



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Beato Giovanni della Pace

Blessed Giovanni Cini "della Pace" November 12

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:

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 blessed/saint?
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 blessed, Blessed Giovanni Cini "della Pace" (say Gee-oh-VAH-nee Chee-nee deh-la Pah-chay) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Giovanni (which is Italian for John) is called Blessed 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 Giovanni's story. (Have a map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Blessed Giovanni. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. ***Pray: Blessed Giovanni, you were a man who changed your whole life and sought a path towards God. Please help us to follow your example and turn away from sinful behaviors. Join us before God as we ask Him to make us people of peace, love, and kindness. May your example of humility and repentance show us the way. Amen.***
4. Use the follow-up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Blessed Giovanni Cini "della Pace"

If you take a tour of the city of Pisa, Italy, anyone could point you in the direction of the famous "Leaning Tower" of that city. If you stopped local people to ask about someone that many of their ancestors once loved and celebrated, you may get confused looks as they ask you, "Who? Are you sure he's from Pisa?"

Known first as Giovanni Cini Soldato (soldato is the Italian word for soldier), the man known by that name is probably someone his local townspeople avoided. Though born of distinguished parents, Giovanni was known as a ruthless warrior and to be unpredictably violent. During his lifetime, Italy was divided into a series of city-states and Pisa was one of them. Giovanni served in this Republic's army. During a particular battle in 1296, he led an uprising against Pisa's own administration. He was tried and found guilty of murder because of crimes committed during the attack and spent the next nine years in prison.

We do not know what thoughts and reflections went through Giovanni's mind throughout his imprisonment but we

do know that when he was released, he was a changed man. He founded a place called the Pious House of Mercy which gave out food, clothing, and money to the poor. He kept night hours so that those who were ashamed to be seen accepting charity during the day could come in the secrecy of night to receive help.

Eventually Giovanni heard a call from God to become a hermit—to live by himself and devote his life to prayer. For the rest of his life, he lived outside Pisa's Gate of Peace and took on his new name—Giovanni ‘della Pace’, which means John of Peace.

Seeing the joy he radiated, many others followed his example which led to the founding of a society called the Confraternity of Disciplinati of Saint John the Baptist. These people felt called to pray for the sins of all the world. Giovanni lived out the rest of his life in a simple room, or cell, receiving food through one window and Holy Communion through another.

He was beatified in 1856. His feast day is November 12th. It is interesting to note that a century later, a fur maker from Pisa, also named Giovanni Della Pace was beatified. They are not related!

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

1. Blessed Giovanni was courageous and used his faith to turn his life around. Does this mean he was not afraid? Name a time you were courageous – were you afraid but used your courage anyway? Why did you do it?
2. What do you think the initial reaction of the people of Pisa was to Giovanni’s new way of life?
3. Do you find it hard to accept when someone has a change of heart and changes their behavior to prove it? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Blessed Giovanni changed his name to reflect his change of heart. Think about a word you could add to your name this month to describe the way you show your love for God in how you live. Make a small sign and put it on your desk so that everyone knows your “new” name!
2. Giovanni’s new name showed where he lived, too—outside the Gate of Peace. Make your classroom door into a Gate of Peace by decorating it with slogans and signs about peace and the word itself in many languages. Make them in the colors of the World Mission Rosary! Say a silent prayer for peace each time you walk through the doorway.

Older students:

1. Blessed Giovanni had a change of heart and asked for God’s forgiveness. This month marks Thanksgiving, when we thank God for our blessings. Remember to ask for His forgiveness as well: write a Penance Service and hold it in your classroom.
2. Giovanni did penance for the sins of the whole world. This is similar to today’s Divine Mercy Chaplet. Started by a Polish nun, St. Faustina, it is prayed using a rosary but with different prayers. Go to this site: www.thedivinemercy.org, then pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet with your class.

All students:

Pope Francis has been making lots of headlines this year! He has called us to serve the poor, just as Blessed Giovanni did, when he says, “We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.” This month, show your support of the poor in the missions. Host a day to dress in the colors of the World Mission Rosary; assign a color to each grade and pray for ‘your’ continent.. Donate \$1 to MCA for every student who participates.

