



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



**Saint Mariana de Jesús de Paredes, O.F.M.
May 26**

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 Mariana de Jesús de Paredes, O.F.M. telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Mariana 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 Mariana's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. **Pray: Saint Mariana, although you experienced hardships in your own childhood, you remained devoted to a life of prayer and service to others. Help us to remember that when we keep God in our hearts through prayers, service to others will come naturally because it is His Will. Amen.**
4. Use the follow-up questions (below)
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Mariana de Jesús de Paredes, O.F.M.

Mariana de Paredes was born in 1618 in the city of Quito, Ecuador. Both of her parents were from aristocratic Spanish families. Mariana was the youngest of eight children and was born to her parents late in their lives. Many witnesses claimed that on the night of her birth, the night sky put on a dazzling display of light and stars. Both of Mariana's parents died when she was quite young, leaving her to be raised by her older sister and the sister's husband.

When Mariana was still a small child, she showed a great interest in having an active prayer life. She would often sacrifice her food and eat only the Eucharist, offering her hunger to God as a blessing for others. Young Mariana also loved the Blessed Mother very much and would pray to be able to reflect the light of Christ's love to others like Mary did. We know this because like many young girls, Mariana liked to keep a diary. Her piety was amazing!

At ten years old, Mariana decided that she was meant for life in a convent and took her own vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. She wanted to be a missionary and teach others about Jesus. After two failed attempts to join different convents, it was decided that Mariana would continue to live with her sister and brother-in-law as a hermit—secluded away from the rest of the household, living a life of prayer and service. She gave all she had to the poor, took the habit of the Third Order of Franciscans and vowed to live a regulated life of prayer, fasting, and acts of mercy.

Despite the fact that her own education was somewhat limited, Mariana managed to start the first free clinic in Quito as well as a kindergarten for native children where they learned to read, write, sing, play the flute, and most importantly to Mariana, pray to God.

Mariana was known as a Mystic—she could “read hearts” (know people’s true thoughts) - and was known to perform miraculous healings during her lifetime by making the Sign of the Cross over the sick. In 1645, tragedy struck Quito in the form of a major earthquake and the serious public health problems that followed. Many people in those days saw these things as signs from God that the city was full of sinners. Mariana publicly offered her life to God as a sacrifice so that the disasters would stop. The tremors stopped, order and health returned to the city and Mariana died soon thereafter. She was twenty-six years old. It is said that a white lily sprang up from her grave, earning her the nickname “The Lily of Quito”.

When Mariana was canonized in 1950, Pope Pius XII said, “May the world learn of the energies hidden in prayer and sacrifice.”

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

1. Saint Mariana de Jesús de Paredes, O.F.M. loved to pray daily knowing that it brought her closer to God. She especially loved the Blessed Mother. Who is your favorite saint to ask for help?
2. Mariana was very young when she decided that she would dedicate her life to God. How was she so sure?
3. Mariana was of Spanish descent; this means she was considered to be of the “upper class”. When she started a school for native Ecuadorian children she put herself in the service of the “lower class”. How was that reflecting the love of Christ?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Mariana prayed every day to the Blessed Mother. Missionary Childhood members are asked to pray one Hail Mary every day for other children of the world. Make a sign for your bedroom at home to remind you to pray your Hail Mary daily.
2. Mariana often went without eating and prayed to God instead as an offering for others. Skip your afternoon snack and let your stomach rumble a bit. Say a pray for hungry children and sacrifice the money saved for the missions.

Older students:

1. Saint Mariana was known to fast for long periods of time. Pick an evening and skip dinner and snacks. Write down how you feel—irritated? Tired? Record how many times your stomach grumbles. Share your writing in small groups in class. Add up the number of stomach grumbles and make an offering to the missions for each one!
2. Saint Mariana started a kindergarten to teach little ones. Volunteer to work with the younger students at your school or parish. Help them learn to pray the World Mission Rosary.

All students:

Keep a diary like Saint Mariana did. Write down every time you pray or do an act of mercy. Also write down every time you gossip, say a bad word, or misbehave. Do this for one week. Which list is longer? Which list will bring you closer to Jesus? Pray to Saint Mariana for help!