



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi Beatified March 22, 1998

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 Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Cyprian 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 Cyprian's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Blessed Cyprian Michael. 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 Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi

Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi was the first born child of his non-Catholic family. His father named him Iwene, which translates to "Let malice not kill". Iwene's mother died after giving birth to a second son. His father remarried and the family was joined by four more boys and a girl. Young Iwene was permanently blinded in one eye as a youngster during a mud fight with another child yet he would let his name be his life's motto—he did not let anger get the best of his heart or soul.

When he was six years old, Iwene was sent to live with his aunt, a Christian. The boy's father wanted him to have a good education which was not available in their village. Iwene's Dad was determined that his son would grow up to get a good job and help lift the family out of poverty. Iwene's new school was run by Irish Spiritan missionaries who taught him about our Catholic faith. Within three years, Iwene was baptized and took the Christian name of Michael. He loved serving as an altar boy and a catechist to other students.

When Michael graduated from school, he became a teacher and later the headmaster (principal) of a school. He was known to be very strict and a bit of a perfectionist. During this time, Michael felt God calling him to serve him as a priest. Michael's father was appalled that his son would think about entering the seminary—he was expected to earn a good salary to help the family, not become a priest with no income! Michael trusted that God

would care for all of them and entered the seminary where he developed a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Blessed Mother.

Once ordained, Father Michael became the first native priest in the area. He was known to live very simply and to be extremely hard-working. Local people learned new techniques of home building with adobe and mud bricks from their new pastor. They loved him for his kindness.

Father Michael stood up for the oppressed, especially the women of his time. He encouraged the women to stand up to anyone who would mistreat them and established homes for unmarried women where they could live peaceably until their marriage.

While serving at his last parish which was in his hometown, Father Michael became less strict and more internally prayerful. He felt God calling him to a new way of life. When the local bishop announced he was looking for volunteers to travel to England to study so that they could start a monastery in Nigeria—encouraging a life of simple work and prayer—Father Michael volunteered immediately and was sent.

As a novice, Father Michael took the name Cyprian, after the Roman martyr. He worked in the kitchen, garden, and bookbindery at simple tasks of service. One of his teachers could be demanding and now-Father Cyprian recalled the times that he may have been overly strict and asked for God’s forgiveness.

Father Cyprian was to return to Africa to help start a Trappist monastery in Cameroon but fell ill. He died on January 20, 1964 of heart trouble.

He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on March 22, 1998, at Oba, Nigeria, becoming the first West African to be beatified.

1. ***Pray: Dear God, you chose Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi to be an example to us of holiness. Help me to spread faith in you everywhere I go, as he did. Grant that I may also live my life in loving and serving You and my neighbor. Amen.***

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

1. Blessed Cyprian Michael once said, “If you are going to be a Christian at all, you might as well live entirely for God.” What does that mean for your daily life? What practical things can you do during Lent to “live entirely for God”?
2. Blessed Cyprian Michael was known to put the needs of others before his own. Think about times when you have done this. How did you feel?
3. Blessed Cyprian Michael loved to pray and listen to God. This Lent, make a plan to spend more time talking and listening to God.

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Missionaries were Blessed Cyprian’s teachers. 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 Africa and the missionaries who serve them.

Older students:

1. Iwene means “Let malice not kill” - which says that we should be kind, not angry, so as not to injure a soul. Invent a new “meaning” for your name this Lent that will guide you through the forty days. Make a sign for your desk that proclaims it to your class.
2. Many children in Blessed Cyprian’s home country of Nigeria 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.