



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Bathilde
January 26

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 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 saints, Saint Bathilde, (say Buh-til-da) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Bathilde was a saint because she 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 Bathilde's story.
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Bathilde. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. *Pray: Saint Bathilde, you are an example of how we can find ourselves in what we think are awful circumstances and still act with kindness and charity to others. You also show us how to remember that life is always changing! Help us to follow your example of kindness, fairness and devotion to the poor so that we, too, may live a life of holiness. Amen.*
4. Use the follow up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Bathilde

Born to a noble family in England around 626-627, Bathilde was only about 14 years old when she was kidnapped by Danish Vikings and sold into slavery in France. She became the personal servant of a prominent town's mayor of the day, caring for her every need. Long known as a child who was caring, nurturing and sensitive to the needs of others, Bathilde did not let this awful turn in her life change her pleasant nature. Even amongst her fellow slaves, she was known for her beauty, charm, and kindness. After finishing her own daily tasks, Bathilde was known to spend time cleaning the shoes and mending the clothes of her fellow servants.

When the mayor's wife died, Bathilde's beauty and kindness impressed the mayor himself enough that he sought to marry her, though he was much older than she. Alarmed by this prospect, Bathilde dressed in rags, dirtied her face and hid herself away among lower caste servants until the mayor remarried. When she re-emerged, the mayor

tried to impress none other than the King of France with his beautiful servant. The King was a young man himself and unmarried. He was so taken with Bathilde that he freed her and married her, making her Queen of France at age 19! The couple had three sons and a happy marriage that lasted less than 10 years before the King, Clovis, died suddenly. Their oldest son, at just 5 years old was too young to rule but was named king, with his mother, Bathilde, acting as regent—ruling in his name until he was of age.

During her rule, Bathilde used public monies to ransom children who had been sold into slavery by their families who were so poor that they sold their children to pay taxes. She also reduced taxes to fair rates. Bathilde made the practice of trading slaves illegal and decreed that any slave who was brought into France was immediately free by virtue of setting foot on French territory, making her one of the first known abolitionists.

Bathilde promoted the Christian faith by building monasteries, churches, and hospitals for the poor. She encouraged better agricultural practices, giving away land to people who promised to pray and farm and help to feed the poor.

When her son was old enough to reign as king, Bathilde retired to a convent. While many wealthy pious women in those days would retire to a relatively comfortable life of cloistered prayer, Bathilde became a nun like all others, humble and at the service of the common people and her fellow sisters. She placed herself under the obedience of others and always volunteered for the most menial of tasks.

Saint Bathilde was canonized in 880. Her feast day is January 26

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

1. Many of us dream of “hitting the jackpot” and becoming rich as Bathilde did. How might it change you? How might it change the people around you?
2. Bathilde was born to a good family and had it all taken away from her. She still managed to impress those around her with her piety, kindness, and humility. Do you think it was easy? Why or why not?
3. In what ways did Bathilde show her Christian faith publicly?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Bathilde was a very good mom. Make a card for your parent/guardian with a drawing of Saint Bathilde. Thank them for loving you and tell them Bathilde’s story. Pray to this saint for their intentions.

Older students:

1. Saint Bathilde knew that to be a good leader, one must serve. Write a short paragraph about someone you know who best shows this quality. Present them with the writing as a gift and tell them the story of Saint Bathilde.
2. Saint Bathilde was an early abolitionist. We think of slavery as something in the past when in fact it is still a problem worldwide. On 12/3/14, the Holy Father, along with other religious leaders, signed a “Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery” aimed at eradicating all forms of slavery and human trafficking by 2020. Go to <http://bit.ly/1tKB1NO> (a Vatican news site) to learn more. Then write a letter to your congressman/women, asking what is being done in our country to combat this issue.

All students:

1. One of the ways that Bathilde found extra money to build hospitals for the poor was to sell some of her own jewelry. Make your own crafts—beaded bracelets/necklaces, friendship bracelets, fleece blankets, homemade soap, rosaries, tie-dyed tee shirts, for example—and, with your pastor’s permission, sell them after the Masses at your parish. Donate the proceeds to the Missionary Childhood Association. Check out these pictures of MCA members from Allentown, PA to Jinja, Uganda who recently did just that!

