



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Mary MacKillop of the Cross

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 Mary MacKillop of the Cross, (say Muh-KILL-up) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Mary MacKillop was named 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 Mary MacKillop's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Mary MacKillop. Elaborate/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 Mary MacKillop of the Cross

Mary Helen MacKillop was born to Alexander and Flora Mackillop in 1842 near Melbourne, Australia. Alexander and Flora had emigrated independently of each other from Scotland to Australia where they met and married. Mary was the first of their eight children. The MacKillops were a faith-filled family and raised their children to be close to God and the Church.

Though he was a well-educated man, Mary's father never seemed to be able to hold a steady job. Often, the family depended on the children working at odd jobs for income. When she was fourteen, Mary took a job as a clerk in a stationery store. At age eighteen, because she had been well-educated by her father and at school, Mary was able to secure a job as a governess, caring for and teaching the children of an aunt and uncle. It was already in her heart to help those in need, so Mary would also include the children of the workers on her relative's farm—many of whom were indigenous Australians and not allowed an education—in her lessons. It was during this time that she met Father Julian Tenison Woods, who would have a profound impact on her vocation.

Mary left the family farm and became a school teacher in another part of Australia. Soon, she opened her own boarding school. Many of her brothers and sisters joined her to teach and work at the school. Because her friend,

Father Woods, was also very concerned about the education of poor children in his part of Australia, he invited Mary and her siblings to return to Penola, site of the aunt and uncle's farm, to open a Catholic school. With the help of her sisters Annie and Lexie as fellow teachers and her brother, John, as a handyman, the school opened with 50 students in an old stable. During this time, Mary dedicated her life to God and the service of His children.

On November 21, 1866, on the Feast of the Presentation of Mary, several other women joined Mary and her sisters and began to call themselves the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, or the Josephites, and dedicated themselves to the education of children from poor families. The women began to wear brown habits, or outfits. Because of their name (The Josephites) and the color of their dress (brown), they became colloquially known as "The Brown Joeys". Mary took the name Mother Mary. The new Sisters adopted a "Rule of Life" that emphasized a dependence on God's providence, their own poverty, and a willingness to go wherever they were needed. Within five years, 130 Sisters were working in 40 schools and charitable institutions.

Mother Mary's life was not without hardships. The friendship with Father Woods was broken when Mother went to Rome to seek the Pope's approval of The Josephite order. The Holy Father made some changes to their "Rule of Life," which Mother Mary and Father Wood had previously agreed upon. Father felt that Mother Mary did not stand up strongly enough for their mutual "Rules" and broke off their friendship. Although no longer associates, when Father Woods angered some of his local priests, they decided to punish him by hurting the Josephites. They declared that the Sisters were no longer able to govern themselves. When Mother Mary refused to go along with this, she was excommunicated. This was a dark time for Mary—she was not allowed any contact with Catholics. A kind Jewish family took her in and some friendly Jesuit priests saw to her spiritual needs in secret. Within a few months, the bishop relented and lifted the penalty on Mary. She was free to practice her faith and went on to become Superior General of the Josephite order she founded. Even a paralyzing stroke and years in a wheelchair did not hamper her good work to spread high levels of education across Australia. She was known for her kindness, determination and affection for all of God's children.

Saint Mary MacKillop of the Cross died on August 8, 1909. She was canonized on October 17, 2010. Her Sisters continue their work however they are needed across Australia, New Zealand, and Peru.

Pray: Saint Mary MacKillop, you valued education and worked to make sure all children had access to it. Help us to be grateful for our teachers and our school. Remind us to reach out in prayer and sacrifice to those who may not be blessed with the opportunity to go to school. Amen.

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

1. Saint Mary MacKillop of the Cross worked hard to support others all her life. What ways can we support others around us who may be experiencing difficulties every day?
2. Mary's family life was not perfect. Do you sometimes get upset because your family's life is not? If so, how can you overcome this desire for perfection so that you can enjoy what you have?
3. Mary must have been very sad when her friendship with Father Woods split apart. How would you begin to fix a broken friendship?

Follow-up Activities:

All students:

1. November is Thanksgiving Month! In gratitude for your education, write a thank you note to a teacher and tell them that you will pray to Saint Mary MacKillop to help them be the best they can be!
2. The "Brown Joeys" have travelled 8,226 miles from their founding in Penola, Australia to their work in Lima, Peru. Collect 1 penny for every mile (\$82.26) per class and send it to MCA for children's education in the missions. Help more missionaries go wherever they are needed—just like Saint Mary MacKillop!