



Saint of the Month



Saint Angela Merici Memorial: January 27

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 Angela Merici, (say Muh—REE chee) telling as much of, or parts of, the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Angela 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
7. To expand children's vocabulary, as appropriate: **orphaned, cherished, sacraments, faith formation, formalized, recruited, status, determination, formalizing, patron, radical, commonplace, perseverance, constrain**

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Angela Merici's story. (Have map posted or globe available to show her location)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Angela Merici. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. ***Pray: Saint Angela, you suffered through the loss of your parents and sister at a young age and still remembered to turn to God for comfort. You accepted the graces he offered you and improved the lives of so many others around you. Help us to follow your example and turn to God in the rough spots in our lives so that we may continue to serve Him wherever He needs us. Amen.***
4. Use the follow up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Angela Merici

Born in 1474 in the area of Lombardy, Italy, Angela Merici and her beloved sister Giana Maria were orphaned when Angela was just ten years old. They moved from their hometown of Desenzano del Garda to Salo to live with their uncle. Though only a distance of twelve miles, it must have seemed like a new world to the sisters. It was not the first major change that Angela would turn to God for help accepting. Not long after the move, Giana passed away suddenly, leaving Angela alone with her uncle. Besides the loss of her cherished sister, Angela's greatest

upset was that Giana had died without the final sacraments of the Church. At the time, there was very little care taken in the religious instruction of children, especially girls. In prayer, Angela asked God to accept the soul of her dear sister into heaven; it is said that she had a vision of just that—Giana in heaven with the angels and saints! When Angel's uncle died, she returned to her hometown. She was 20 years old and needed to make a way for herself in the world. This was not a simple task for a young woman in those days. Again, Angela turned to God. He opened her eyes to the many young girls around her who had little to no education, especially faith formation. Now, Angela faced another challenge: education was very formalized in her day. It was for the rich or for nuns. She was neither. Who would teach all these girls in her town? Where would they go to learn? Angela saw that the girls weren't being helped by the old way of doing things so invented a new way. She recruited other young, unmarried women to help her go out into the streets and round up all the girls they saw and teach them what they themselves knew: to read, write, and love God. These women had little money, no status or power but a determination to help others in Christ's name. They lived in their own houses but would gather for prayer where Angela would remind them, "Reflect that in reality you have a greater need to serve [the poor] than they have of your service." Angela's methods were so successful that she was asked to start her "schools" in other towns. News of Angela and her teachers even traveled to the pope who asked her to come to Rome and take over a group of nuns involved in nursing. Angela declined, knowing that God was not calling her to that work. His request did make her think about formalizing her group of women, however and she put it under the protection of her favorite, or patron saint, calling it Angela's Company of St. Ursula or the Ursulines.

Angela's ideas for education for all women, no matter their station in life were radical at the time. They are commonplace now because she had the courage and perseverance, granted through God's grace, to continue her work, no matter how challenging. Angela reminds us of her approach to change: "Beware of trying to accomplish anything by force, for God has given every single person free will and desires to constrain none; He merely shows them the way, invites them and counsels them."

Saint Angela Merici died at the age of 66. Her feast day is January 27.

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

1. Saint Angela Merici trusted God, even during very difficult times in her life. We don't always remember to do that. Think of a time when you remembered and one that you did not. Compare your feelings about the situation. Resolve to turn to God more.
2. Angela made a difference in her town by educating girls. Why is that so important?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Angela and her sister moved 12 miles to their uncle's home after they were orphaned. For 12 days in a row, say a Hail Mary for children in the missions who have no access to education, entrusting them to St. Angela Merici. Make a daily sacrifice to your MCA Mite Box for them as well.
2. Make a classroom bulletin board with pictures of children from the missions (magazines available from the Mission Office). Place a picture of Saint Angela Merici in the middle. Every day, on paper in the colors of the World Mission Rosary, write a prayer intention for the children. Use pins/tacks to attach them to the board.

Older students:

1. Even the saints have patron saints! Saint Angela's was Saint Ursula. Pick a patron saint for yourself - it's as simple as thinking of something that you are good at or interested in and Googling to find out who has been assigned to be the patron saint of it! Write a prayer to them that explains why you chose them and dedicate yourself to them.
2. As you go to school, look around you and try to identify people who you think may be in need. Are they homeless? Hungry? Lonely? Sad? Have a class discussion about the needs of the people around your town. Find out how your church family is helping to address those needs. Ask your pastor how your class can be of help to one of the ministries doing outreach.