



## Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



**Saint Peter Mary Chanel**  
**April 28**

**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 Peter Mary Chanel (say sha-NEL) telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Peter was a saint because he 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 Peter Mary Chanel's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Peter Mary Chanel. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. **Pray: Saint Peter Mary Chanel, from the time you were a young boy you knew that a sure way to Jesus was to pray to Mary. Help us to follow your example and be willing to go wherever God's path takes us as we serve Him in this world, leading others in His way. We pray for Mary's guidance as you did. Amen.**
4. Use the follow-up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

### Saint Peter Mary Chanel

Peter Chanel was born the fifth of eight children of a family with a small parcel of land in south-east France. As he grew up he took a share in the work of the farm. With France still recovering from the aftermath of the Revolution, his early education was rather fragmented. He made his First Holy Communion on March 23, 1817. Soon thereafter, his parish priest began to read to him letters from the missions of the time – America. Peter was fascinated; he later said, "It was that year that I formed the idea of going to the foreign missions."

Thanks to the concern of his parish priest who recognized his potential, Chanel began his secondary study at the age of 16. In July 1827, he was ordained a priest at age 24, and was known for his unfailingly cheerful disposition and his fervent devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus. For him, the way to finding Jesus was through Mary. He would do God's work in her way. After a year as assistant in a large parish, he was placed in charge of a small country parish that had been sadly neglected since the Revolution. With a characteristic low-key approach, plus tact, compassion, and prayer, in three years he had transformed it.

In 1836, a great event took place, which was the turning point in the life of Father Chanel . “Oh! The glad tidings I have to give you,” he wrote to a friend. “Our Holy Father, Gregory XVI, approved our Marist Society on 29<sup>th</sup> April, and entrusted it with the Missions of Oceania. I manifested my old longings, and now my heart throbs with joy as my name is put on the roll for the first draft of missionaries. We shall, no doubt, encounter many dangers during the journey, but I am not the least afraid; I already offered to God the sacrifice of my life. One thing alone frightens me: my unworthiness for this apostolic vocation. I sorely need God’s help and Mary’s assistance; this is why I am begging for prayers on every side. I rely on yours.”

Peter Mary Chanel was assigned to the island of Futuna and landed there in November, 1837; no Christian missionary had ever set foot on the island. He had to learn a very difficult local language in order to preach the Good News to the natives. At first, his missionary actions were tolerated by the local king, Niuluki, but once the king’s son had been baptized, things changed. Niuluki began to feel threatened by Peter and was worried that as his people became Christians, they would no longer be blindly obedient to his laws. When one of his henchmen suggested they kill Peter, the king did nothing to stop it. Peter Mary Chanel was killed just three years after his arrival on Futuna as a missionary.

Saint Peter Mary Chanel’s Feast Day is April 28. He is the first martyr of Oceania.

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

1. Saint Peter Mary Chanel had to learn a difficult new language in order to teach others about Jesus.. How would you tell someone about Jesus if you could not use your words?
2. Peter was curious about the missions, even at a very young age. Why is it important to understand how other people live? How does this help our faith?
3. Even though the king did not kill Peter himself, he did nothing to stop it. Is he still responsible?

**Follow-up Activities:**

**Younger students:**

1. Peter had to take a boat to get to the island of Futuna. Write prayer intentions for children in the missions on a piece of paper and fold it into an origami sailboat (instructions attached). “Sail” them to Saint Peter Mary Chanel by tacking them to a bulletin board, hanging them from a string across your window, or sitting them on your classroom altar.
2. The Island of Futuna currently has a population of about 5,000 people. Can your class sacrifice \$50 for MCA this month? That’s one penny in honor of each person on Futuna.

**Older students:**

1. Saint Peter Mary Chanel had to learn a new language to speak to the natives of Futuna. When was the last time you learned a new word? In computer class, look up how to say Jesus in six different languages. Practice using them every day during April. On April 28th, present them to your class. Which do you like best? Why?
2. Saint Peter Mary Chanel travelled 10,214 from his home in Ain, France to Futuna to serve God. Can you class honor his mission travel and raise a penny for every mile? Your goal is \$102.14 per class!

**All students:**

1. Saint Peter Mary Chanel had to learn many new words and understand how to use them properly in order to communicate with others on Futuna. Words have enormous power. Think about the words *I* and *you*. Now, insert the word love between them; then insert the word hate. How do you feel when you say them? How do you feel when you hear them? This month, in honor of Saint Peter Mary Chanel and his mastery of so many words in a difficult language, be mindful of your words. Are they harsh or gentle? In order to show those around you that you have Christ in your heart, choose your words carefully.
2. The Marist Fathers (founded by Saint Peter Mary Chanel) have a presence in the Archdiocese of Boston. Call Fr. Walter Gaudreau at 617-426-4448 to arrange for a Marist Father to speak to your students about the ongoing Marist Missions in Oceania and the legacy of St. Peter Mary Chanel. The Marist Sisters are in Waltham. Call Sister Catia Conterno at 781-893-0149 for a school visit from the Sisters as well.