



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Bona of Pisa
May 29

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:
 - 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
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Saint Bona of Pisa, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Bona 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 children develop listening skills

Procedure:

1. Prepare children to listen to Bona of Pisa's story. (have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Bona 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

Saint Bona of Pisa

As a very young child, Bona of Pisa lived a difficult life. She was raised by a single mother in a time when that was unthinkable. Told that her father had disappeared while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she would later find out that he had, in fact, abandoned their family when she was only three, leaving her and her mother destitute. Rather than turn to bitterness, her mother turned to God and brought her young daughter along with her. The little girl spent many hours in Pisa's Holy Sepulcher Church.

Bona was just seven years old when she had her first vision while praying: she saw Jesus reach down from the large crucifix as if to hold her hand. As one can imagine, this was very confusing for a young girl! Still, Bona returned to church daily to pray and ask for God's help with her life. Her next vision was of Jesus with his Blessed Mother and a few saints, including Saint James the Greater. This vision sent young Bona running from the church! When Saint James followed her and calmed her fears, she returned to pray and developed a life long devotion to this Apostle. Saint James had led her back to Jesus.

At the age of ten, Bona felt that God was calling her to join the Third Order of Augustinians, a voluntary group of lay people who support the Augustinian Friars with prayer and work. At age fourteen, Bona had another vision from God—this one telling her that her father was alive in the Holy Land. She decided, with her mother's blessing, to journey to find him. We don't know if the reunion was a happy one or not; we do know that on her return trip,

Bona was kidnapped by pirates and imprisoned. She was later rescued by some of her fellow countrymen.

One might assume that this would set Bona against travel forever, but the opposite was true. This mighty girl decided that she should lead groups on pilgrimages to the site of the burial of her favorite saint, Saint James the Greater in Compostela, Spain—a trip of over a thousand miles. She became an official guide of the Knights of Saint James and led ten such trips. If Saint James could lead Bona back to Jesus, perhaps she felt he could do the same for others. Exhausted by her tenth thousand-mile trip—much of it on foot—she died in Pisa having followed God’s path for her, literally! She was truly Pisa’s missionary on pilgrimage.

Saint Bona of Pisa is the patron saint of pilgrims, travelers, guides, and flight attendants.

Pray: *Saint Bona, you show us that even at an early age, we can accomplish great things. The key for us, as it was for you, is to pray often and to listen to God’s plan for us. Even when the task may seem past our abilities, we need only to remember that nothing is impossible with God! Be with us as we seek His ways always. Amen.*

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

1. Saint Bona was a young girl who spent a lot of time in prayer. Think about how much time you spend in daily prayer. This month, try to add a bit more time every day. Ask Saint Bona for help.
2. Does it surprise you that Saint Bona accomplished so much at such a young age? Why or why not?
3. What do you think you would do if you truly saw a vision as Saint Bona did? Who would you tell? Why?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Bona walked over one thousand miles with each pilgrimage to Compostela, Spain. For the average person, walking one thousand steps is about a half mile. Walk one thousand steps around your house, yard, or neighborhood and pray the World Mission Rosary. Ask family and friends to pledge a donation for each step you walk for Missionary Childhood. Send donations to MCA at 66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184 or donate online: www.propfaithboston.org
2. Research the Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James). See how many pilgrims still walk to see the church and burial site of Saint James the Greater. <http://santiago-compostela.net/>

Older students:

1. Part of Saint Bona’s membership in the Third Order of Augustinians called for her to fast regularly. Pick a day with your family to fast from snacks, junk food, or soda. Collect the money saved by fasting and give it to Missionary Childhood so that more children in the missions can have a good meal. Send your donations to the address above.
2. Research the Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James). See how many pilgrims still walk to see the church and burial site of Saint James the Greater. Watch this video from Salt and Light TV on the Camino: <https://saltandlighttv.org/catholicfocus/?f=el-camino>

All students:

Saint James the Apostle has inspired many missionaries to share their faith around the world. Here in Boston, Cardinal Richard Cushing was inspired in 1958 to found the Missionary Society of Saint James the Apostle. Headquartered in the North End at Saint Stephen’s Church, the Society sends diocesan priests from all over the world on mission to the poor of Peru. For more information on The Saint James Society, visit their website: <http://www.socstjames.com/>



Saint James the Greater

Pray the World Mission Rosary! If you don’t have the colored beads at home, just remember these colors as you move through the decades: Green is for the grasslands of Africa; red is for the fire of faith brought to The Americas (North and South!) by missionaries; white is for Europe, home of the Holy Father, who always wears white; blue is for Oceania (the Pacific Islands) and reflects the color of the vast ocean that surrounds it; and yellow is for Asia, where the sun rises first in the east. Pray for the people who live in these places and the missionaries who serve them, and you’ve prayed for the whole world—including yourself and your family!