



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Venerable Henriette Delille

Goal: To provide a lesson for children about a saint—or someone on the path to sainthood—who exemplifies 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-to-be, Venerable Henriette Delille, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Henriette 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

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Henriette Delille's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Venerable Henriette. 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.

Venerable Henriette Delille

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1812, Henriette Delille lived all her life in New Orleans, Louisiana. Henriette's mother was an free woman of color and her father was a white Frenchman. She had one sister and two brothers, one of whom died in infancy. Among Henriette's relatives was her great, great grandmother who was a slave from West Africa. The family lived in the French Quarter of New Orleans near Saint Louis Cathedral, which was partially built with donations from the Propagation of the Faith, the "big brother" Pontifical Mission Society to the Missionary Childhood Association!

Henriette was trained by her mother in the Catholic faith, French literature, music, and dancing in the hopes that she would marry a wealthy, cultured man and grow her own family. Henriette had other ideas.

In 1827, and at the age of 14, Henriette was invited by a local Sister to teach at a Catholic school for young girls of color. Her love for and service to the poor quickly absorbed her time and cause discord with Henriette's mother, who wanted her to settle down with a family.

When Henriette was 22 years old, her mother suffered a nervous breakdown from which the doctors said she would never recover. Henriette was left in charge of a considerable amount of money. After making sure that her mother would be cared for properly for the rest of her life, Henriette sold the rest of the family's possessions and founded a small group of sisters, calling them the Sisters of the Presentation. There were nine

other mixed-race women in the original group who shared the tasks of caring for the poor and sick of the area and teaching both free and enslaved children and adults. They also took older adult women into their home who needed more than just daily care and so are credited with starting the first American Catholic home for the elderly.

Henriette was very devout and loved God very much. Because of her love for Jesus and for the sake of the Gospel, she was determined to help those in need. Her life's motto was "I believe in God, I hope In God. I want to live, love, and die for God."

In 1836, Henriette drew up the rules and regulations for devout Christian women, which would eventually become the Society of the Holy Family. The group was founded for the purposes of nursing the sick, caring for the poor, and instructing the illiterate. Records show that these women served as godmothers to many: slaves, free, children, and adults. Noteworthy are the heroic efforts of the early Sisters who cared for the sick and the dying during the yellow fever epidemics that struck New Orleans in 1853 and 1897. Today, the Sisters of the Holy Family have over 200 members who serve across the southern United States operating free schools for poor children, nursing homes for the elderly, and retirement homes. The Sisters have also opened missions in Belize in Central America and Benin City in Nigeria. They also witnessed many marriages. Last year (2017) the Sisters of the Holy Family celebrated their 175th anniversary.

Henriette bore many crosses in life. She encountered resistance of the ruling population of New Orleans to the idea of a black religious congregation. After her initial funds dwindled, the Sisters were constantly low on funds to more fully serve those in need. Henriette also suffered from her own poor health. Despite all this, Henriette has been found by the Church to have lived a life of heroic virtue and has been put on the path to sainthood. She lived in faith, hope and love, and was compassionate, forgiving, and merciful. Henriette had a strong belief in justice and showed that she was not afraid to do what was right in the eyes of God.

Venerable Henriette Delille died November 17, 1862 at the age of 49.

Pray: O good and gracious God, You called Henriette Delille to give herself in service and love to the slaves and the orphan, to the sick and the aged, to the forgotten and the despised. Grant that inspired by her life, we may be renewed in heart and mind to live in service to all Your people. Amen.

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

1. Venerable Henriette devoted her life to serving God through service to others. How do you show that same virtue in your life?
2. The Sisters of the Holy Family started schools for many poor children, just like many missionary Sisters do today, with help from the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA). How does your membership in MCA help you appreciate your own education more?

Follow-up Activities:

1. Write letters to the sisters serving in the missions. Tell them how their work inspires you to be a missionary through your MCA membership. Be sure to also thank them for their service! Send your letters to us at the address below and we will send them to sisters worldwide!
2. The charism of The Sisters of the Holy Family has not changed. They, and many Sisters in the missions supported by MCA are the faces of love, mercy and compassion to the people of God in Africa, the Americas, Europe, the Pacific Islands and Asia. Challenge each of your students to sacrifice a dollar for every continent named here and donate it to the Missionary Childhood Association to support education in the missions.
3. Pray for the Canonization of Venerable Henriette Delille by saying this prayer every day during the month of November: O good and gracious God, You called Henriette Delille to give herself in service and in love to the slaves and the sick, to the orphan and the aged, to the forgotten and the despised. Grant that inspired by her life, we might be renewed in heart and in mind. If it be Your will may she one day be raised to the honor of sainthood. By her prayers, may we live in harmony and peace, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.