



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Frances of Rome March 9

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 Frances of Rome, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Frances 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 Frances of Rome's story.
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Frances. Elaborate/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 Frances of Rome

Saint Frances of Rome was born into a wealthy family in 1384. As a child, she was known to be quiet and prayerful but also strong-willed. At the age of eleven, she decided that she wanted to be a nun. Frances' father decided he knew what was best for her and arranged for Frances to be married to a man from another well known family. Frances was unhappy but obedient. She soon found that she could love her new husband, Lorenzo Ponziano. They went on to have four children together and were happily married for forty years.

In those days, a married woman lived in her husband's family's house. Frances' mother-in-law was still in charge there and favored her other daughter-in-law, Vannoza. She treated Vannoza with love and respect while ignoring Frances. Although this could have caused friction between them, Frances found common ground with Vannoza—they both shared a love of God, prayer, and a desire to serve the poor. They joined forces to do just that. Because Frances had a talent for making everyone feel as if they were her best friend, many other wealthy women joined them in the work.

Saint Frances of Rome

Because Lorenzo was the oldest son, when his mother died, Frances found herself in charge of the Ponziano estate while still a teenager. She realized that her duties would keep her from her more contemplative prayer life. Instead of spending so much time in church, she worked to find God in her daily duties of caring for her children, running a huge household, and skillfully managing the estate while Lorenzo was away on business and fighting the many battles of the time.

Frances was generous to the poor at these times as well; during a period of flood and famine, she turned part of the huge home into a local hospital and distributed excess clothing to those in need. Her life was not without its own sorrows—two of her children died of the plague. Lorenzo was seriously injured in battle and returned to her from exile disabled and penniless. She tended to him in a humble home for the rest of his life.

After his death, Frances founded a confraternity—a voluntary group of lay people who come together to pray and perform works of charity. She later founded a monastery for those in the group who wished to live in community and take religious vows. It became known as The Oblates of Saint Frances of Rome.

The Feast Day of Saint Frances of Rome is March 9.

Pray: Saint Frances, you had a plan for your life but followed God's different path for you with contentment. Help us to pray, learn, and listen to God's word so that we, too, may find joy and peace in His plan for us. May your devotion to serving others, especially the poor, be a great example to us as we strive to show Jesus to those we meet. Guide our work this Lent and always! Amen.

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

1. Saint Frances of Rome was referred to as "strong-willed." Discuss the benefits or detriments to being strong-willed.
2. Frances could have resented Vannozza for receiving preferential treatment from their mother-in-law but did not. What does this teach us about having good will towards all people?
3. Frances was born rich and then lost everything yet kept her faith. What habits in her life made that possible?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Frances found God in her everyday duties. Pick one of your daily tasks and offer it to God—pray while you do it! Draw a picture of yourself doing the task.
2. Frances treated everyone with kindness and respect—as if they were her best friend. Make this your goal for the rest of Lent. Write down how people react when you are always nice to them!

Older students:

1. Saint Frances of Rome thought she knew what God wanted for her life (to be a nun) but it seems He had other plans for her along the way. Discuss the virtue of obedience. Do you think it was easy for Frances? Write a few paragraphs about a time when you chose obedience—even though you didn't want to—but in the end saw it as the right path.
2. Research the full meaning of a confraternity. Do you think The Missionary Childhood Association is a confraternity? Write a paragraph stating your case. Remember to fill you Mite Box as a member of MCA!

All students:

1. Saint Frances of Rome is known as the patron saint of motorists. This is because legend has it that as Frances would go out at night to tend to the sick, her guardian angel would hold a lantern to guide her to safe travels. Write a prayer to Saint Frances and pray it every time you get into a car this month. Ask her to protect all travelers.
2. Saint Frances has often been compared to Mother Teresa—she saw poor people and because of her faith in Jesus, she helped them. She was a true missionary. Make a list of ideas of how you can live as a missionary every day—in your school, at home, in your parish, and around the world. Pick one thing from the list daily as your special intention upon which to act. Remember: your donations to Missionary Childhood are a great way to be a missionary to children around the world!

Missionary Childhood Association

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