



Saint of the Month



Saint Mathilda of Ringelheim March 14

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 Mathilda of Ringelheim, telling as much of, or parts of, the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Mathilda 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
7. To expand children's vocabulary, as appropriate: **holiness, piety, converting, monasteries, accusations, favoring, struggling, petty, dignity, disarray**

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Mathilda of Ringelheim's story.
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Mathilda. 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.

Pray: *Mathilda, although you tried to please God in your life, you still made many mistakes. Through the grace of forgiveness, you were reconciled with God and your family. Help us to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes. Help us to forgive others who cause us grief. Amen.*

Saint Mathilda of Ringelheim

So often, we look to the saints' lives for examples of a life well-lived; we want someone to look up to, someone to show us a path to holiness. Although we often find it, how much more satisfying is it when we find also the stories of the mistakes that these holy people made as well? We can all relate much better, it seems, to someone who is shown to be less than perfect, as we are.

Such is the case of St. Mathilda of Ringelheim. Born about 895, the daughter of a German count, Mathilda was raised by her grandmother from whom she learned a love of hard work and spiritual reading. She would have been very happy to spend her life devoted to God but while she was quite young her parents married her off to a

German nobleman named Henry. Soon thereafter, Henry became King of Germany. Although this made Mathilda the Queen, she lived a life of simple piety. She found time daily for prayer, visiting and comforting the sick, caring for prisoners and converting sinners. Her husband, the King, told her many times that he was a better person and a better King because she was his wife. Mathilda founded many monasteries and was free to use the treasures of the kingdom for her works of mercy; such was the love and respect that her husband held for her and her acts of charity. Mathilda was known for her generosity – she did not wait for Lent to practice intense prayer and almsgiving. It was her way of life. She was known to sneak out of her bed in the middle of the night to go to church to pray!

Henry died unexpectedly in 936. After his death, Mathilda decided to live her life for God alone. She called her priest to celebrate a Mass for Henry’s soul and at its conclusion she gave the priest all the jewels that she wore. She did this to show that she was giving up the things of the world.

If Mathilda’s story ended there, we might be tempted to say, “That’s great, but what does it have to do with me?” Well, Mathilda was not perfect. Her greatest mistake was in playing favorites among her five children. Although one son, Otto, was named in Henry’s will to succeed him, Mathilda favored her other son, Henry, and set in motion a family feud that ended in unfounded accusations of theft to fund her charitable work and disarray for the kingdom. Eventually, the two sons banded together against their mother and banished her to a monastery. While there, she offered up her sufferings in penance for her mistake of favoring one child over the other. They eventually forgave their mother and invited her back to live with them. Mathilda stayed in the monastery, continuing her life of prayer and sacrifice.

How often do we make the mistake of favoring one person over another because of petty things? We want to be with a more popular crowd, so we shun those who don’t “fit in”; we want to be seen as smart, so we stay away from those who struggle in school.

Perhaps the lesson to be learned from the life of St. Mathilda is that everyone has value, no matter who they are, no matter what their talents seem to be (or not to be!). By giving everyone a chance to show us what their God-given talents are, we allow them the dignity to grow, in His love, to be the person that God intended them to be. St. Mathilda also teaches us that we can make up for our sins and mistakes by offering up our little sufferings for those who have so much less than we do. Her sons teach us that no matter the mistake, if we forgive one another, we can live in peace, as God intended.

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

1. How is St. Mathilda an example of the kind of life we can all strive to live? What should we try to avoid in her story?
2. How does it feel when someone “in charge” (a teacher, a parent, or even someone seen as “more popular”) plays favorites and it is not you? What about when it is you – how do you think others feel?
3. Think about a mistake that you’ve made in your own life. What can you do to make up for it?
4. Did Mathilda trust God? How do you know?
5. It can be hard to forgive someone. Does hearing them say “I’m sorry” help? Does it matter how the apology is said? Why?

Follow-up Activities:

1. In Mathilda’s home country of Germany, Missionary (Holy) Childhood Association members have a tradition of going door to door singing Christmas carols, dressed as the Three Wise Men, on the Feast of the Epiphany to raise funds and awareness about the missions. Plan a public MCA celebration to let your community know about your MCA work—an open house focusing on mission countries with student made displays, a walk-a-thon for MCA, a living World Mission Rosary. Go to this page on the Vatican website: <http://www.news.va/en/news/europegermany-from-the-star-singers-a-blessing-f-2> to see the work of MCA’s Star Singers of Germany featured.
2. Write a prayer asking for the guidance of St. Mathilda this Lent to learn to ask for forgiveness.
3. Write a skit, poem, or song about the conflict between Mathilda and her sons. Perform it (or videotape it and play it) for other classes.
4. Read Colossians 3:12 -13. Start a private Lenten journal about forgiveness. Write about God’s forgiveness of you and your forgiveness of others. How has it changed your heart this Lent?