



## Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



### The Korean Martyrs Feast Day: September 20

**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 groups of saints, The Korean Martyrs telling as much of, or parts of, the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that The Korean Martyrs are 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

#### Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to The Korean Martyrs' story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story . Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. **Pray: (Spoken by Pope Francis at the beatification of more Korean Martyrs in 2014)** May the prayers of all the Korean Martyrs, in union with those of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, obtain for us the grace of perseverance in faith and in every good work, holiness, and purity of heart, and apostolic zeal in bearing witness to Jesus in this beloved country (of Korea), throughout Asia, and to the ends of the earth.
4. Use the follow-up questions (below).
5. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

#### The Korean Martyrs

During the early 17th century, all of Korea was a closed society based on Confucianism. There were very strict social separations between the nobility (and therefore educated or intellectual) class and the commoners, who were the majority. Commoners paid most of the taxes, provided a workforce, and even staffed the military.

During this time some Christian literature written in Chinese by Jesuits for their mission work in China, was brought into the country. It was read and discussed by the upper-class and condemned as being heterodox, that is, not conforming with the accepted cultural beliefs enforced by the ruling dynasty.

Despite this a local Church began. When a Chinese priest secretly entered the country just twelve years later, he found about 4,000 people who identified themselves as Catholics even though they had never seen a priest! The

Church had risen from the faith of lay people. The new believers called themselves “Friends of the Teaching of God in Heaven”. In their familiar Confucian way of thought, “friends” was the one term that implied equality.

Catholics coming together to worship without any distinction of class was seen by the hierarchy of society as a threat. Persecutions began—the rulers felt that if they made life difficult for some Catholics, most would give up on this new faith. People were jailed, even tortured and put to death, all because they would not renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. They were young and old, married and single, people from all walks of life who simply loved God more than all else. These trials went on for almost 100 years and close to 10,000 people were killed for their faith. One estimate says that 25% of all Catholics were wiped out. Yet the faith grew.

In 1984, St. John Paul II canonized 103 of these martyrs, including Father Andrew Kim Taegŏn, the first native born Korean Catholic priest. He was 25 at the time of his death. The martyrs’ feast day is September 20. Pope Francis, on his trip to South Korea in 2014, beatified 124 Korean Martyrs. This brings them one step closer to being named saints.

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

1. Since everyone in Heaven is technically a saint, why is it important that we know some of them by name?
2. The Korean Martyrs’ story shows that its not just adults who are called to witness to their faith. What does it mean as a youth to be a “public Catholic”?
3. According to many of the individual martyr’s stories, they prayed publicly to the end. How does it feel to pray publicly (not in church) when you know others may see you—for instance, saying grace at a restaurant with your friends?

**Follow-up Activities:**

*Younger students:*

1. There are 103 Korean Martyrs who are named saints. Collect 103 pennies from each student and put them in your classroom bank for MCA and the missions. Don’t have a classroom bank? Email [mheil@propfaithboston.org](mailto:mheil@propfaithboston.org)!
2. Make a list of five ways that you can make sure that people around you know that you are proud to be Catholic. Then act on them!

*Older students:*

1. While Pope Francis was in Korea, he said this of the martyrs: They knew the cost of discipleship ... and were willing to make great sacrifices...” He spoke of learning the lesson of sacrifice from the martyrs in our own time, which looks more toward materialism and self-satisfaction. "Their example has much to say to us who live in societies where, alongside immense wealth, dire poverty is silently growing; where the cry of the poor is seldom heeded," he said. Make a list of at least five ways that you can help hear the ‘cry of the poor’ through the Missionary Childhood Association, then act on them this month.

*All students:*

1. Show yourself as “Public Catholics”! Do you have a chain link fence at your school or parish? Using small green, red, white, blue, and yellow hard plastic cups (like Solo cups) form a World Mission Rosary by inserting the cups into the links of the fence. You will need 11 green, 11 red, 16 white (11 for the decade for Europe and 5 for the “beads” that start the rosary), 11 blue, and 10 yellow. Craft the cross out of 6 cups of any color. Pray the rosary outside for world peace, especially on the divided Korean Peninsula.
2. Here in the Archdiocese of Boston, the Korean Catholic Community worships at what was Corpus Christi Church at 45 Ash Street in Newton. It is now called Saint Antoine Daveluy (say Dah-vo-lee), named for the French missionary Bishop who was canonized as one of the original Korean Martyrs. For more information on the Church in Korea and the Korean Martyrs, please contact Mr. Dominic Choo ([kccb001@yahoo.com](mailto:kccb001@yahoo.com)) or the Principal of the Korean Catholic Community’s Sunday School Program, Ms. Christina Taborsky ([Christina.taborsky@gmail.com](mailto:Christina.taborsky@gmail.com)).