

Going the Extra Mile

For Kids in Need of Jesus



Issue Alert!

What is Child Labor?

The International Labor Organization (ILO) identifies child labor as those activities that damage children's health, threaten their education and leads to further exploitation and abuse.

The ILO defines child laborers as all children younger than 12 working in any economic activities, as well as children 12 through 14 years old engaged in more than light work and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor – in which they are enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazards.

The Global Story

- 218 million children are engaged in child labor, excluding child domestic labor.
- Children represent an estimated

40–50% of all victims of forced labor, or 5.7 million children, are trapped in forced and bonded labor.

- Among children ages 5 to 14 employed as workforce in the world, 69% work in agriculture, 22% in the service sector (such as domestic servants, waiters, cooks), and 9% in industrial facilities.
- Approximately one million children work in small scale mining and quarrying operations worldwide.

Sources: UNICEF, International Fides Service



Making a Difference through HCA

Pope Leo XIII was the first pope to devote an Encyclical Letter (*Rerum Novarum*) to labor-related issues. In this Encyclical, written in 1892, the pope specifically addressed the blight of child labor. Since this time, the Catholic Church has remained an active and outspoken advocate of children's rights – specifically the right to know about God and to experience His great love for them. In fact, on the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II published *Centesimus Annus*, taking up the same themes as Pope Leo XIII, from a 20th Century perspective.

The prayers and sacrifices of young people through the Holy Childhood Association (HCA) help support the work of missionaries who bring the Good News of Jesus to the poor and suffering – including child workers.

One of these missionaries, Father Benedito, runs a home for street children in Lubando, Angola. The missionaries and lay volunteers from this home care for children who are victims of forced labor and domestic abuse, providing help and support and uniting them with their families whenever possible.

Similar efforts are taking place in Asia as well.

“Education is a top priority in our diocese,” says Sister Martha Sunni of Multan, Pakistan. “Most of the families

in our diocese earn money making bricks and involve their children in this work as well.” Help from the Holy Childhood Association makes it possible for Sister Martha to provide these children with books, uniforms and small, but healthy meals. “Our children are very grateful to their brothers and sisters in the United States,” she says. “They remember you every day in their prayers.”



Students in Multan who learn to read and write have a greater chance of escaping the dire poverty that surrounds them than those who do not.



Children from Multan drink clean water from a well near school. The well was made possible by funds from HCA kids.

Activity

Gem Mines

In the Developing World, children mine a wide range of minerals – gold and precious stones, zinc, coal, mica, and bauxite as examples. Children are used in this work primarily because of their small size. Rock quarrying, especially near booming cities and construction areas, are hubs of child labor, as well as bonded and forced labor.

The following activity is designed to mimic conditions faced by children who work in gem mines in the Developing World. We recommend contacting parents to inform them of your intentions to engage in this activity with your students.

Materials needed:

- + Long, narrow and sturdy cardboard box in which a child of about six or seven years could fit. Use a larger box if needed to correspond to the size of older students. Seal one end of the box while keeping the opposite end open.
- + River rocks of various sizes (available in craft stores)
- + Small basket or container
- + Gold paint to mark special rocks
- + Chocolate coins or candy to be used as payment
- + Stop watch or watch with a second hand

Procedure:

Place rocks (including only two that you have painted with gold paint), on the floor of the box toward the closed end. Dim the lights in the room. Ask one student to crawl into the box on his or her back (or belly), while carrying the basket / container and collect 10 rocks in 30 seconds.

The teacher (acting as “mine owner”), examines the rocks to see how many gold rocks were found. The student is “paid” (given chocolate) only for gold rocks; this fact is not divulged at the start of the activity. Repeat the exercise so that all students have an opportunity to “mine” for rocks.

Reflection Questions:

- + How does it feel being in a dark, enclosed space?
- + How did your motivation change once you learned you would only be rewarded for finding gold rocks?
- + In the Developing World, when children are not paid for this work, it often means that they and their family will go hungry for a day or more. How do you feel knowing this?
- + For further study or reflection ask students to go on a web quest to find out information about their favorite gem, birthstone or precious metal, seeking information such as its country of origin, how it appears in its natural state, how it is collected from the earth, who gathers and / or mines for this material (children). Ask students to report on their findings.