

**Blessed Dina Bélanger**  
**(1897-1929)**

*Musician and Mystic*

*Catechetical Activity*

*Ages 9-11*

## Blessed Dina Bélanger (Musician and Mystic, 1897-1929)

**Materials Needed:** Blessed Dina Bélanger's biography (short version), copies of the worksheet (1 per child), pencils, pencil crayons

### Gathering:

1. Ask the children to gather around and sit quietly for a moment.
2. Ask the children to think of a time when meditation has been helpful for them. You may wish to give an example of your own to prompt them with their thinking. If they cannot think of a time when they have used meditation, ask them to consider a situation when meditation *might* be helpful for them.
3. Have the students consider different benefits to meditation.

### Listening:

1. Read aloud the biography of Blessed Dina Bélanger (short version on pages 3-4) to the group. You may find it beneficial to paraphrase some parts of the biography.
2. Remind the children that Blessed Dina Bélanger was a musician; she studied music, played the piano, gave concerts, and was a music teacher.
3. Ask the children if they play any instruments? Provide them with an opportunity to share with the group which instrument they play, and for how long they've been playing it. Ask the children to think of some of the benefits to playing instruments (concentration, dedication, creativity, etc.).

### Doing:

1. Using the piano activity on page 5, ask the children to brainstorm seven keys or elements that will help a person meditate. (For example: silence, prayer, reflection, music). Ask the children to write each key to help with meditation on the dark keys on the piano, and then colour and decorate the piano.
2. Allow time for the children to share their ideas with their peers.

### Going:

1. Read the prayer on page 6 to the group.

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**Feast Day: September 4<sup>th</sup>**

### **Her Life**

Dina Bélanger was born in Quebec City on April 30, 1897. She was the only daughter of Séraphia Matter and Olivier Bélanger. She attended elementary and secondary school with the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at their convent in Saint Roch and then at Jacques Cartier School. At the age of 14, she asked whether she could be a boarder at Bellevue Convent, where she wanted to complete her studies. Also at 14, she consecrated her virginity to God.

When she finished school, she returned to live with her parents and studied piano. She developed a personal rule of life that was based on prayer, mass, communion, the rosary, and meditation, and kept it all a secret. She helped her mother with the parish's outreach to the poor and the sick. She was active in the Work of the Tabernacles (its members made altar cloths and liturgical vestments for poor parishes and for the missions). She became an active member of the Apostleship of Prayer and joined the Third Order of St. Dominic. In 1916, she was admitted to the New York Conservatory, where, for two years she studied advanced piano and harmony. When she returned to Quebec, she gave concerts and continued to study of harmony by distance education.

When she was 24, she entered the novitiate of the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Sillery. She received the religious habit the next year under the name of Marie Sainte-Cécile de Rome, and made temporary vows on August 15, 1923. That September, she was appointed as music teacher at the Convent of Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse. Her stay there was interrupted by bouts of illness.

From the age of 11, Dina had deep prayer experiences and an intimate relationship with the Lord. Her superior in the community asked her to keep a journal of her spiritual experiences, which she began to do in 1924. She pronounced perpetual vows on August 15, 1928. The following April, she had to enter the infirmary. She died on September 4, 1929, at the age of 32, the victim of pulmonary tuberculosis which had first been diagnosed in the spring of 1926.

Dina Bélanger was beatified by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II on March 20, 1993, at the same time as Saint Claudine Thévenet, the founder in France of the religious congregation to which Dina belonged.

### **Her Spirituality**

As a child, she learned how to lift herself to God in prayer, in the silence and beauty of nature. She made first communion when she was 10 and from that time she sought recollection, meditation, and intimacy with Jesus.

She received abundant grace, and prayed ever more fervently and performed acts of love as Jesus communicated himself to her by voices and visions. She thirsted for silence, and had to force herself to socialize with other teenagers. Her independent nature meant that she struggled with her "selfish desire for isolation and peace".

As a student, Dina loved every subject. She was passionate about art and the beautiful and her aim was always perfection: "I wanted to find the God-given talents within me," she wrote, but her ideals were so high that she never felt she deserved the praise she received. She was naturally oriented to meditation, and did not believe that she would find spiritual nourishment in books: "Jesus himself gave this to me. He presented the book from which shone forth to my eyes, in large letters, the secret of happiness and the knowledge of love." The Autobiography of Saint Theresa of Lisieux helped her learn how to abandon herself to God.

Dina was open to apostolic and missionary life and had a strong desire to help others, especially priests and religious, deepen their relationship with Jesus. "In all my actions, my words, my thoughts, and my desires I find myself to be passive, as if under the influence of the Supreme Being, as if the Spirit of Love had his soft yet strong guiding hand on me. My freedom is total, and in that state there is no conflict. His grace is simply so strong that I cannot resist." Her sole occupation became one of continually directing her attention to God. "Have confidence in my mercy. It is because you are weak and unhappy that I have chosen you," Jesus said to her, as she recounts in her autobiography. Her union with him was so profound that she could write, "Jesus Christ lives in place of me on earth. He has substituted himself for me, and now I am nothing." Thus she was one with the apostle Paul who wrote, "It is not I who live, but the Christ who lives in me."





Image: Dina-Bélanger Centre, courtesy of the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary

Father of everlasting goodness,

You put into the heart of Blessed Dina Bélanger the burning desire to offer you on behalf of all mankind, the infinite riches of the Heart of Jesus present in the Eucharist, and, to live, like Mary, closely united to Him whom she loved with an undivided heart.

May we, like her, find our joy in faithfully doing your Will, and since you revealed to her your great desire to pour out upon the world the abundance of your graces, hear the prayer which we make for your greater glory, and which we entrust to her intercession.

Amen.

Prayer: Religious of Jesus and Mary ([www.rjm-us.org](http://www.rjm-us.org)). Used with permission