

MAKE IT YOUR *Mission*

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It is not uncommon for classes and programs to start the year with a grounding theme or a centering idea. After a year of disrupted learning, upheaval, and isolation during the pandemic and the 2020-2021 school year, children might need some time to get reacquainted with interacting with one another. Recent times have also seen great political division and mean-spiritedness. A child who has heard any newscast has most likely picked up on some of this. So start this new academic year by being intentional about inviting the children to care for God and one another. Don't just pick a theme—make it a mission! And make it the yearlong, collective mission. Center your mission on loving God and loving others.



Make Scripture the Motto

Identify a Scripture quote or passage as a foundation for your mission of caring for God and others. Make a short quote your motto for the year! Display the motto around the classroom, school, and church buildings. Reference it frequently. Many good Scripture texts can provide a focused mission for your group. Some possibilities include:

- **John 13:34:** Jesus commands to love others as he loves us.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7:** Paul explains the attributes of love.
- **Mark 12:28-31:** The Great Commandment asks us to love God and others as we love ourselves.
- **Luke 10: 25-37:** The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates how to treat others, even those people we may not like.

Actively Pursue the Mission

Practice pursuing the mission. Build daily and weekly activities that invite the children to care for God and others as part of their daily activities.

- **Daily prayer:** Begin each gathering with a simple prayer that incorporates the motto from Scripture.
- **Group goals:** Have the group set a small goal for the week to collectively pursue the mission.
- **Missionary challenges:** Invite the children to identify three things they personally will do during the week to pursue the mission.
- **Small collections:** Periodically, invite the group to contribute to a collection for those in need with either goods or money. Keep it small so the children truly are able to contribute themselves.

Celebrate the Mission in Action

Ideally, our care for others should be evident in the big and small actions of our daily lives. Take time to name and celebrate when people successfully pursue the mission.

- **Missionary magic:** Highlight one child periodically, illustrating specifically how they pursued the mission.
- **Partners in mission:** Share local news stories of people or organizations doing good for others.
- **Mission jar:** Have fun little trinkets, stickers, etc. in a jar. When you see the mission in action, invite the children to pick a prize.
- **Celebrate group goals:** Take time each week to have the group together name successes of collectively pursuing the mission.

Expand the Mission

A mission of loving God and others can't be limited to school and parish program gatherings. It should involve every aspect of daily life. Invite the children to pursue the mission beyond your gatherings by including families and other communities.

- **Family prayer:** Send the daily prayer home, and invite families to pray it together at a meal or the end of the day.
- **Extend goals:** As the group names a collective mission goal, invite them to consider ways the goal can be pursued at home. Share this goal with families.
- **Invite contributions:** Invite families to submit news stories or nominations for partners in mission.
- **Display the mission:** Invite the children to create artwork to represent the mission. Send the artwork home, and ask families to display it in a prominent place at home.

The past year has likely taken a toll on all of us. As we “re-enter” a life that again involves gathering together, challenge the children (and yourself) to love God and others very intentionally. Make it your mission!