



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Casimir
1461-1484 A.D.

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 Casimir, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Casimir was a saint 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 Casimir's story
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Casimir. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners
3. **Pray: Dear God, Saint Casimir was a young peacemaker. Please help me learn from his example so that I may always be an advocate for peace. Amen.**
4. Use the follow-up questions
5. Present follow-up activity below. (optional) Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Casimir

Casimir was born a prince in Krakow, Poland on October 3, 1461, the third of thirteen children. His mother was a gentle and caring woman, who took a great interest in her children's happiness and education. The family would often travel together as his father went on official visits around his kingdom. This was an uncommon practice for the time, but Prince Casimir's mother enjoyed spending time with her children and insisted they accompany their parents on journeys. This example of commitment to family and marriage was a great influence on the young prince.

Prince Casimir began formal school at the age of nine and was educated by a priest, Father Jan, who was the secretary to the Bishop of Krakow. Father Jan was a strict teacher and stressed the importance of ethics and religious devotion. Prince Casimir enjoyed school and was a very active learner. Although he was first in line to the throne, he expressed little interest in ruling Poland and instead focused on piety, his education, and helping the sick and the poor as best he could.

In October 1471 a war between Poland and Hungary broke out and Prince Casimir and his father were forced into battle. Once the it was at a standstill he resumed his schooling. Prince Casimir was deeply affected by the war and after witnessing so much human suffering and pain, he devoted himself to being a peacemaker.

Despite being a prince and having the most luxurious items available to him, Prince Casimir chose to wear the simplest of clothing and give his nicer items to the poor children of Krakow. He gave up his comfortable bed and slept on the floor as a sign of his devotion to God. The prince spent his nights praying to God, asking Him to bring peace to the nation. He asked to be an instrument of God's will.

Prince Casimir's father, the king, felt that the prince was ignoring a pre-destined path: ascension to the throne of Poland. Casimir argued that he was answering a higher calling, that of living God's will. This upset his father, who then sent his son into exile to "learn his lesson". This only helped Casimir commit to a deeper relationship with God. Soon, he returned home and he and his father reconciled. Upon returning to Poland he continued his studies, helping needy children, and promoting peace.

On March 4, 1484 Casimir died of a respiratory ailment. His body is interned at the Cathedral of Vilnius in Lithuania. At his funeral attendees sang Saint Casimir's favorite hymn, "Daily, daily. Sing to Mary." He is celebrated as a peace maker. Casimir was canonized by Pope Clement VIII in 1602 and is the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania. On June 11, 1948, Pope Pius XII named Saint Casimir the patron of youth.

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

1. Saint Casimir's story teaches us that being devoted to God is not always an easy path. Discuss a time you felt it was hard to be true to your faith. How did this make you feel? How did you overcome people's judgements? Looking back on it, are you proud of the way you acted?
2. Saint Casimir's teacher was an important figure in his life. He taught him about God and helped him learn more about his faith. Who are some people in your life who have taught you about God? What did they teach you about your faith?
3. Saint Casimir died at the age of 25, but was able to accomplish so much as a young person. Never think you are too young to make a difference! What are some ways you can help children who are less fortunate than you?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Casimir is the patron saint of youth. Pray to Saint Casimir to help you remember children in the missions who have less than you. This Lent put off purchasing a new item you've been saving for and put some of the money in your Mite Box. Renew your savings after Lent.
2. Saint Casimir was a peacemaker. Draw a picture of Saint Casimir promoting peace. Explain to your class what action he is doing in your drawing. How does this action promote peace? Try this action for yourself. Draw a picture of yourself doing this action and share it with the class.

Older students:

1. Research the Vilnius Cathedral in Lithuania. In addition to Saint Casimir, who else is buried there? Of whom are the sculptures on the roof? Write a short report on the information you find most interesting about the Vilnius Cathedral and present it to your class. How are some of your facts different from your classmates?
2. Saint Casimir's teacher was important in his religious studies. Write a letter to one of your previous teachers who helped you deepen your faith. Be sure to tell them how much your education means to you and what specifically made them important in your life.

All students:

1. Saint Casimir gave up many luxuries to help needy children. We can all do the same, especially during Lent. Go without small treats, like candy and ice cream; put the saved money in your Mite Box.
2. Learn Saint Casimir's favorite hymn. "Daily, daily, sing to Mary" found here: <http://bit.ly/1WtZIwA>