

ADVENT ACTIVITIES

THE BEST PRESENT

- † Materials needed: A plastic or soft sculpture nativity set enclosed in a "beat-up" cardboard box, a beautifully wrapped empty box.
- † Approximate time: One class period

Directions

Show the children the beat-up box and the beautifully wrapped Christmas gift. Then ask the children which gift they would rather receive for Christmas. (Expect most to select the beautifully wrapped package.) Then, show them that there is nothing inside.

Next, open the unwrapped cardboard box. Take out the pieces one by one, ending with the baby Jesus. Remind the children that good things don't always come in fancy packages. Jesus wasn't born in a fancy hospital. He was born in a stable! But, He was the best gift ever. Leave the nativity set out where children can see it and touch it.

After this exercise, ask the children if they know where they were born. Then, ask them if they think their brothers and sisters in the Missions might have similar experiences. Share with them that children in the Missions are sometimes born in hospitals run by Sisters, or health clinics that are part of a parish. Sometimes, children are born at a family home. Conclude with a prayer for children of the world that they may experience the joy of Christ's birth through contact with missionaries.

THE BLESSING BOX

This activity is to impress upon the children the generous blessings God has poured out upon us. Make a small gold box, decorate an empty box, or simply use a Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) coin box to be used as a bank. Place it in the middle of a table and once a day during Advent, you will be placing offerings into it. On Epiphany, when according to tradition, the Kings gave their gifts to the Christ Child, you can give the gift to mission children. Each day, the children will be able to reflect upon their blessings. Each day count a different blessing, and put money in the box accordingly.

Here are some sample blessings to count:

- † Many children worldwide live in poverty, lacking adequate clothing. Give 2 cents for each pair of socks and leggings/tights each child has.
- † Was it cold enough to wear a coat today? Were you thankful for your coat? Give a penny for every coat, raincoat and jacket in your house.
- † "Give us this day our daily bread." Thank God for feeding you today and give one penny for every slice of bread your family ate today.

Be creative! Think of the many blessings you can count at this time of the year!