



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint John Kanty
Feast: December 23

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 John Kanty, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that John 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 John Kanty's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint John Kanty. 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 John Kanty

To most people in the United States, Saint John from Kenty—also called John Kanty, Canty or Cantius—is a relatively unknown saint. Yet, this professor priest was deeply admired by someone all of us know, Saint Pope John Paul II. Born just 13 miles from the late Holy Father's hometown in the Polish countryside to Anna and Stanislaus Kanty in 1390, young John showed academic talent at an early age and found himself attending one of the finest schools in the nearby city, Krakow Academy. He went on to study at the same University (Jagiellonian University) that would see the future brilliance of students Nicolas Copernicus, the famed mathematician and astronomer, and Karol Wojtyla, later Saint Pope John Paul II. John Kanty received his bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees and began teaching at his alma mater.

He was known for his kindness not only to his students but also to the poor of Krakow. He gave of himself constantly, sleeping little and eating no meat. He kept only what he absolutely needed of his salary for his basic needs and gave the rest to the poor. His popularity and success at such a young age led other professors to be envious, resulting in a plot to have him wrongly accused of a rules infraction. John was relieved of his teaching job and sent to be a parish priest—something he had been ordained for but for which he had no experience. His new parishioners were less than pleased with the idea of a disgraced professor as their new pastor and they did not give him a warm welcome. Knowing people could not be forced to accept him, John pretended not to notice and simply lived and worked every day with the love of Christ as his guide.

After eight years, John Kanty was cleared of the false charges against him and summoned back to teach in Krakow. His formerly cold parishioners were said to have lined the streets calling after him to stay!

John returned to Krakow and taught Sacred Scripture for the rest of his life. He continued his humble lifestyle and outreach to the poor. A story is told of him arriving at a dinner given by a nobleman in an old, raggedy cassock and being turned away at the door by a servant who thought John's outfit was too frayed to be in such high company. He went home and put on new garb and returned, only to have a servant spill food on him! "No matter," he joked, "My clothes deserve some dinner, too. If it hadn't been for them I wouldn't be here at all."

When John Kanty died, he was considered one of the holiest, well-loved men in the city. He was known for his care for the poor and his special love for students—in mind, body and spirit. John was also known as a great defender of the faith. Not long after his death, his tomb became the destination for many European Catholic pilgrims, praying for his kindly intercession. Throughout his own years in Krakow, Saint Pope John Paul II drew great inspiration from his visits to Saint John Kanty's grave. On his 1997 trip to his homeland, it was no surprise to his fellow Poles that the then-Pope's itinerary included a trip to the tomb of Saint John Kanty.

1. ***Pray: Saint John Kanty, during your life, you were treated unjustly. You bore it with the quiet dignity of a Christian, neither holding a grudge nor seeking to return the offense. Instead, you lived a life focused on Christ and his presence in others, especially the young and the poor. Help us to keep our focus like yours—on a life of holiness and service to the poor, especially children. Amen.***

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

1. Saint John Kanty was treated unjustly—he was accused of something he didn't do and lost his job because of it. How do you feel when something unjust happens to you? To whom can you go to seek justice?
2. How did Saint John Kanty show his humility?
3. Do you feel called to holiness? Do you see the holiness in others? What do you think drew Saint Pope John Paul II to admire Saint John Kanty so much?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Most of us can understand someone who would be kind to the poor and live a life of service. It can be harder to think about someone like Saint John Kanty who chose to live with just the bare necessities of life and give the rest away. As we approach Christmas, make a choice to pare down your "Santa List" a bit; ask Santa to make a contribution to MCA instead.

Older students:

1. Painted on the wall in his room, St. John Kanty had his motto (written in Latin) "*Guard against causing trouble and slandering others, for it is difficult to right the evil done.*" It's easy to understand why this was meaningful to him. Write your own life motto and create a poster to hang in your own room to help you to be true to it every day.

All students:

1. When Saint John Kanty was assigned to a parish, he was very nervous—it was something he had never done before! Still, he put all his energy and heart into it. Today, do something you've never done or do something in a new way. Be of service to someone or reach out to a fellow student who is always alone. Pray to St. John Kanty for the courage! Write or draw a picture about your experience.
2. Go to this website: <https://bit.ly/2OJOojX> to see pictures of Missionary Childhood members in Saint John Kanty's country of Poland celebrating their MCA membership by Christmas Caroling in their towns and neighborhoods. It is one of the most popular MCA activities in Europe! Children sing, ask for donations, and leave a little message about the missions with the people they visit. Organize a Christmas Carol for the Missions Activity at your school or parish like your brothers and sisters in Poland. If your school or faith formation program puts on a Christmas pageant, charge a small admission fee, or sell baked goods and cocoa and donate the funds to MCA to help feed the poor of the missions in honor of Saint John Kanty.

Missionary Childhood Association

66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184 | Tel: 617.779.3871 | Fax: 617.542.1778

www.propfaithboston.org | mheil@propfaithboston.org