



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Julie Billiart
July 12, 1751 — April 8, 1816

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:

- To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
- 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
- To introduce one of our Church's saints, Saint Julie Billiart, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
- To learn that Julie was a saint because she lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
- To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
- To help the children develop good listening skills

Procedure:

- Prepare the children to listen to Saint Julie Billiart's story
- Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Julie Billiart. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners
- Use the follow-up questions
- Present follow-up activity below. (optional) Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Julie Billiart

Saint Julie Billiart was born in 1751 in Cuvilly, France, the fifth of seven children. She was educated by her uncle at a small village schoolhouse. From the start it was clear that Julie's favorite subject was religion. She learned quickly and would continue studying after the lessons were over. By the age of seven, Julie memorized the catechism and would gather groups of friends to teach them about the Catholic faith. She enjoyed sharing the stories of Jesus and was a natural educator. She excelled so rapidly in her knowledge of the catechism that her priest allowed Julie to make her First Communion and Confirmation at age nine, even though most children at that time waited until they were thirteen.

At the age of sixteen, Julie began formally teaching to help support her family, who had fallen on hard times. Her students admired her devotion and compassion.

When she was twenty two, Julie was traumatized when an enemy of her father shot a gun into her house. No one was injured, but the event left Julie paralyzed with fear and unable to walk. Julie did not allow her limited mobility to hinder her devotion to God. She developed a deep prayer life and continued to teach from her couch. Her favorite thing to do was to prepare children for their First Holy Communion. Julie was also very talented at needlework and made lace and cloths for church altars. This provided more income for her family.

1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution. During this time churches and religious orders were forced to close down if they did not agree to practice the new government's form of Catholicism. When a "government" priest was assigned to her village, Julie managed to convince everyone not to take sacraments from him, marking her for persecution. When she was found out, friends smuggled her from house to house in a hay wagon to save her.

In one of her many hiding places, Julie received a visit from a priest who asked her to pray a novena to the Sacred Heart. Julie prayed; on the fifth day, the priest returned and asked her to stand and walk. She did so for the first time in over twenty years!

In 1803 Julie had a vision of Jesus surrounded by a large group of religious women. The Lord spoke to Julie telling her these women were her fellow sisters and she was to open an institute to educate young girls. Shortly after, Julie founded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The charism of the order was to educate poor girls who had little access to schooling. Over the next few years foundations spread across Europe and then to the rest of the world. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur brought education to young women across the globe, who otherwise would have gone without.

In January 1816, Julie became very sick. She died on April 8, 1816 at her motherhouse in Namur. She was beatified in 1906 by Pope Pius X and canonized in 1969 by Pope Paul VI.

Pray: Dear Saint Julie, through your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you received many graces, including the courage to stand up for your faith in dangerous times. Please help me to be as devout and brave as you. I ask for these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.

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

1. When Julie fell ill she continued her deep prayer life. How does the act of prayer help you overcome your hardships?
2. Your membership and sacrifices for the Missionary Childhood Association help to support Sisters in the missions like Saint Julie's Sisters who teach poor children. When you think and pray about children who have no education, how does your MCA membership help you to appreciate your education more?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Draw a picture of Saint Julie Billiart teaching children our faith. Present your picture to your family and tell them about a time that you taught someone about Jesus, just as Saint Julie did.
2. Write a letter to your local Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Tell them how their foundress inspires you to be a missionary through your MCA membership. Include your drawing with your letter. Be sure to also thank them for their service! The address is: Sisters of Notre Dame, 30 Jeffreys Neck Road, Ipswich, MA 01938. Pray a decade of your World Mission Rosary (available from our office) for the Sisters.

Older students:

1. Read about Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, a missionary in Brazil who was martyred in 2005 for standing up for social and environmental rights in the Amazon. Write a short report, song, or play on Sister Dorothy's life and her mission work in Brazil. Answer these questions: What similarities do you see between Sister Dorothy's and Saint Julie's lives? What changes have been made to policies in Brazil because of her work? Go to this link to learn more about Sister Dorothy and her work: <https://bit.ly/3aR36iY>
2. Research the French Revolution. What did it mean for Catholics? How was the church persecuted? How are Christians being persecuted now? What can you do to help them?

All students:

1. Read the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12 in the Bible) After each one discuss how it is related to a missionary's work. What are some ways you can live each Beatitude? For each you perform this month, make a donation to your MCA Mite Box.
2. The slogan of the Sisters of Dame de Namur is: "Oh! How good is the good God!" Look for God's goodness in the people and things around you today and share your findings with your family.
3. The charism of The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur has not changed. Today the sisters are traveling all over the world to bring education to young girls. They work on five continents. Challenge each member of your family to sacrifice a dollar for every continent and donate it to the Missionary Childhood Association to support education in the missions.

Send your Lenten donations to: Missionary Childhood Association 66 Brooks Drive Braintree, MA 02184