



# Pilgrims of Hope with Mary's Meals

A Mary's Meals learning  
resource for pupils between  
five and 11 years old, for the  
2025 Jubilee Year



mary's  
meals

a simple solution  
to world hunger

# Pilgrims of Hope with Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals provides a nutritious meal to more than 2.4 million children living in poverty every school day. These meals are a great source of hope for children, their families and local communities, providing access to a better today and opportunities for a better future for the next generation.

Mary's Meals is named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, who brought up her own child in poverty. We consist of, respect, and reach out to people of all faiths and none.

This resource introduces the work of Mary's Meals and helps children explore the idea of hope and the theme of this Jubilee Year. It also provides opportunities and ideas for them to become pilgrims of hope, by praying for our work, sharing it with others and raising funds to support the children we feed.

The activities included in this resource are designed to be used in Catholic primary schools, but can also be used by other groups such as church youth groups.

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# Introducing Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals provides school meals to more than 2.4 million children living in some of the world's poorest countries. This lesson will introduce your pupils to the work we do, and encourage discussion about school meals and why they are important.

- For children aged four to seven, you can start with [Photo Pack 2 on our resources page](#), which comes with notes.
- For children aged eight to 11, you can start with the [From Hunger to Hope video](#).



**Lead a discussion with the children, guided by the following questions:**

- What surprised you about what you have learned?
- How are our lives similar to the children in the photos/video? How are they different?
- What difference does having a meal at school make to children living in poverty?
- Why is the work of Mary's Meals important?
- How does the work of Mary's Meals make you feel?

***Another great way to introduce Mary's Meals to your pupils is by inviting a Mary's Meals speaker to visit your school. [Contact us today to book your visit.](#)***



# Exploring hope

Hope is a virtue, a gift that God has given to us by his presence in our lives, and which he asks us to share with others. Look together at one of the following verses from the Bible, and talk about what it means to you:

- You are my hope, Lord. (Psalm 71:5)
- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace. (Romans 15:13)

God made us for Heaven and through Jesus' death on the cross, he has promised that we will have eternal life. We have hope that one day in Heaven there will be no more tears, sadness or suffering and we will all be happy with God because of His promise. (Revelations 21:4). God wants his children to be happy on earth too and he has given us gifts and talents to use to help others in need, bringing them hope for today and the future. Talk about this together before connecting this to Mary's Meals in our next activity.

## School + Food = Hope

School + Food = Hope is a phrase used to describe the impact of Mary's Meals. You can explore this with your class by creating a poster or writing your own acrostic poetry.



*Remind the children of what they have already learned about the work of Mary's Meals and introduce this phrase "School + Food = Hope".*

Take each word in turn and work as a class to create a word bank, using different words and ideas that come to mind connected to the work of Mary's Meals.

## Poster activity

Create a big poster as a class of School + Food = Hope, using the word bank to inspire words and drawings to include. Make it as bright and colourful as you can to show the hopeful and joyful meaning behind it.

## Acrostic poetry

Write acrostic poems, using the word banks as inspiration. You could split up the class so different groups are working on the poems for each word – school, food and hope. Each poem should take the chosen word as the title, written vertically for each letter to begin a new line. Share the poems aloud, or create a class display, including photos or artwork to depict these themes.

# SCHOOL + FOOD = HOPE

# The Year of Jubilee

In this special Jubilee Year, we are invited by Pope Francis to become Pilgrims of Hope.

## Introduce pilgrimage

Talk to your class about pilgrimage, a journey to a special holy place. You could choose one of the following pilgrimages to research together:

- Camino de Santiago
- Pilgrimage to Lourdes
- Pilgrimage to Walsingham
- Pilgrimage to Knock

## Pilgrims of Hope

Even without travelling far, Pope Francis is inviting us all to go on a journey of faith this year, bringing hope to others through our prayer and actions. Share his words with your class:

‘I ask with all my heart that hope be granted to the billions of the poor, who often lack the essentials of life.’

Could helping Mary’s Meals spread hope? Talk about your ideas together.

## Journeying with Mary’s Meals

We hope you will join us as Mary’s Meals Pilgrims of Hope! Create your own map or checklist for this year, using the following themes or adding your own ideas:

- Pray for hope
- Spread the word
- Give hope

# Pray for hope

Prayer has been part of the Mary's Meals mission from the beginning. We invite you to pray with your class for the work of Mary's Meals, that our school meals will bring hope to families in difficult circumstances.

Talk as a class about how we can support the work of Mary's Meals through prayer, thinking about:

- The children who already receive Mary's Meals – what do we hope for them? Safety? Love? Friendship? Full tummies?
- Children who are hungry and don't have Mary's Meals yet – we hope that Mary's Meals can grow and help more people.

## Journeying in prayer

At the beginning of each month, choose [a country where Mary's Meals works](#). Find out a bit about that country using the Mary's Meals website and talk together about what you have learned.

Pray as a class for the children receiving Mary's Meals in this country for the rest of the month. You could add a Hail Mary to your usual class prayers, pray the [Mary's Meals prayer](#), or the children could write their own prayers, inspired by the above prompts.

As you progress through the year, you can keep track of your prayer journey on a world map or globe in your class.

## Make a class pilgrimage

Could you go on a trip as a class or as a school to your local parish, diocese cathedral or another special holy place?

Bring prayers you have worked on as a class and have a special prayer service. You could think about incorporating hymns and scripture passages that relate to the themes of hope, food and loving thy neighbour, such as:

- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37)
- Feeding the 5,000 (John 6: 1-15)
- I am the bread of life (hymn)

### ***Save the date: Pray in May***

***You can support Mary's Meals in prayer throughout the year, but many supporters make a special effort to pray during the month of May, dedicated to Our Lady – after whom Mary's Meals was named. We make special prayer resources for our Pray in May campaign, so be sure to check our website for them.***

# Spread the word

If more people know about Mary's Meals, this means more people can help us in our mission to bring hope to hungry children. Your class can help by sharing the work of Mary's Meals in the local community.

Have a brainstorm in your class about ways you could spread the word. You can use your own ideas, or those below.

## Share your prayers

If you have written your own prayers for the work of Mary's Meals, sharing these with your parish community is a great place to start. You could make a display at your church about the work of Mary's Meals, featuring your prayers, or turn them into a little booklet with copies printed to share at Mass.

## The right to go to school

Every child has the right to go to school but, for hungry children, no food means they are often missing out on learning, spending their day working instead. Write a letter (either individually or as a class) to a respected leader (for example, a parish priest, politician or head teacher) and share your thoughts and ideas with them based on what you have learned about the problem of child hunger and the work of Mary's Meals.

## Go online

How can you spread the word about Mary's Meals far and wide? Why not work together to produce a short video that could be shared on your school's website? You could use your video to introduce Mary's Meals, share your prayers or poetry and encourage other people to support the mission.



# Give hope

Raising funds for Mary's Meals is a powerful way to give hope to hungry children around the world. **It costs just 10p a day to feed a child with Mary's Meals at school, and £19.15 to feed a child for a whole school year**, so your class can make a powerful and measurable impact.

## Collecting pennies

Choose a time of the year such as Lent to collect spare change as a class – even a few pennies each will start to add up and help Mary's Meals provide these life-changing school meals. You can request a blue Mary's Meals mug to collect your coins by [getting in touch with us](#).

## Porridge party

Porridge was the first meal served by Mary's Meals, and this nutritious meal is still on the menu in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe! Invite parents and other members of your school community to learn about the work of Mary's Meals at a porridge party: cook up some porridge for your guests, and you could make other items like flapjacks to sell too. Create a beautiful display to share with your guests everything you have learned about Mary's Meals and encourage them to make a donation.

## Sponsored pilgrimage walk

A sponsored walk is a great way to raise funds for Mary's Meals. To link into the Jubilee Year, you could make your sponsored walk a pilgrimage to a local holy place, taking time along the way and at the end to pray for the work of Mary's Meals.

## An enterprising approach

Challenge pupils to think about how they could help raise money for Mary's Meals, focusing on the skills and talents that they have. What could they make or bake to sell for Mary's Meals? Or could they put on a show or event? They could brainstorm this as a whole class or in small groups.



***Some inspiration: Pupils from St Cuthbert's Primary School in Lanarkshire opened their own shop to raise funds for Mary's Meals. They made calendars, friendship bracelets, keyrings and badges to sell to fellow pupils, raising more than £400!***

Choose an idea as a class and make a plan together. You may wish to give pupils or groups different areas of responsibility, such as budgeting, planning, marketing and production.

However much your class raises, together you will make a huge difference to children living in poverty. Count the profit as a class, and then work out how many children you are providing with a daily school meal. [When paying in the funds raised](#), you can request a certificate to celebrate what you have achieved.

***Why not work together with other local schools or your parish community to give hope to a whole school? Find out about [Sponsor A School on our website](#).***



# Curriculum notes

Learning about Mary's Meals through these activities will link to many topics and subjects across the curriculum, including:

- Religious education
- Literacy
- Social studies
- Mathematics
- Sustainable development

In particular for religious education, this resource covers key topics, such as:

- Pilgrimage
- The virtue of hope
- Prayer
- Showing love for others

# PILGRIMS OF HOPE



[marysmeals.org.uk](https://marysmeals.org.uk)

Mary's Meals, Craig Lodge, Dalmally, Argyll, Scotland, United Kingdom, PA33 1AR  
Registered charity: SC022140 Limited company: SC265941

mary's  
meals

a simple solution  
to world hunger