



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto To be Canonized May 13, 2017

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 our Church's saints, Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Francisco and Jacinta will soon be saints because they 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 help the children develop a knowledge and love for Mary, our Mother, and the Rosary.

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Francisco and Jacinta's story (Have map posted or globe available).
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Bl. Francisco and Jacinta. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. ***Pray: Blessed Francisco and Jacinta, teach us how to love Jesus and Mary as you did, to do little acts of love for God, and to pray the rosary for the Church and those who are far away from God. Help us to become witnesses to the love of God and of the tenderness of Mary. Amen.***
4. Use the follow-up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto

Francisco Marto was born June 11, 1908. His sister, Jacinta, followed two years later on March 11, 1910 as last of the children of Manuel and Olimpia Marto. They were born into a family of sheep farmers in rural Portugal. Francisco loved games and playing with other children, always happy for the winner no matter who it was. He loved nature and animals. Once, he gave a penny, all the money he had, to a friend for a captured bird so that he could set it free. He had a mischievous nature and was known to pull pranks on his older brother.

Jacinta Marto charmed all who knew her. She was energetic and loved to dance. Jacinta took a special delight in flowers and loved to gather them, making bouquets for her favorite cousin and friend, Lucia. Both Francisco and Jacinta prayed the rosary every day before lunch, but to make more time for play, they shortened it to the words "Our Father" at the beginning of each decade, followed by "Hail Mary" ten times. This way of praying the rosary would soon change.

When their cousin Lucia was old enough to pasture her family's sheep she had less time to play with Jacinta. Missing her friend, Jacinta pestered her mother to let her and Francisco to take some of their sheep to the same pasture as Lucia. In the spring of 1916, as

the children watched their sheep, the Angel of Peace appeared to them asking them to pray with him and sacrifice for the reparation of sinners. He appeared again in midsummer with the same request. In a final appearance at summer's end, the angel held a bleeding Host over a chalice and gave the children Holy Communion. These visitations from the angel readied the children spiritually for the Marian apparitions to come.

On May 13, 1917, the Blessed Mother appeared to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta in the valley of Cova da Iria, near Fatima, as they were tending their sheep.

Our Lady addressed the pain in the world at that time—World War I and the spread of Communism—and asked the children to pray the rosary often, saying: “Through the Rosary, you can stop wars.” She also renewed the request for the children to make sacrifices and to offer them for the conversion of sinners. The children listened and prayed often. They sometimes gave their lunches to beggars, going without food themselves. They offered up their daily sorrows for an end to the war and for those who were far away from God. Mary appeared to the children monthly, each time on the 13th day.

By the third apparition, the mayor of the district began to discredit these apparitions by intimidating the children. He tried to bully them into admitting they lied, threatened to boil them in oil if they withheld Our Lady's “secret”, and jailed them to keep them from their appointment with Mary on the day of the fourth apparition. Bravely, the children kept their appointment.

As the children spoke of their experiences, word spread and townspeople began to accompany them to the valley. The crowds grew when it became known that the Blessed Mother promised a miracle on October 13th in order to prove that the children were telling the truth.

The night before the 13th, it rained heavily, soaking not only the ground but also the pilgrims who made their way to Fátima. At noon on the following day, those present witnessed the “Miracle of the Sun”: they saw it spin, change colors, and appear to be coming down to earth. Miraculously, many people reported being able to look at the sun without their eyes hurting. In addition, the ground and all things surrounding the area became completely dry.

In October of the following year, Francisco and Jacinta became seriously ill with the Spanish flu. Mary appeared to them again and said she would take them to heaven soon. Bed-ridden, Francisco requested Communion. The following day, April 14, 1919, he died. Jacinta also never regained her health. She died February 20, 1920.

Saint Pope John Paul II beatified the Marto siblings on May 13, 2000 calling them “two candles which God lit to illuminate mankind in its dark and anxious hours.” Pope Francis canonized Jacinta and Francisco Marto on May 13, 2017.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Francisco and Jacinta were average children growing in their love for Mary and her Son. How do you think they felt when the Mary appeared to them? How would you feel if Mary appeared to you?
2. The three children of Fatima were bullied and made fun of for saying that “a lady” was appearing to them. What gave the children courage to continue to speak and converse with her? Would you have that courage?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Francisco and Jacinta were inspired by Our Lady of Fatima to pray for sinners and peace in the world. Pray a decade of the World Mission Rosary (available through the MCA office) for the same.
2. Perform a small sacrifice (give up your favorite snack, a trip to the movies, etc.) for those who are far away from God. Offer the money you saved to your MCA Bank for children around the world who are hungry, physically, and spiritually.

Older students:

1. Host a Marian prayer service (provided with May MCA e-newsletter) during the month of May in your school or parish. Make a World Mission Rosary with loops of construction paper to lead the procession.

All students: Learn the prayer that the Angel of Peace taught the children at Fatima and recite it during May: “My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.”