



Saint of the Month



Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio February 25

Goal: To provide a lesson for children about a saint or saints 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:

- To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
- To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a blessed or a saint?
One who:
 - lives like Jesus
 - teaches others about Jesus by their example
 - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
- To introduce one of our Church's blessed and saints, Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio, (say App-uh-REE-see-oh) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
- To learn that Sebastian was named a blessed because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
- To learn that we are called by God to incorporate the Gospel with into our lives and share it with others
- To help the children develop listening skills

Procedure:

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

Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio

When you consider all of the inventions that have changed the world, things like fire and the wheel may spring to mind. Certainly, the simple road ranks right along side them. Think of how different our lives, and history itself would be without a vast roadway system. Even the Roman Empire could not have had such a broad reach without their ability to build good roads.

Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio certainly knew the value of humble things, including a road. Born in 1502 in northwestern Spain to a poor peasant family, Sebastian was the only boy of three children. He spent his childhood working—tending cattle and shepherding various flocks for wealthier people. His work helped to support his family. Sebastian was not able to attend school and never learned to read and write, but his pious parents made sure he learned his prayers well!

As a young man, Sebastian decided that he should help raise money so that his sisters had dowries to marry well. (A dowry is an ancient custom whereby a girl's family provides money or property to the husband-to-be to ensure that the new couple will be able to provide for themselves.) He worked his way across Spain

doing just that, giving his family all he earned and living on very little.

Eventually, Sebastian decided to travel to the New World — to Mexico — to help establish the Catholic faith among the people there. He was given land in the interior of Mexico from Spain, the country that ruled Mexico at the time. Sebastian was soon rounding up wild cattle on the land and training them to pull a cart. He became known as one of Mexico's first *charros* (cowboys). He soon realized, however, that his main difficulty in doing business was getting supplies from Spain to his ranch and bringing his cattle to market, as there were no decent roads. Sebastian set about building them, even though he had no experience. He spent 10 years building a 466 mile road that ran from Mexico City to Zacatecas and set up a successful transport, postal, and delivery business. The road is still in use today.

Sebastian became very wealthy but lived simply. He gave most of his money to the poor and lent money to others without asking for anything in return. When he was about 60, he heard of a young woman who could not find a husband for lack of a dowry. He married her to save her from embarrassment. When she died young, he did the same thing again! When his second wife passed away, Sebastian donated all he owned to a Franciscan Friary and joined the order as a brother. He was 72 years old.

Sebastian was assigned to a large friary and given the job of Quaestor—one who travels throughout the local community seeking support for his brother friars. The inventor of the Mexican highway system had become a beggar on that same road. He marked his 98th birthday on the roadside, begging for alms. Sebastian died a month later on what would become his feast day: February 25. Reportedly, his last word was, “Jesus!”

1. ***Pray: Blessed Sebastian, you listened to God and followed his call to travel to the New World so that you could use the talents that He gave you to show others who He is. Help us, every day, to be more like you and follow the path that God lays out for each of us. May our lives, like yours, praise Him and bring others to love Him! Amen.***

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

1. Blessed Sebastian started out life in humble circumstances and grew to be rich. He never let it change him. Discuss examples of people in the news who could learn from Sebastian's example. What choices could they make differently?
2. Would you be able to give away most of your money and live simply? What would you miss most? What would you miss least?
3. Sebastian was willing to do whatever his family needed. What do you do to help your brothers or sisters?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Doing extra chores and asking for payment, then putting it in your MCA Mite Box is acting like Sebastian when he asked for alms for the poor. Draw a picture of Sebastian and you in service to others.
2. Blessed Sebastian traveled about 5400 miles to get from his home in Spain to Mexico City. By filling your Mite boxes, have your class try to collect 1¢ for every mile Sebastian traveled (\$54).

Older students:

1. These days, by using the talents God gave him to build roads, Sebastian would be considered a civil engineer. What do you think your vocation is? Write a short essay, poem or story about how you could use your God-given gifts to make the world a better place.
2. Ask people of these vocations to come to your class to speak: civil engineer, Franciscan Friar, farmer or rancher. Later, discuss the differences in their talents and gifts. How can their faith play a role in making them better at what they do? Create a bulletin board or hallway display of yourself as your future vocation with a brief explanation of how being Catholic will make you better at what you choose.
3. Follow Sebastian's example for one month—live more simply and give away a good portion of your own money to MCA. Write about how it felt to be “poor” for a month.