

Churches in Africa

Pray that the Church in Africa may help teach others to be fair.



Have you ever heard of Africa? It's a big continent very far away. Africa is full of beautiful places. Parts of it are jungle and parts of it are desert. In the far northeast are the pyramids of Egypt. Farther south are grasslands, with giraffes and lions and many other kinds of animals. Even though Africa is a very different kind of place than we are used to, the people of Africa are all children of God. There are many Catholics living there!

The Pope asks us to pray this month that the Catholic Church in Africa may help teach others to be fair. A lot of bad things have happened in Africa throughout history. Because it is such a rich land, outsiders have gone there and stolen its resources and harmed its people. Most of the people living in Africa are poor, and every day they have to worry about illness and violence.

Pope Benedict sees that the people of Africa are full of faith and hope, even though they have so many problems. He wants the Catholic Church in Africa to teach everyone how to be fair, so people don't need to worry about violence or about being poor.

Let's pray along with the Pope for our brothers and sisters in Africa, and teach other people that we are all children of God.

Think about it!

- How is Africa different than the place you live now?
- How are Africans the same as you and me?
- How can you help others understand that Africa is part of God's kingdom?

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Mancala: The African game of counting and strategy

Many Historians believe that Mancala is the oldest game in the world. The word Mancala means "to transfer" in Arabic. That is exactly what you do; you transfer, or move, playing pieces from one bin to another.

Mancala represents the diversity of Africa. Some version of Mancala is played in nearly every African country. It is enjoyed by royalty and commoners, adults and children, in cities and villages of every size.

Mancala has lasted for so many years because each past and present culture has been able to enjoy it in its own special way: as an important family game, a ceremonial right of passage, or a form of recreation among friends.

The type of Mancala board varies, the wealthy may play on carved ivory boards covered with gold, or it could be just a few holes in the ground with pebbles as playing pieces.

On the next page, you will find instructions for making your own Mancala board out of a recycled egg carton, as well as rules for playing this fun game!

Materials for Making an Egg Carton Mancala Board

- 1 carton from a dozen eggs (the cardboard ones work better than the Styrofoam ones).
- 48 pebbles, dried beans, marbles, pennies, buttons, or whatever small markers you have handy.)
- Scissors, tape, stapler with staples, or glue
- Paint, glitter, stickers, or anything else you like to decorate with

1. Remove the top of the carton from the bottom by cutting along the hinge. Remove the extra part used to keep the carton closed when used to store eggs. Set the bottom aside for later.



2. Cut the top of the carton in half, crosswise. These pieces will be used as the end cups of the Mancala board.



3. Decorate the pieces with paint, glitter, stickers, or whatever you like!
4. Slide the two halves of the top underneath each end of the bottom, extending beyond the bottom by a couple of inches. Fasten together using the tape, staples, glue.
5. Find someone to play with!



How to play Mancala

Place the board on the table between you and your opponent. Each player takes 24 pieces and puts four pieces in each of the six small holes or "bins" on your own side of the board. There are two large holes at each end of the board. Those larger bins are called "kalahas".

These are empty at the start of the game. Where the pieces are on the board determines if you can move them or not. During the game, you can move any of your pieces from your side of the board. You may not move the pieces on the opponent's side of the board.

Choose a player to go first. That player then scoops up all the pieces from any bin on their side of the board. Moving to the right, that player drops one piece in each bin as it goes along the board. If you come to the large bin, the kalaha, drop a piece in there too. If, after you put a piece in the kalaha, you still have pieces in your hand, continue to put pieces in the bins on your opponent's side. If you should reach the other end where your opponent's kalaha is, skip over it and continue on your side. If your last piece falls in your kalaha, you get to take another turn. If not, then it is your opponent's turn. He does the same.

When the last piece that you drop is in an empty bin, you get to capture the opponent's playing pieces in the bin directly next to your bin. These pieces are then put into your kalaha along with the piece that was in the empty bin. After the capture, it is the other player's turn.

The object of the game is to be the player with the most pieces in kalaha. When all six bins on your side or the other player's side are empty, the game is over. The player that still has pieces in their bins can now put them in the kalaha. Players count their pieces and the one with the most, WINS!

