

Gift of Hope Tree

This Advent, organize a Catholic Relief Services' Gift of Hope Tree faith formation activity!

The Gift of Hope Tree activity is an opportunity to invite children and families to reflect on how Christ was born into poverty, and how this reflects the reality of many other families around the world today. Participants will consider what gifts the Holy Family might have needed and how those gifts compare to what people who live in poverty might need. They will assemble Gift of Hope Tree ornaments, which feature gifts that donations to Catholic Relief Services provide to people around the world.

The Gift of Hope Tree assembly activity is best for grade school students and their families. It can be used in a variety of settings, including religious education classes, family catechesis or an intergenerational gathering.



Photo courtesy of SERRV



Photo by David Snyder for CRS

HOW TO USE YOUR TREE

You can use your assembled Gift of Hope Tree in whatever way works best for your audience. Here are suggestions for ways to invite people to donate gifts from the Gift of Hope Tree:

- » Invite families to take home a Gift of Hope Tree ornament as part of an intergenerational event where you assemble the tree.
- » Invite students in a class to pool their money to donate a larger gift.
- » Put the tree near the entrance to a religious education class or school and invite families to take a Gift of Hope Tree ornament as they pick up or drop off their children.
- » If your parish or school already coordinates a giving tree activity for your local community, add these ornaments to your tree and invite people to remember their local and global family at Christmas.

Individuals or families may donate gifts online at crs.org/gift-tree. Each ornament also lists the website URL for that particular gift. If you choose to coordinate donations for a group, please collect payment for the gifts and mail checks (either individuals' checks or one check from the parish/school) made out to "Catholic Relief Services" with the donation form. Gift prices in the Gift of Hope Tree activity represent averages. Actual costs may vary based on local economies. All items are actual goods and services Catholic Relief Services supports in poor communities around the world. The gifts described in the Gift of Hope Tree activity are symbolic of the good your donation will do for children, women and men in 100 countries.

MATERIALS

- Copies of Gift of Hope Tree ornament cutouts, one for each person or family
- Scissors
- Colored construction paper
- Hole punch
- Ribbon or string
- Glue sticks or tape
- Crayons, markers or colored pencils
- A tree to hang ornaments on—a traditional tree, one made of construction paper, or some other creative alternative



Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

PREPARATION

- Read this facilitator's guide.
- Make enough copies of Gift of Hope Tree ornament cutouts so each person/family has one (there may be duplicates).
- Prepare materials in advance to keep the activity simple for any age group. For example, cut construction paper in the shape of gifts, cut ribbon, etc.
- Set up your tree.

GROUP ACTIVITY

PRE-ACTIVITY DISCUSSION

1. What do you want for Christmas this year? Invite a few participants to share their answers.
2. Is this a gift that the Holy Family might have needed on their journey? If so, why?

FACILITATOR: Today we will remember that many people around the world need gifts like tools to build wells to get clean water or to plant gardens for food. They might also need medicine or school uniforms! These might not sound like fun gifts, but they are things that people need.

We are in the season of Advent, a time when we prepare for Christ's arrival. In the days leading up to Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph were on the road. They were called to take part in a census and had to go to Bethlehem to register with the state. Mary gave birth to Jesus while they were traveling. They couldn't find a place to stay, so he was born in a barn! Imagine the scene of Jesus' birth: hay, manure, cows, sheep and other animals. Jesus was born in poverty.

3. Why do you think people around the world might need these gifts?

FACILITATOR: Mary and Joseph probably could have used gifts like shelter, items to help care for their newborn baby, and food and water.



Photo by Rene Durocher for CRS

As we prepare for Christmas throughout the season of Advent, let's continue to keep in mind that Jesus was born in poverty. Even though more than 2,000 years have gone by, many people throughout the world continue to live without basic necessities like food and shelter. Together, we'll participate in an activity that helps us think about gifts that people who live in poverty might need.

We will assemble gifts for a Gift of Hope Tree. The Gifts of Hope are items for people around the world who live in poverty. After we have assembled the gifts, you can donate one or more to people in need.

I will give each person an ornament to cut out. Read the description of your gift silently or to your family. Cut out a shape that reflects the gift. Glue or tape the gift description to the front and the prayer card to the back. Decorate the ornament however you like. Write a prayer for those who might need to use your gift on the back. Then, punch a hole in the top and string the ribbon through the ornament so that we can hang it on the Gift of Hope Tree.

NOTE TO FACILITATORS: *After everyone has finished making the Gift of Hope Tree ornaments, reconvene the group.*

POST-ACTIVITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of your Gifts of Hope? How much does your gift cost? How do you think the cost compares to the gifts you want for Christmas?
2. Is this a gift that the Holy Family might have needed on their journey? If so, why?
3. Why do you think people around the world might need these gifts?

FACILITATOR: Catholic Relief Services will give these gifts to people in need throughout the world. CRS helps poor and suffering people in 100 countries on behalf of the Catholic community in the United States.

As we reflect on the story of Mary and Joseph this Advent, let us remember that although the Holy Family came from poor and humble origins, they were surrounded and supported by people



Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

who traveled from distant parts of the world, like the Three Kings. May we remember that Christ enters our own life in hidden, unexpected ways, challenging us to reach across the world to anyone who needs love and support.

In a moment, we will hang these gifts on the Gift of Hope Tree and pray for people throughout the world who, like Jesus, were born into poverty.

Closing Prayer: As our closing prayer, we will place our ornaments on the tree one by one. We will each read the prayer we wrote as we hang our ornaments on the tree.

NOTE TO FACILITATORS: *If you are in a big group, invite everyone to put their ornaments on the tree before the prayer starts, and preselect a few volunteers to read the prayers on their ornaments.*

And so we begin:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ...

Read Luke 2:1-14

Dear Jesus,

As we reflect on the story of the Holy Family, let us pray for all families—those we know, and those we do not. Those who live on the other side of the world, and those who live on the other side of the street. Let us recognize and rejoice in the great diversity of the one family of God as we reflect on and give thanks for all of the gifts present in our own families.

Please hear our prayers now for those around the world who will receive our Gifts of Hope.

Invite people to read the prayers on their ornaments as they place the ornaments on the tree.

In your name we pray, Amen

STUDENT UNIFORM

\$20

Helps a child dress for success and eases financial burden on the family

To make your donation for this gift online, visit crs.org/uniform.



FERTILIZER (2 BAGS)

\$20

Helps farmers nourish soil, reap better harvests and earn more income

To make your donation for this gift online, visit crs.org/fertilizer.



EMERGENCY HOUSEHOLD KIT

\$70

Flashlight, bedding and dishware to ensure a family's survival in an emergency

To make your donation for this gift online, visit crs.org/kit.



HEALTH EXAMS FOR 12 CHILDREN

\$25

Promotes health and prevents illness

To make your donation for this gift online, visit crs.org/exams.



HAND-WASHING STATION \$30

Protects children from preventable diseases
To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/hands.

MOSQUITO NETS FOR TWO FAMILIES \$60

Protects two families from malaria
while they sleep
To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/nets.



CARE FOR MOTHER THROUGHOUT PREGNANCY \$30

Keeps mother and baby safe and healthy
To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/mother.

RABBIT \$27

Produces organic manure for crops
To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/rabbit.



MODIFIED BICYCLE FOR CHILD WITH DISABILITIES

\$50

Helps a child keep pace with peers and
travel more easily to school

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/bike.



QUALITY SEED FOR A SEASON

\$50

Ensures harvests that will feed farm families
and their communities

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/seeds.



FISH FOR A POND

\$60

Varies a family's diet and improves
community nutrition

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/fish.



LAMB (1)

\$80

Strengthens children's diets
and provides income

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/lamb.



CLASSROOM DESKS FOR 13 CHILDREN \$100

Where pencil meets paper for 13 bright futures

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/desk



TOOLS TO DIG A WELL \$235

Provide shovels and concrete blocks so a community can dig into its water supply

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/well



WHEELCHAIR \$200

Provides mobility, access and opportunity
for people with disabilities

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/wheel



COW (1) \$300

Provides milk and income

To make your donation for this gift online,
visit crs.org/cow



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES GIFT OF HOPE TREE DONATION FORM

School/parish/institution name: _____

Organizer name: _____

Position: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

THE GIFT OF HOPE TREE ACTIVITY WAS USED IN:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious education program/class | <input type="checkbox"/> Entire school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole community or intergenerational event | <input type="checkbox"/> Entire parish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

DONATION CHECKLIST:

1. Note the total quantities of each item on the order form below:

ITEM DESCRIPTION	COST	QUANTITY	TOTAL
2 bags of fertilizer	\$20		
Student uniform	\$20		
Emergency household kit	\$70		
Health exams for 12 children	\$25		
Hand-washing station	\$30		
Mosquito nets for two families	\$60		
Care for mother throughout pregnancy	\$30		
Rabbit	\$27		
Modified bicycle for child with disabilities	\$50		
Quality seed for a season	\$50		
Fish for a pond	\$60		
1 Lamb	\$80		
Classroom desks for 13 children	\$100		
Tools to dig a well	\$235		
Wheelchair	\$200		
1 Cow	\$300		

Total donation amount: _____

Appeal Code: Gift of Hope Tree # RGC0150000

2. Check to make sure the total donation amount matches the total sum of the checks.
3. Review all checks to make sure they are payable to Catholic Relief Services and write “Gift of Hope Tree” on all of the checks in the memo line.
4. List each enclosed check by number and donation amount:

Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:
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Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:
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Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:	Check number: Donation amount:

5. Place all checks and the completed Catholic Relief Services Gift of Hope Tree Donation Form in an envelope and mail to:

Catholic Relief Services
Attn: Donor Services
P.O. Box 17090
Baltimore, MD 21297-0303

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QUESTIONS: Please call Donor Services at **877-435-7277** or visit **crs.org/gift-tree**.

