



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Wulfstan of Worcester January 19

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:
 - lives like Jesus
 - teaches others about Jesus by their example
 - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Saint Wulfstan, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Wulfstan 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 Saint Wulfstan's story
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Wulfstan. Elaborate or 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 Wulfstan

Saint Wulfstan of Worcester was born in Itchington, England to a father named Æthelstan (meaning "noble stone") and a mother named Wulfgifu (meaning "gift of the wolf"). To name their son, they combined parts of both their names and christened him Wulfstan — "wolfstone". As a child, Wulfstan was educated in a monastery. There, he fell in love with the beautifully decorated manuscripts of the Psalms and the sacramentary, the book of prayers used at Mass.

Wulfstan was a humble lad and a serious student. That did not prevent him from enjoying a good time with his peers, competing in races and athletic games. Although a village girl had her heart set on becoming his wife, Wulfstan heard God's call and dedicated his life to service in the Church as a monk.

He was known for his humility. Even after being named the Bishop of Worcester, he continued to dress simply, in lamb's skin. When one of his fellow bishops teased him that he could be wearing something much fancier like beaver or sable pelts, he said that since he worshipped the Lamb of God, he would be content with the simple skins and not those of other "craftier beasts".

Wulfstan was also known for his devotion to prayer, especially the Psalms that he fell in love with as a boy. He was known to recite them aloud as he traveled, sometimes to the consternation of his travel companions! He also made a habit of stopping to pray in each and every church that he passed, to show people that time spent with God was always time well spent.

This is not to say that he did not value people—Wulfstan was mainly responsible for stopping the slave trade in the city of Bristol, England. People who had fallen onto hard times and become landless and poor were being captured and sold as slaves to work in Ireland. With his faith as his guide, Wulfstan stood up for his marginalized brothers and sisters and won over his opponents, putting an end to the practice. Wulfstan had little care for secular matters. If called into court to be present for a matter, the saint would often nod off and sleep during cases that did not pertain to faith, practicing a “holy indifference” to the ways of the world.

He is known for rebuilding many churches, giving beautiful homilies, and for being a vegetarian!

Saint Wulfstan died in 1095 and was canonized in 1203.

Pray: Lord God, You gave your servant Saint Wulfstan the courage to stand up for others and to fight against injustice in a way that helped people to hear the truth while continuing to admire the messenger. Help us always to speak Your words with love and kindness, and with true faithfulness, always leading others to You. Amen.

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

1. Saint Wulfstan lived at a time when the French had taken over England and replaced all English Bishops with French ones, except one—Wulfstan. Why do you think that happened?
2. Why did Wulfstan’s humility make him popular?
3. Wulfstan managed to stand up against slavery and keep the admiration of people on both sides of the issue. Why is this an important gift?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Saint Wulfstan never passed a church without stopping to pray. Adopt a form of this devotion—every time you pass a church, synagogue, or mosque, ask God to bless the people who worship there.
2. One of the things that made Saint Wulfstan famous was the number of churches he rebuilt after they had been destroyed. Use your mission bank this month and sacrifice so that children in the missions can have a small chapel built in which to learn and worship.

Older students:

1. Saint Wulfstan loved the Psalms and used to pray them out loud. Memorize a Psalm from the Bible and recite it for your family. Tell them why you chose that Psalm.
2. Saint Wulfstan was a Benedictine monk who lived by the motto of “Prayer and Labor”. Members of Missionary Childhood, are asked to pray—a Hail Mary every day—and work—sacrifice by doing chores, or give up something they like—for the good of others. Write a story about your own experience as an Missionary Childhood member, comparing your own prayers and works to that of Saint Wulfstan.

All students:

1. As a family, honor Saint Wulfstan and eat a meatless meal. Give the money you would have spent on the evening meal’s meat to the missions.
2. As a very active bishop, Saint Wulfstan was known to be constantly traveling to every parish in his diocese on pastoral visits. Imagine Cardinal Seán doing the same thing! He would go to over 250 parishes across 2,465 square miles! Run a fundraiser for Missionary Childhood and challenge your fellow students: can you have a Crazy Hair Day and raise \$1 for every parish (over 250!) in the Archdiocese? Challenge each student in your Catholic school or parish to sacrifice \$1 for children in the missions. Dress in the colors of the World Mission Rosary and pray for “your” continent that day!