

Saint Marguerite d'Youville

(1701-1771)

Mother of the Poor

Catechetical Activity

Ages 6-8

Saint Marguerite d'Youville (Mother of the Poor, 1701-1771)

Materials Needed: Saint Marguerite d'Youville's biography (short version), copies of the activity sheet (1 per child), pencils, pencil crayons, markers, etc.

Gathering:

1. Ask the children to gather around and sit quietly for a moment.
2. Explain to the children that they are going to learn about Saint Marguerite d'Youville, and that she was known as the 'mother of the poor'. Ask the children to think about what 'mother of the poor' means. Why would someone be given that name? What kinds of things do they think Saint Marguerite d'Youville did, to be known as the mother of the poor?
3. Let the children think for a moment, and then allow them a chance to share some of their ideas with a partner.

Listening:

1. Read Saint Marguerite d'Youville's biography on pages 3-4. You may find it beneficial to paraphrase some parts of the biography for the children.
2. Now ask the children to think about why she was known as the 'mother of the poor'. Ask for some volunteers to share specific examples from her biography of things she did to look after those who were less fortunate.
3. Have the children think about their own family and community. Ask them to share some of the ways in which they help the needy in their community. (ex. fundraisers, food drives, snowsuit funds, etc.)

Doing:

1. Ask the children to complete the word search puzzle on page 5 or 6 (you may choose which is more suitable for your group; as one is more advanced than the other). Depending on your group, you may wish to have them complete it individually, or with a partner. The answer keys are provided on page 8.
2. If time permits, they can decorate their word search puzzle with symbols and pictures that represent Saint Marguerite d'Youville and the work she dedicated her life to.

Going:

1. Read the prayer on page 7 aloud to the group.

Saint Marguerite d'Youville (1701-1771)

Mother of the Poor

Feast Day: October 16th

Her Life

Marie-Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais was born in Varennes, Quebec, on October 15, 1701. Her father had come from Brittany, France in 1687. The eldest of six children, Marguerite was only seven years old when her father died.

Thanks to the help of her great-grandfather, Marguerite was able to study at the Ursuline boarding school for girls in Quebec City for two years. At 12, she returned to her family to help teach her brothers and sisters. On August 12, 1722, she married François d'Youville. A fur and alcohol trader, he was unreliable and rather selfish. He died in 1730, leaving Marguerite, who was pregnant for the sixth time, with two living children and a lot of debt.

In 1737, she rented a house in Montreal where she gave hospitality to women in need. She and three companions made private religious vows. Because they broke social barriers by taking in the needy, the women were scorned, slandered and persecuted. Marguerite was accused of trafficking in alcohol with the First Nations people as her husband had done, with, it was said, the collaboration of the Sulpicians.

In 1747, Marguerite was put in charge of the administration of the Charon Brothers Hospital. When her term was up in 1750, she wrote to France for help and offered to pay the hospital's debts. The King, Louis XV, confirmed her as director of the hospital on June 3, 1753, and authorized her to form a religious community which was approved by the Most Rev. Henri-Marie de Pontbriand, Bishop of Quebec, in 1755.

To meet the financial needs of the hospital, Marguerite used her administrative talents and started up various activities such as needlework, dressmaking and tailoring, and the manufacture of military flags, clothing for Native people, hosts and candles. She also ran a tavern, sold tobacco, lime, building materials, and sand. The hospital welcomed a wide variety of people, including the poor, epileptics, lepers, battered women, and sick priests. During the wars leading up to the Conquest of 1760, her door was open to prisoners, the sick and the wounded of both sides. Beginning in 1754, Mother d'Youville also took in abandoned children.

In 1765, the General Hospital burned down. It took four years, but she got it rebuilt. On December 9 and 13, 1771, she had attacks of paralysis and she died on December 23. She was canonized on December 9, 1990 by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II.

Her Spirituality

With the Ursulines, Marguerite grew in the practice of the apostolic prayer of Marie of the Incarnation who had founded the girls' school in Quebec City a century earlier. She was intelligent and she had good judgment and a well-developed sense of responsibility. She was strong and hard-working and she was a teacher who "knew how to be respected and how to be loved."

When she was 27, her heart broken by the scandalous life of her husband, she was struck by the revelation of God's personal love for her. After his death, she had to provide for her family while his estate was settled. At the same time, she visited the poor, the prisoners and the sick, and begged for funds to provide a proper burial for criminals who had died.

In 1737, still looking after her children, she formed with three companions an association of "young women, secular in habits, but religious in their hearts" who consecrated themselves "in perpetuity to the service of the poor." In the memoir that she wrote in 1752, she said, "Providence and our hard work are the resources we count on to carry on the work." She took in "found" children in order "to preserve them body and soul, to offer them a Christian education and help them prepare to earn an honest living." After a fire, which destroyed her building in 1765, she and her Sisters prayed the *Te Deum* and said, "The Lord gave us everything, the Lord has taken everything away, may his Name be praised forever." At the end of her life, she said, "We have always been on the verge of losing everything, but we have always had what we needed."

Within the community, Marguerite wanted "perfect union, with one heart and one soul, always considerate and supportive of each other in our weakness, knowing that we need a greater love to bear our own." To obtain that, the Sisters should "draw from the Divine Paternity the feelings of love, tender solicitude, and compassion that will sustain them in helping the poor, the sick and the orphan."

Marguerite d'Youville's spirituality can be summed up in three words: "Father, Providence, Poor". Her love was universal and adapted itself so well to every kind of distress, that it was common for people to say, "Go to the Grey Nuns. They will never refuse to help you."

U	R	O	T	C	E	R	I	D	O	Z	E	C	N	H	J	R	O	O	P
S	I	Y	E	R	B	N	O	E	Q	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	F	R
Y	T	I	N	U	M	M	O	C	U	G	C	S	L	H	E	L	A	R	O
B	N	A	O	R	A	J	C	M	F	E	D	I	L	A	K	I	V	N	V
P	I	E	A	W	R	F	C	A	T	R	L	E	Y	D	O	G	C	A	I
I	A	Y	R	A	G	I	A	S	N	B	E	A	I	R	L	I	J	K	D
E	S	W	A	D	Y	R	O	T	N	E	E	D	L	E	W	O	R	K	E
N	R	E	E	G	E	S	A	T	H	B	U	V	E	S	P	U	S	L	N
J	E	H	A	R	R	T	S	U	B	E	E	B	N	S	I	S	I	O	C
U	H	Y	T	H	I	N	O	O	R	E	R	N	A	M	U	V	O	V	E
H	O	S	P	I	T	A	L	I	T	Y	R	B	I	A	C	O	C	P	O
N	S	G	D	E	E	T	R	A	C	O	T	N	Q	K	I	W	N	N	E
F	P	H	P	G	H	I	Y	L	N	N	P	U	L	I	O	S	A	E	L
J	I	D	U	U	G	O	U	C	H	S	E	C	E	N	P	E	R	L	A
L	T	U	N	E	O	N	R	U	I	B	Q	M	N	G	Y	H	F	I	E
E	A	E	K	R	P	S	I	V	E	R	U	P	O	D	I	A	R	Y	R
A	L	R	L	S	E	T	Y	C	O	E	N	E	L	O	E	C	O	M	T
T	K	P	W	V	O	D	E	E	Y	A	T	U	C	Y	H	A	I	S	N
O	E	B	O	A	R	D	I	N	G	S	C	H	O	O	L	N	D	R	O
P	O	L	E	C	P	P	K	A	E	T	E	D	A	R	P	I	H	I	M

QUEBEC

COMMUNITY

HOSPITAL

FRANCOIS

BOARDING SCHOOL

FATHER

CHILDREN

RELIGIOUS VOWS

PROVIDENCE

MONTREAL

DRESSMAKING

POOR

HOSPITALITY

NEEDLEWORK

LOVE

FIRST NATIONS

DIRECTOR

SAINT

W	K	I	N	D	V	S	D	I	O	P
E	A	R	C	M	H	I	B	F	L	N
S	P	Q	H	O	S	P	I	T	A	L
I	K	U	W	T	Y	C	T	L	I	W
C	H	E	F	H	E	L	P	L	G	E
K	E	B	O	E	S	I	O	O	N	I
O	U	E	L	R	P	M	O	V	A	L
Y	G	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	K
F	D	L	M	C	B	G	Y	E	S	C
S	A	I	N	T	D	E	S	F	P	D
D	V	N	S	A	C	A	R	E	L	A
E	H	E	A	R	T	S	E	D	A	R



SAINT

MOTHER

LOVE

QUEBEC

POOR

KIND

SICK

HOSPITAL

CARE

CHILDREN

HELP

HEART



Image: "Mother d'Youville teaching the Catechism in Châteauguay in 1766" 1942, by Flore Barrette, sgm [1897-1984]. Courtesy of the Grey Nuns of Montreal (1974-A-092).

Prayer

Saint Marguerite d'Youville,
we turn to you in humble prayer
because your life speaks to us
of goodness, compassion and love
in a world of suffering, anguish and pain.

It is not unlike the world you knew
as you went about doing good
with a great love for the human family,
with preference for the poorest of all.

Your dream of universal charity
became a mission in the Church.

We give thanks to you for the
inspiring vision that is ours today
as your dream lives on.

May we learn as you did the life-giving power of love,
the profound peace of unfailing trust,
the deep mystery of suffering and pain,
the comfort of prayer.

Saint Marguerite, teach us to listen,
in the silence of our hearts,
to the God of Mercy and Compassion,
that we, too, may be signs of God's love
to all people of our word.

Amen.

Answer Keys

U	R	O	T	C	E	R	I	D	O	Z	E	C	N	H	J	R	O	O	P
S	I	Y	E	R	B	N	O	E	Q	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	F	R
Y	T	I	N	U	M	M	O	C	U	G	C	S	L	H	E	L	A	R	O
B	N	A	O	R	A	J	C	M	F	E	D	I	L	A	K	I	V	N	V
P	I	E	A	W	R	F	C	A	T	R	L	E	Y	D	O	G	C	A	I
I	A	Y	R	A	G	I	A	S	N	B	E	A	I	R	L	I	J	K	D
E	S	W	A	D	Y	R	O	T	N	E	E	D	L	E	W	O	R	K	E
N	R	E	E	G	E	S	A	T	H	B	U	V	E	S	P	U	S	L	N
J	E	H	A	R	R	T	S	U	B	E	E	B	N	S	I	S	I	O	C
U	H	Y	T	H	I	N	O	O	R	E	R	N	A	M	U	V	O	V	E
H	O	S	P	I	T	A	L	I	T	Y	R	B	I	A	C	O	C	P	O
N	S	G	D	E	E	T	R	A	C	O	T	N	Q	K	I	W	N	N	E
F	P	H	P	G	H	I	Y	L	N	N	P	U	L	I	O	S	A	E	L
J	I	D	U	U	G	O	U	C	H	S	E	C	E	N	P	E	R	L	A
L	T	U	N	E	O	N	R	U	I	B	Q	M	N	G	Y	H	F	I	E
E	A	E	K	R	P	S	I	V	E	R	U	P	O	D	I	A	R	Y	R
A	L	R	L	S	E	T	Y	C	O	E	N	E	L	O	E	C	O	M	T
T	K	P	W	V	O	D	E	E	Y	A	T	U	C	Y	H	A	I	S	N
O	E	B	O	A	R	D	I	N	G	S	C	H	O	O	L	N	D	R	O
P	O	L	E	C	P	P	K	A	E	T	E	D	A	R	P	I	H	I	M

W	K	I	N	D	V	S	D	I	O	P
E	A	R	C	M	H	I	B	F	L	N
S	P	Q	H	O	S	P	I	T	A	L
I	K	U	W	T	Y	C	T	L	I	W
C	H	E	F	H	E	L	P	L	G	E
K	E	B	O	E	S	I	O	O	N	I
O	U	E	L	R	P	M	O	V	A	L
Y	G	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	K
F	D	L	M	C	B	G	Y	E	S	C
S	A	I	N	T	D	E	S	F	P	D
D	V	N	S	A	C	A	R	E	L	A
E	H	E	A	R	T	S	E	D	A	R