

Prayer Celebration

Preparation: Gather the following materials: a basket containing an article of clothing and cans/boxes of food; a religion textbook; a prayer book and rosary; a carpenter's belt and/or tool. (Be aware of safety issues.) Assign four children to bring the items forward as part of an opening procession. Cover a table with a decorative cloth. Place a statue of Mary and a Bible on it.

Stand and sing "When the Saints Go Marching In." Children bring the items forward and place them on the prayer table. After the song is finished, ask the children to be seated.

Leader: Mary and all the saints show that there are different ways to follow Jesus. We look to them for hope and ask them to pray for us.

Leader: [Hold up the basket.]

St. Vincent de Paul took care of those who were in need of food, clothing, and shelter. We follow Jesus when we care for the poor.

St. Vincent de Paul,

All: Pray for us.

Leader: [Hold up the textbook.]

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton taught children about their faith. We follow Jesus when we learn about his life and his teachings.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,

All: Pray for us.

Leader: [Hold up the prayer book and rosary.]

St. Therese of Lisieux lived a life of simple prayer and solitude. We follow Jesus when we take time to pray every day.

St. Therese of Lisieux,

All: Pray for us.

Leader: [Hold up the carpenter's belt and/or tool.]

St. Joseph took care of Mary and Jesus, and worked hard as a carpenter. We follow Jesus when we show love for our families.

St. Joseph,

All: Pray for us.

Leader: Mary is the first of all the saints. We follow Jesus when we imitate her way of holiness and faith. Let us stand and offer the prayer that honors Mary.

[Close by praying together the Hail Mary.]

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The Call to Sainthood

"He's a saint." This statement is a common reference to someone who has endured a great deal of hardship without complaint, or sacrificed in a significant way for someone else. We recognize the nobility in such a person, particularly when he or she acts out of deep commitment to his or her faith. How often, however, do we apply the same term to ourselves?

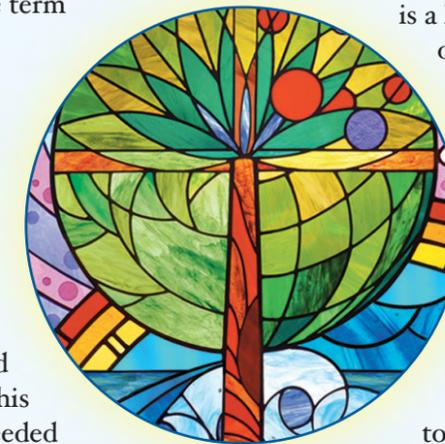
The invitation to sainthood is not reserved for the select few. Paul often addressed his letters to the "saints" or "holy ones." Rather than seeing these members of the early Christian communities as paragons of perfect virtue, he viewed them as being fashioned into the holy people of God. This makes sainthood a call to be heeded by every Christian disciple.

What does it take to answer this call? When we consider the great saints—the "giants" in our faith tradition—the answer may seem daunting. Francis of Assisi embarked on a radical path of transformation as he surrendered all of his worldly possessions, embraced a life of poverty and service to the poor, and founded a major

religious order. Elizabeth Ann Seton, left to care for five children after the death of her husband, established the Catholic school system in the United States and started the Sisters of Charity. Is it any wonder that we tend to consider sainthood out of the ordinary?

In each story of the saints, however, there is a humble beginning. What stands out is how the saints responded to both adversity and opportunity. Some used their wealth and prestige to provide relief for the poor. Others had the gift of eloquence or the power of persuasion that made them effective teachers and preachers. Still others simply had good hearts. They saw needs around them and rose to meet them.

One of the most reassuring aspects of the call to sainthood is the knowledge that we do not tread the path alone. We are pilgrims, each exploring the invitation to discipleship in our own unique way. The saints are companions who guide us, pray for us, and show us, through their examples, what it means to be truly holy.



Suggested Activities

- Invite the children to brainstorm a list of saintly qualities. Draw upon both the lives of the saints as well as other positive role models to come up with the list. Post it on a bulletin board and continue to add to the list throughout the coming month.
- Explain the definition of a "patron" – a person who encourages and takes care of someone or something. Many parishes and Catholic schools are named after patron saints. Challenge your class to research the patron saint of your (arch)diocese, parish, or school. Write and illustrate a story about the saint's life and the qualities that make her or him a model of Christian love and discipleship.
- Invite the children to write a letter to a saint who is profiled in your religion textbook. Encourage them to ask the saint for guidance about contemporary challenges in living as disciples of Jesus.

Bright Ideas

To learn about the saints and for additional activities related to the lives of the saints, visit www.SadlierWeBelieveBlog.com.



Directions

Mary is the first of all saints. When we pray the Rosary, we ask Mary for her prayers. Through the Mysteries of the Rosary, we reflect on the stories of Jesus and Mary. Draw a picture in each box to tell the stories of the Joyful Mysteries. Write a short prayer around the edges of the cross.

1 The angel Gabriel tells Mary she is to be the mother of Jesus.

2 Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth.

3 Jesus is born.

4 Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple.

5 Mary and Joseph find the boy Jesus teaching in the Temple.