

**Servant of God Elisabeth Turgeon
(1840-1881)**

The Maternal Tenderness of God for His Children

Catechetical Activity

Ages 9-11

Servant of God Elisabeth Turgeon (1840-1881)

Materials Needed: Copies of Elisabeth Turgeon's biography (short version), copies of worksheets, pencils, and pencil crayons.

Gathering:

1. Ask the children to gather around, close their eyes and sit quietly for a moment.
2. Ask the children to think about *why* they pray.
3. Use prompts to encourage their thinking; what do you ask for when you pray? Do you thank God when you pray? What do you thank him for? How often do you pray?
4. Give the children a few examples of why you pray (for your family, your health, to help you get through a difficult time, etc.) and then ask for volunteers to offer additional comments.

Listening:

1. Read the short biography of Elisabeth Turgeon (pg 4-5) to the children.
2. Have a discussion with the children about Elisabeth Turgeon's reliance on prayer; how she believed completely in the power of prayer especially in light of her health concerns.
3. Also discuss her determination to teach and spread the Good News of God to children.

Doing:

1. Provide each child with a copy of Elisabeth Turgeon's biography (short version).
2. Ask the children to fill in the blanks of the activity sheet (pg 6-7) using information from the biography.

3. Once they have completed each sentence, ask them to use the letters from the boxes in order to complete the sentence at the bottom of the activity sheet. (Answer key provided on pg 9).
4. If they have time, encourage the students to be creative and colour their activity sheet.

Going:

1. Bring the session to a close by reading the prayer for the beatification of Elisabeth Turgeon to the group (pg 8).

**Servant of God Elisabeth Turgeon (1840-1881):
The Maternal Tenderness of God for His Children
Beatification in Rimouski, April 26, 2015**

Her Life

Elisabeth Turgeon was born on February 7, 1840, in Beaumont, across the Saint Lawrence River from Quebec City. She was a gifted student and wanted to pursue an education, but the death of her father when she was only 15 meant that she had to stay home and help her mother with the education of her younger sisters. At 20, she was at last able to go to the Laval teacher's college in Quebec to prepare to work as a teacher.

In 1863, she became the principal of a school near the family home. She was a good teacher, but had two brushes with death and had to take a year off. At the end of the 1871-1872 school year, another bout of illness forced her to quit for good. She turned with trust to "good Saint Anne" and promised to teach for free at Saint-Anne-de-Beaupré if she were healed. As she was fulfilling this promise, Father Jean Langevin, who had been named Bishop of Rimouski, asked her to come and direct the small community of teachers that was being formed there. Elisabeth Turgeon believed that God's will was for her to go into religious life.

She arrived in Rimouski on April 3, 1875. Bishop Langevin called the group the Sisters of the Elementary Schools.¹ He entrusted to Elisabeth the task of forming good teachers to fulfill the need for Christian education for the poor children of the surrounding countryside. When she was made superior, Mother Marie Elisabeth (her name in religious life) occupied herself with establishing the community of Sisters. She founded the community's first mission on January 2, 1880, and two others the following September, in outlying, poor parts of the Diocese of Rimouski. It was a daring move, proof of great trust in God. Then she opened a private school in Rimouski, where the novices could have their first teaching experience.

Charity was the unifying principle in Elisabeth's life. Her love was made up of tenderness; one of her companions recalled that she was quick to forgive and accepted everyone with

¹ In 1891 they would adopt the name Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

never any bitterness or animosity. Her health challenges ought to have limited her ability to work as a teacher, but she made up for it with exceptional moral force. Her constant sweet nature and serenity always masked her suffering. Mother Marie Elisabeth patiently and joyfully overcame hunger, cold, and bodily weakness and, in imitation of Jesus, she kept silent when falsely accused by others.

It was inevitable that the frail health of this Servant of God would give out. On her deathbed, she reminded those present what the Lord was calling them to: "My Sisters, I particularly recommend union, in fraternal charity, for when you are united in a community, when peace reigns among its members, it is heaven on earth." She died peacefully on August 17, 1881, at the age of 41.

Her Spirituality

Elisabeth Turgeon's spirituality was centred on the mission of teaching and Christian education. This was essentially the mission of Christ and the Church, the mission of salvation which had to be transmitted through education and the instruction of poor country children, and was realized in the consecrated life. She counted on God for the success of the mission: "He will strengthen you and enlighten you, and he will give intelligence to those whom you are bringing to him."

Her spirituality was lived in Christian faith, charity, and hope. Very early, Elisabeth Turgeon had heard the invitation of God the Father, "the good God", to enter into communion with him. Her whole ambition was to know Jesus, to love him, and to make him known to children.

Elisabeth Turgeon had a strong and vital practice of intercessory prayer. She relied completely on prayer for the necessities of life, for healing, for help in managing practical affairs, for conversion, and for special graces for herself and others. She showed tremendous trust in Mary and had particular devotion to "this good Mother". For Elisabeth Turgeon, Mary was the surest way to go to Jesus. This explains the motto of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary: "All for Jesus through Mary."

Elisabeth Turgeon (1840-1881)

Directions: Fill in the blanks with words from Elisabeth Turgeon's biography. Use the letters from the boxes to complete the phrase at the end of the activity.

1. After her father died, Elisabeth Turgeon had to stay home and help her mother with the education of her younger _____ .
2. The community of Sister's first mission was in January 1880, and two other missions followed in _____ _____.
3. Elisabeth also opened a _____ _____ school in Rimouski where the novices had their first teaching experiences.
4. Father _____ _____, who had been named Bishop of Rimouski, asked her to go and direct a small community of teachers.
5. In 1863, Elisabeth became a _____ _____ of a school near her family home.
6. On her deathbed, Elisabeth told her Sisters "... when you are united in a community, when peace reigns among its members, it is _____ on earth."

7. _____ _____ was a unifying principle in Elisabeth's life.
8. In 1875, Elisabeth Turgeon arrived in _____ _____ and worked with the Sisters of the Elementary Schools.
9. Elisabeth's sweet nature masked her _____ _____. She overcame hunger, cold, and bodily weakness.
10. Her spirituality was centred on the mission of _____ and Christian education.
11. The motto of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy _____ _____ is: "All for Jesus through Mary."
12. Her whole ambition was to know Jesus, and to make him known to _____ _____.

Elisabeth Turgeon is a

_____ .

A Prayer for the Beatification of Elisabeth Turgeon

O God of tenderness and compassion,
you filled Elisabeth Turgeon with zeal
for your glory and the salvation of the world.
You called her to found
a religious congregation dedicated
to the Christian education of the young.
In sickness, in poverty,
in every tribulation,
she called on you
with a deep faith and the trust of a daughter.
Grant, by her intercession,
the favour we ask,
through Jesus Christ Our Lord.
Amen.



Mary, Queen of the Rosary,
pray for us.

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Activity Answer Sheet

Directions: Fill in the blanks with words from Elisabeth Turgeon's biography. Use the letters from the boxes to complete the phrase at the end of the activity.

1. Sisters
2. September
3. private
4. Jean Langevin
5. principal
6. heaven
7. Charity
8. Rimouski
9. suffering
10. teaching
11. Rosary
12. Children.

Answer:

Elisabeth Turgeon is a servant of God.