

VOCATION AWARENESS LESSON

GRADE EIGHT

SAINT CATHERINE LABOURE (MIRACULOUS MEDAL)

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY: DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AND VINCENTIANS

Objective: Through the life of Saint Catherine Laboure, the student will gain an understanding of vocation.

Materials: Story of Saint Catherine (provided), front and back pictures of the miraculous medal (provided), art supplies

Instructional Focus:

- I. Students will be introduced to age appropriate adaptations of the following vocabulary/definitions which are taken from the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.
 - a. Vocation- the call each person receives from God; everyone has been called to holiness and eternal life, especially in Baptism. Each person can also be called more specifically to the priesthood or religious life; to the married life; and to the single life.
 - b. Priest- a baptized man ordained through Holy Orders who with the bishop exercise the pastoral mission of the Church. They serve God's people in the work of sanctification by their preaching, teaching and offering the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the forgiving of sins. (A priest may be ordained as a diocesan priest or as a member of a religious community.)
 - c. Holy Orders- The sacrament in which a bishop ordains a man to be conformed to Jesus Christ by grace, to service and leadership in the Church. A man can be ordained as a deacon, priest or bishop.
 - d. Religious or Consecrated Life- A permanent state in life into which certain men or women freely commit themselves to a life of special service to Christ, marked by the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

As a class, students will read the biography of St. Catherine Laboure. Students will discuss Catherine's visions of the Blessed Mother and the Mary's messages on Catherine's life. Students will have a moment of reflection on the following question: Have I ever experienced the presence of the Blessed Mother in prayer? Students may share with the class. In groups, students will research Marian prayers, choose one that is personally meaningful and share the prayer with the class.

- II. Using the biography, create a timeline of St. Catherine's life. Divide the class into groups. Assign a time period of St. Catherine's life to each group. Each group will create a skit about or illustrate this time period and share their creative endeavor with the class.
- III. Using art supplies, students will create their own stain glass window which depicts the front and back of the miraculous medal. Students will choose one symbol of the medal and explain its meaning on below (or on reverse side of) the stain glass window.

IV. Optional:

*Class "Virtual" Tour of the Miraculous Medal Shrine at:
<http://www.cammonline.org/index.php?/shrine/tour-of-shrine>

* Research the following topics:

- the relationship of the Vincentians and the Miraculous Medal
- Blessed Teresa of Calcutta's devotion to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

SAINT CATHERINE LABOURE

As the evening Angelus was ringing over Burgundy France on May 2, 1806, in the tiny village of Fain-les-moutiers, Catherine was born. She was the ninth of eleven children to Pierre and Madeleine Laboure and was baptized the very next day. She soon became known as Zoe to her family and friends. She grew up in a very happy household and her God given gift of getting everyone to play and pray together soon became evident. Unfortunately when she was nine years old that happiness came to an end as her saintly and beloved mother died. Left a widower with three small children still at home, Pierre was lost and needed much help.

Catherine felt the loss and emptiness of her mother keenly. Shortly after her mother's funeral, she pulled up a chair beneath the shelf where the statue of Our Lady was in her home. She took the statue down, threw her arms around it and proclaimed "Now, dear Blessed Mother, you will be my Mother!" Zoe, thinking she was alone, did not realize that a house servant witnessed her gesture. Years later, the servant shared this incident as testimony to Catherine's devotion to Mary, Mother of God.

As the oldest of the remaining children, Catherine was entrusted with the care of her younger sister and brother and supervision of the household. Her daily routine of rising early, walking to church, and returning home to do household chores matured her beyond her years. As she grew, her desire to serve God also grew. At first her father refused to entertain her idea of becoming a nun, however, her persistence caused him to change his mind and give his permission. At age 24, she entered the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity on the Rue due Bac in Paris.

On the night of July 18, 1830, a bright light awakened Catherine from her sleep and the voice of an angel greeted her with these words: "Come to the chapel; the Blessed Virgin is waiting for you." Catherine was surprised to see all the lights lit as the rest of the convent slept. Upon arriving in the chapel she was led toward the sanctuary and knelt by the chair which was used by the Directress for conferences. She heard the rustle of silk and saw a most beautiful Lady walking toward her. It was the Blessed Mother and she sat down in the Directress' chair. Catherine leaned her hands on Our Lady's lap and looked into her eyes. Our Lady instructed Catherine that she was entrusted for a special mission; however, she would endure trials in the carrying out this mission. Our Lady told her of the many hardships that were to come to France. She then disappeared and the angel led Catherine back to her dormitory.

Once again on November 27, 1830 the Blessed Virgin came to Catherine. Initially, she was dressed in white having a long veil which fell to her feet and stood on a globe. In her hands and with uplifted eyes, the Virgin held up a golden ball towards heaven as an offering to the Almighty. Her fingers were covered with rings whose precious jewels sparkled brilliantly and showered her feet. Looking at Catherine, Mary told her about the symbolism of her gesture. Suddenly the vision of Our Lady changed as she appeared with a white dress with a blue mantle and a white veil which

draped back over her shoulders. She was still standing on the globe, and had one foot on the head of a serpent which lay at her feet. The Virgin's arms and hands pointed downwards as a cascade of rays fell from them onto the globe. An oval frame formed around the Blessed Virgin and written around within it, in letters of gold, was the beautiful prayer, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you." Our Lady then instructed Catherine to have a medal struck of this apparition. The front was to be of her image with the prayer; on the reverse side was to be a cross, the symbol of Christ's Redeeming Sacrifice on Mount Calvary for the salvation of the world. All who wore the medal would receive great graces.

Catherine spoke to no one about her visions except her spiritual director. Though it was difficult to convince this young priest of the apparitions, by June, 1832 the first medal was struck. The story of the Miraculous Medal soon spread worldwide and to this day, is known to bring great graces to those who wear the medal and who pray the Novena to the Miraculous Medal.

Saint Catherine died on December 31, 1876, after suffering many misunderstandings and jealousy from her fellow sisters in community. She held all of these sufferings in her heart and offered them to Jesus. Fifty-seven years after her burial, her body was exhumed and found to be completely incorrupt. She was beatified on May 28, 1933 and canonized a saint on July 27, 1947.

