



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes

Blessed Lucien Botovasoa
Beatified April 15, 2018
Feast Day April 14



Goal: To provide a lesson for children about a saint or blessed person who exemplify a deep relationship with God and the ability to share it with others

Materials Needed: This lesson plan, accompanying story, and any necessary materials for follow up activities

Objectives:

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a saint? What does it mean to be blessed?
One who:
 - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
 - teaches others about Jesus by their example
 - lives like Jesus
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Blessed Lucien Botovasoa, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Lucien was beatified because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
5. To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
6. To help the children develop listening skills

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Blessed Lucien's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Blessed Lucien Botovasoa. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Blessed Lucien Botovasoa

In 1908, Lucien Botovasoa was the first born of nine children in his family in a rural part of southeastern Madagascar.

Lucien was baptized into the Catholic faith at age ten and received his First Holy Communion at age fourteen. After studying at state-run schools for a few years, Lucien attended the Jesuit College of Saint Joseph. After graduating with a teaching certificate he became an instructor at that school. He liked to end every class with a short story on the life of a different saint - just like the one you are reading now!

Lucien took the Jesuit Latin motto '*ad maiorem Dei gloriam*', which translates to 'All for the greater glory of God'. Lucien Botovasoa tried to live his life every day so that people would see Christ in his words and actions.

On October 10, 1930, Lucien married Suzanne Soazana in his local parish. They became the parents of five children. Because he had a prayerful demeanor and lived a life of obvious piety, a nun that Lucien worked with once asked him if he ever regretted marrying instead of becoming a priest. Lucien replied immediately, "I do not have the slightest regret at all." He felt that he was well able to serve God through his marital vocation.

Lucien was a man of many talents. In addition to Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, he spoke Italian, Latin, German, and Chinese. He was also known for his musical gifts and used them to praise God as a singer and musician in his parish choir. Eventually, he became the choir director.

The people who knew Lucien best described him as always smiling and joyful. He radiated the love of God!

Although happily married and devoted to his family, Lucien desired a closer tie to religious life. He found the perfect fit for him when he read about the Rule of the Third Order of Franciscans. This is a world-wide community of Catholic men and women who follow a code of simple living set forth by Saint Francis of Assisi. Sadly, there was no such group in his country. Undeterred, Lucien sought out other like-minded people and established a local branch in 1944. He began to dress in brown as Franciscans do, instead of the usual black of a Malagasy teacher.

After the end of World War II, political upheaval came to the island of Madagascar. Some people urged Lucien to run for political office but he wanted no part of serving anyone but God. His wife feared that his public holiness was casting an unwanted spotlight on him in this time of unrest in the country, but Lucien was not afraid. In 1947, a persecution of Christians began with priests and nuns being arrested and random people being killed for their faith. His own church was burned on Palm Sunday of that year.

On April 14, 1947, as Lucien sat eating lunch with his pregnant wife and four other children, he heard that the anti-Christian forces were coming for him. He entrusted his wife and children to the care of his brother. Lucien was arrested, condemned without trial, and killed that night by men whom he had taught when they were school boys. He prayed for them as he died, saying, "If my life must redeem the life of many others, don't hesitate to kill me."

1. ***Pray: Dear God, you chose Blessed Lucien Botovasoa to be an example to us of holiness. Help me to be an example of what it means to serve You in all I do. Grant that I may also live my life in joyful love of you and others. Amen.***

Follow-up Questions: (add, omit, re-word as appropriate for your grade level)

1. Blessed Lucien once said, "I am very happy about my state because God called me for this: to be a layman, married, and a teacher." How did Lucien know what God wanted from him? How can you imitate Blessed Lucien in finding God's call for yourself?
2. Blessed Lucien was known to be joyful at all times because of his love for God. Think about the happiest person you know. Ask them if they'd be willing to share their joyful inspiration with you.
3. Blessed Lucien loved to learn more about the lives of saints. This Lent, make a plan to read books or watch videos about saints' lives. Pick a favorite and pray for that saint's help on your own path to holiness.

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Blessed Lucien was a teacher. Thank your teachers and then make a sacrifice to Missionary Childhood (give up some candy, soda, or chips and donate the money saved) to honor them.
2. Pray a decade of the World Mission Rosary on the green beads for the children of Madagascar and the missionaries who serve them.

Older students:

1. Blessed Lucien lived simply as a Third Order Franciscan. For the rest of Lent, live as simply as you can. For example, give up extra treats and snacks, be sure to turn out unneeded lights, or pack your lunch instead of buying it. Act as a young missionary and donate any money you save to children in the missions through Missionary Childhood.
2. Many children in Blessed Lucien's home country of Madagascar go without the basics of education that he cherished. Every day during Lent, thank God for your school and teachers and make a small sacrifice for mission children into your Mite Box. Don't have one? Make a mission bank from a shoe box or other container.
3. Learn more about the Third Order Franciscans. Here in the Archdiocese of Boston, their Regional Minister can be reached by email at jackiesfo@juno.com.