RM 21).

World Mission Sunday recognizes all missionary activity of the Church, but focuses particularly on the mission "*ad gentes*" or "to the nations." It refers to missionary activity among peoples in which Christ and his Gospel are not known or which lack the established Christian communities (RM 33). Mission *ad gentes* continues to be reaffirmed through Church teaching, especially through St. John Paul II's encyclical, "Redemptoris Missio: On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate." (Fun fact, JP II was installed as pope on a WMS. He makes reference to this in his 1979 WMS Message. Also, he references traveling to so many countries as a reflection of this missionary consciousness in RM). In his encyclical, St. John Paul II says with regards to mission *ad gentes*, "This is one of the Church's fundamental activities: it is essential and never-ending" (RM 31). It is distinguished from pastoral care of the faithful and new evangelization, but of course, they overlap as well (RM 34).

Missionary activity is always directed towards people's freedom. St. John Paul II says, "Proclaiming Christ and bearing witness to him, when done in a way that respects consciences, does not violate freedom. Faith demands a free adherence on the part of man, but at the same time faith must also be offered to him" (RM 8). And later on, he continues, "*The Church proposes; she imposes nothing*" (RM 39). When sharing the Good News, we have to be careful to respect people's choices so that missionary activity remains evangelization, not proselytization. Proselytization is often associated with the forcing of one's beliefs upon another. God respects our free will, and we must do the same with others. But, the point remains, that each person needs to be offered faith in order to be able to make the choice in the first place. Finally, as Pope Francis emphasizes in his apostolic exhortation, the Gospel is meant to be shared with joy. That attracts others to the faith.

Everyone has a special role to play in this mission of the Church. First, we recognize that we are called to be missionaries by virtue of our baptism, which means we have the responsibility to share the Gospel (Lumen Gentium 17).

Everyone in the Church is called upon to pray and sacrifice for missions and missionaries around the world. Through prayer, Christians can unite themselves to missionaries and their efforts to share the Gospel. Furthermore, all Christians can share in the sacrifices of missionaries (RM 78). This can be financially or giving something up. We are given great examples to model our lives after, such as St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Francis Xavier. While St. Thérèse was too sick to go another country as a missionary, she united herself prayer with missionaries and missions and thus lived her missionary call. The Church recognized that in naming her the patroness of missions and missionaries. Then, we have St. Francis Xavier, patron of missions, who lived the active missionary life, traveling to numerous countries to preach the Gospel, such as India, the East Indies, and Japan. He is said to have baptized more than 40,000 converts. He had a gift for great healing, even raising people from the dead (*CatholicSaints.Info*). While St. Thérèse is highlighted for her prayer and St. Francis for his sacrifices, both saints exemplified these aspects and show the importance of prayer and sacrifice combined.

On WMS, a collection is held to support the 1,100 mission dioceses around the world. The collection is organized through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (one of the four Pontifical Mission Societies). Pontifical = relating the Pope. So all 4 Pontifical Mission Societies are part of the universal Church. The WMS collection actualizes this sacrifice for missions around the world.

Young people in particular have a special role in this year's WMS. Pope Francis wanted young people to recognize their important role in the mission of the Church so he directed his Message for World Mission Sunday to **young people**, "Together with young people, let us bring the Gospel to all." This year, mission month corresponds with the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. Every previous WMS Message has been addressed to "Brothers and Sisters." The first specific group he has chosen to address his message to is young people.

BREAK

Read WMS Message from Pope Francis (10 min.)

Distribute copies of the Pope Francis' Message for WMS 2018 to each person to read silently. It can be found at: https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/papa-francesco_20180520_giornata-missionaria2018.html. Also, it is attached to the end of this document. Pass out pens/highlighters for underlining/highlighting things that stood out to them or parts that they had questions about.

- Variations: Core/teens take turns reading paragraphs out loud while everyone follows along – they can still underline/highlight. Or, if you feel it would be too long to read the whole document, just have them read a few sections.

Small Group Discussion (20 min.)

Take the necessary time to divide into small groups. The Core Member opens in prayer and leads the small group discussion related to 2018 WMS Message.

Questions:

- 1) What struck you while reading Pope Francis' message?
- 2) In his message, Pope Francis invites us to reflect on this fact, "I am a mission on this Earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world." What does that mean to you?
- 3) How can you incorporate praying for missionaries and missions around the world in your own life?
- 4) How can you incorporate sacrificing for missionaries and missions around the world in your own life?
- 5) Have you ever thought about going to another country as a missionary, whether long-term or short-term? Why or why not?

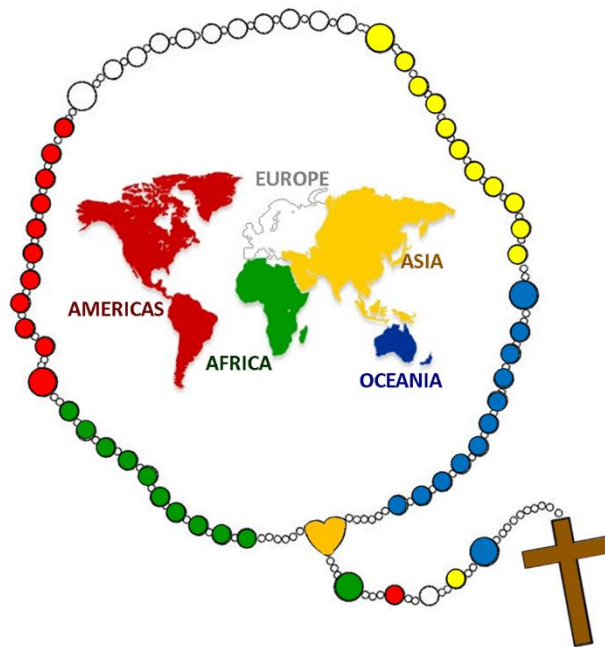
SEND

World Mission Rosary (25 min.)

Invite and teach teens the World Mission Rosary.

The world mission rosary was created by Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, and while the prayers are the same, each decade of the rosary is a different color, representing a different region of the world: the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

- Green symbolizes the forests and grasslands of Africa
- Blue is for the ocean surrounding the islands of the Pacific
- White symbolizes Europe, home of the Holy Father
- Red shows the fire of faith that brought the first missionaries to the Americas
- Yellow is for the morning light of the east, symbolizing Asia



- If you would like free pamphlets (English/Spanish) about the world mission rosary that include mission reflections for each of the mysteries of the rosary, email kimbecvar@archstl.org or call 314-792-7655.
- World mission rosaries can be purchased for \$0.59 from Autom: <https://www.autom.com/stsearch#stq=world+mission+rosary&stp=1&filters%5Bpage%5D%5Btype%5D%5Bvalues%5D%5B%5D=product&filters%5Bpage%5D%5Btype%5D%5Btype%5D=and>.
- Variation: if you do not want to purchase world mission rosaries at this time, you could distribute regular rosaries and project an image of the world mission rosary such as the one above (found on the Chicago Mission Office page: <http://www.wearemissionary.org/world-mission-rosary-2/>).

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2018

Together with young people, let us bring the Gospel to all

Dear young people, I would like to reflect with you on the mission that we have received from Christ. In speaking to you, I also address all Christians who live out in the Church the adventure of their life as children of God. What leads me to speak to everyone through this conversation with you is the certainty that the Christian faith remains ever young when it is open to the mission that Christ entrusts to us. "Mission revitalizes faith" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 2), in the words of Saint John Paul II, a Pope who showed such great love and concern for young people.

The Synod to be held in Rome this coming October, the month of the missions, offers us an opportunity to understand more fully, in the light of faith, what the Lord Jesus wants to say to you young people, and, through you, to all Christian communities.

Life is a mission

Every man and woman *is* a mission; that is the reason for our life on this earth. To be *attracted* and to be *sent* are two movements that our hearts, especially when we are young, feel as interior forces of love; they hold out promise for our future and they give direction to our lives. More than anyone else, young people feel the power of life breaking in upon us and attracting us. To live out joyfully our responsibility for the world is a great challenge. I am well aware of lights and shadows of youth; when I think back to my youth and my family, I remember the strength of my hope for a better future. The fact that we are not in this world by our own choice makes us sense that there is an initiative that precedes us and makes us exist. Each one of us is called to reflect on this fact: "I *am a mission* on this Earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 273).

We proclaim Jesus Christ

The Church, by proclaiming what she freely received (cf. *Mt* 10:8; *Acts* 3:6), can share with you young people the way and truth which give meaning to our life on this earth. Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us, appeals to our freedom and challenges us to seek, discover and proclaim this message of truth and fulfilment. Dear young people, do not be afraid of Christ and his Church! For there we find the treasure that fills life with joy. I can tell you this from my own experience: thanks to faith, I found the sure foundation of my dreams and the strength to realize them. I have seen great suffering and poverty mar the faces of so many of our brothers and sisters. And yet, for those who stand by Jesus, evil is an incentive to ever greater love. Many men and women, and many young people, have generously sacrificed themselves, even at times to martyrdom, out of love for the Gospel and service to their brothers and sisters. From the cross of Jesus we learn the divine logic of self-sacrifice (cf. *1 Cor* 1:17-25) as a proclamation of the Gospel for the life of the world (cf. *Jn* 3:16). To be set afire by the love of

Christ is to be consumed by that fire, to grow in understanding by its light and to be warmed by its love (cf. *2 Cor* 5:14). At the school of the saints, who open us to the vast horizons of God, I invite you never to stop wondering: "What would Christ do if he were in my place?"

Transmitting the faith to the ends of the earth

You too, young friends, by your baptism have become living members of the Church; together we have received the mission to bring the Gospel to everyone. You are at the threshold of life. To grow in the grace of the faith bestowed on us by the Church's sacraments plunges us into that great stream of witnesses who, generation after generation, enable the wisdom and experience of older persons to become testimony and encouragement for those looking to the future. And the freshness and enthusiasm of the young makes them a source of support and hope for those nearing the end of their journey. In this blend of different stages in life, the mission of the Church bridges the generations; our faith in God and our love of neighbor are a source of profound unity.

This transmission of the faith, the heart of the Church's mission, comes about by the infectiousness of love, where joy and enthusiasm become the expression of a newfound meaning and fulfillment in life. The spread of the faith "by attraction" calls for hearts that are open and expanded by love. It is not possible to place limits on love, for love is strong as death (cf. *Song* 8:6). And that expansion generates encounter, witness, proclamation; it generates sharing in charity with all those far from the faith, indifferent to it and perhaps even hostile and opposed to it. Human, cultural and religious settings still foreign to the Gospel of Jesus and to the sacramental presence of the Church represent the extreme peripheries, the "ends of the earth", to which, ever since the first Easter, Jesus' missionary disciples have been sent, with the certainty that their Lord is always with them (cf. *Mt* 28:20; *Acts* 1:8). This is what we call the *missio ad gentes*. The most desolate periphery of all is where mankind, in need of Christ, remains indifferent to the faith or shows hatred for the fullness of life in God. All material and spiritual poverty, every form of discrimination against our brothers and sisters, is always a consequence of the rejection of God and his love.

The ends of the earth, dear young people, nowadays are quite relative and always easily "navigable". The digital world – the social networks that are so pervasive and readily available – dissolves borders, eliminates distances and reduces differences. Everything appears within reach, so close and immediate. And yet lacking the sincere gift of our lives, we could well have countless contacts but never share in a true communion of life. To share in the mission to the ends of the earth demands the gift of oneself in the vocation that God, who has placed us on this earth, chooses to give us (cf. *Lk* 9:23-25). I dare say that, for a young man or woman who wants to follow Christ, what is most essential is to seek, to discover and to persevere in his or her vocation.

Bearing witness to love

I am grateful to all those ecclesial groups that make it possible for you to have a personal encounter with Christ living in his Church: parishes, associations, movements, religious communities, and the varied expressions of missionary service. How many young people find in missionary volunteer work a way of serving the "least" of our brothers and sisters (cf. *Mt* 25:40), promoting human dignity and witnessing to the joy of love and of being

Christians! These ecclesial experiences educate and train young people not only for professional success, but also for developing and fostering their God-given gifts in order better to serve others. These praiseworthy forms of temporary missionary service are a fruitful beginning and, through vocational discernment, they can help you to decide to make a complete gift of yourselves as missionaries.

The Pontifical Mission Societies were born of young hearts as a means of supporting the preaching of the Gospel to every nation and thus contributing to the human and cultural growth of all those who thirst for knowledge of the truth. The prayers and the material aid generously given and distributed through the Pontifical Mission Societies enable the Holy See to ensure that those who are helped in their personal needs can in turn bear witness to the Gospel in the circumstances of their daily lives. No one is so poor as to be unable to give what they have, but first and foremost what they are. Let me repeat the words of encouragement that I addressed to the young people of Chile: "Never think that you have nothing to offer, or that nobody needs you. Many people need you. Think about it! Each of you, think in your heart: many people need me" (*Meeting with Young People, Maipu Shrine, 17 January 2018*).

Dear young people, this coming October, the month of the missions, we will hold the Synod devoted to you. It will prove to be one more occasion to help us become missionary disciples, ever more passionately devoted to Jesus and his mission, to the ends of the earth. I ask Mary, Queen of the Apostles, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and Blessed Paolo Manna to intercede for all of us and to accompany us always.

From the Vatican, 20 May 2018, Solemnity of Pentecost

FRANCIS