



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys January 12

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 Marguerite Bourgeoys, (say BOOR'zhä) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Marguerite 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 Marguerite Bourgeoys' story (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Marguerite. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners
3. **Pray: Saint Marguerite, you stayed strong in your faith and your service to others even when it was hard. You stood up for the weak, the poor, and those who were alone in a new place. Help us to remember to be the face of Christ to all we meet, as you were. Amen.**
4. Use the follow-up questions (below)
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted

Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

Marguerite Bourgeoys, born on Good Friday of 1620, was the sixth of twelve children. Her father was a merchant—today, we may call him a salesman—and her mother was a homemaker. They were solidly middle class and Marguerite and her siblings lived a comfortable, happy life.

At the age of nineteen, Marguerite attended a procession at church in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary on her feast day, October 7. When she saw the statue of the Blessed Mother, she felt a deep calling to be like Mary and serve God. When she returned home that day, everyone remarked upon the change in Marguerite. She carried a new desire and it showed.

Marguerite attempted to join two different orders of Sisters but was refused entry. She eventually joined a lay order

of women who were dedicated to teaching and serving the poor in her town of Troyes, France. Though they were associated with the Congregation of Notre-Dame, these lay women did not join the cloistered Sisters and live behind the convent walls in a life of solitude and prayer as Religious Sisters of the time did.

When she was 32, Marguerite was invited to travel to the new colony of Montreal, Canada by its mayor. He was looking for someone to be a teacher there. After a long boat journey, Marguerite arrived to find that, because many children did not survive the colony's harsh conditions, there were few students. She went to work with a local nurse to change this situation. She was soon teaching many more children and their mothers, who had been sent from France as uneducated orphans to populate the colony. These mothers also needed to learn homemaking skills, so Marguerite set about teaching them how to cook, clean, and raise their children. In addition she began a free trade school to help older women learn skills so that they could earn a living. They also needed to learn the very basics of our faith so that they could teach them to their own children at home.

Marguerite knew she would need more teachers and made the difficult trip back and forth to France twice to recruit women to join her new community. It was during one of these trips that her French bishop tried to close down her work, thinking that Religious women belonged in a convent in prayer. Marguerite held firm to her idea that women had more to give in service to the community in the New World and eventually won him over. Thus the Congregation of Notre-Dame of Montreal was born.

Marguerite Bourgeoys died in 1700, having seen her order welcome women from various backgrounds: French Canadian, First Nations, and English. Her work and her order is very much alive in Canada, the United States, Japan, Central America, France, and Cameroon.

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

1. Saint Marguerite thought she was called to be a Sister but was rejected by two orders. She persevered, eventually founding her own order. How do you think she felt at first?
2. Marguerite lived at a time when women were not allowed to do many things yet she achieved so much. How was she able to do all that she did?
3. What are some of the personal qualities that Marguerite Bourgeoys must have had?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Marguerite taught young girls who had never learned simple things like how to make a bed or sweep a floor properly. Pick a chore at your home and do it for one week. Pray to Saint Marguerite to remind you!
2. Young Marguerite was inspired by Our Lady of the Rosary. Pray a decade of the World Mission Rosary (available at no charge through the MCA office) every week this month with your class.

Older students:

1. Marguerite spoke French. Learn the Hail Mary—the prayer of the International Missionary Childhood Association—in French (<http://bit.ly/1khMxl7>). When you have mastered it, donate \$1 per person in your class to the missions in Marguerite's honor.
2. Saint Marguerite changed the lives of the girls and women she taught. Think of someone who has changed your life. Write them a letter of thanks today.

All students:

1. One of the early tasks undertaken by Marguerite when she arrived in Montreal was to repair the only chapel so the colonists would have a place to worship God. She also turned a stone stable into her school. Many students in the missions have no access to a chapel or school, or theirs is in a state of disrepair. Chapels and schools such as these can be seen on our new mission app for Android or Apple platforms. **Download Missio!** For more information, go to missio.org and see the world changing work of missionaries that you can fund directly as a class, school, or parish!