

Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine (Catherine de Longpré)

1632-1668

"Think Only of His Service"

Catechetical Activity

Ages 9-11

Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine (Catherine de Longpré, 1632-1668)

Materials Needed: Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine's biography (short version), pencils, pencil crayons, activity sheets (1 per child).

Gathering:

1. Have the children gather around, close their eyes and sit quietly for a moment.
2. Ask the children to think about a time when they were sick, or not feeling well. Ask them who took care of them? Use prompts to encourage their thinking: did your mom or dad stay home with you? Did a grandparent or a relative help you? Who made you food? Did your siblings stay quiet to let you sleep?
3. Now ask them 'who takes care of the sick people that don't have family nearby to help?' Allow the children time to share their ideas. You might add a few examples: long-term and short-term care facilities, personal support workers, meals-on-wheels, etc.
4. Discuss why these services (meals-on-wheels, personal support workers, care facilities, retirement homes, etc) are so important. Ask the children to think about what the consequences might be if we didn't have these services?

Listening:

1. Read the biography of Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine to the children (pgs 4-5).
2. Discuss with the children Catherine of Saint Augustine's lifelong commitment to helping the sick (she was raised by her grandparents who helped the poor and the sick, and she continued helping the sick as she grew up - even working in a hospital).

Doing:

1. Remind the children that Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine wrote a letter to "Lady Mary" when she was 10 years old and that she was particularly devoted to Mary and drew strength from her.
2. Ask the children to write a letter to someone that inspires them (it could be a family member, a friend, an athlete, actress, etc.) In their letter the children

should explain how that person inspires them to be a better person. A letter template is provided on page 6.

3. Provide the children with an opportunity to share who inspires them and why, with a partner.

Going:

1. Bring the session to a close by praying together (page 7).

Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine (Catherine de Longpré, 1632-1668):

"Think only of His Service"

Feast Day: May 8

Her Life

Catherine of Saint Augustine was born on May 3, 1632, in Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, Normandy, France. She was raised by her grandparents who made a practice of offering hospitality to the poor and sick, and taught Catherine the virtue of charity. As early as age three, she expressed a strong desire to do God's will. She always remembered the lesson of a Jesuit who told her that "it is certain that one does God's will more in affliction, humiliation, and suffering than when one has everything one wants."

At age five, she had strong mystical prayer experiences where she felt direct contact with God. When she was only eight, she understood that the Holy Spirit was calling her to be a saint, and at age 10 she wrote a note giving herself to "Lady Mary". Catherine was witty and attractive and had a naturally cheerful character and a pleasant voice. She was also determined and liked to show off and be noticed. She was attracted by pretty things, but despite her enjoyment of worldly life, when she was 12 she decided to enter the community of Hôtel-Dieu of Bayeux, which was directed by Augustinian nuns, Hospital Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus.

She entered their novitiate on October 24, 1646, taking the name in religion of Catherine of St. Augustine. When she was 15, she offered herself for the Canada mission and promised "to live and die in Canada if God would open its door" for her. She made solemn profession as a nun at age 16 on May 4, 1648, in Nantes and set sail for Canada on May 27. The ship arrived in Quebec on August 19. Catherine set about learning the languages of the First Nations people, and looked after the sick. Between 1654 and 1668, she filled one after the other the offices of treasurer, director of the hospital, and novice director for her community.

Sister Catherine continued to experience deep prayer and at the same time, inner temptations caused her great turmoil. She often had health difficulties. In 1654, she promised to remain in Canada, and, in 1658, she offered herself in a spirit of reparation

for the salvation of New France. Therefore, she is considered a co-founder of the Church in Canada.

She fell sick and died on May 8, 1668, at 36 years of age. At the time of her death, she had a reputation as a holy person in both Canada and France. She was beatified on April 23, 1989, by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II.

Her Spirituality

As early as three years of age, Catherine de Longpré showed a precocious inclination to follow the will of God absolutely. This characterizes her entire spiritual journey. She was influenced by the rigour of the Jesuits and Saint John Eudes, who emphasized the demands of divine justice.

Catherine's personal prayer conformed to the movement of the liturgical seasons and their great feasts: Easter, the Ascension, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, All Saints' Day, Christmas. "She had a particular devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist, the main source of her strength against temptation, and to the Virgin Mary.

Catherine was extremely discreet about her trials and her intense prayer experiences. She was a decisive woman of action, and, with great tenderness, she spread joy and consolation among the people she looked after. Her writings reveal her common sense, clear judgment, open-mindedness, frankness, generosity and detachment. She could be firm and she could look at things objectively. She loved her land of adoption and vowed to die there, should it be God's will for her to do so. She wanted to remain in Canada to serve the sick and the poor, even if the other nuns returned to France.

Loving God,
maker of the universe
and Lord of all time,
help us to live each day
in your love and service.

Guide us in all we do,
so that we may give you
all honour and glory and thanks
through Jesus Christ our Lord
in the love of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen!



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