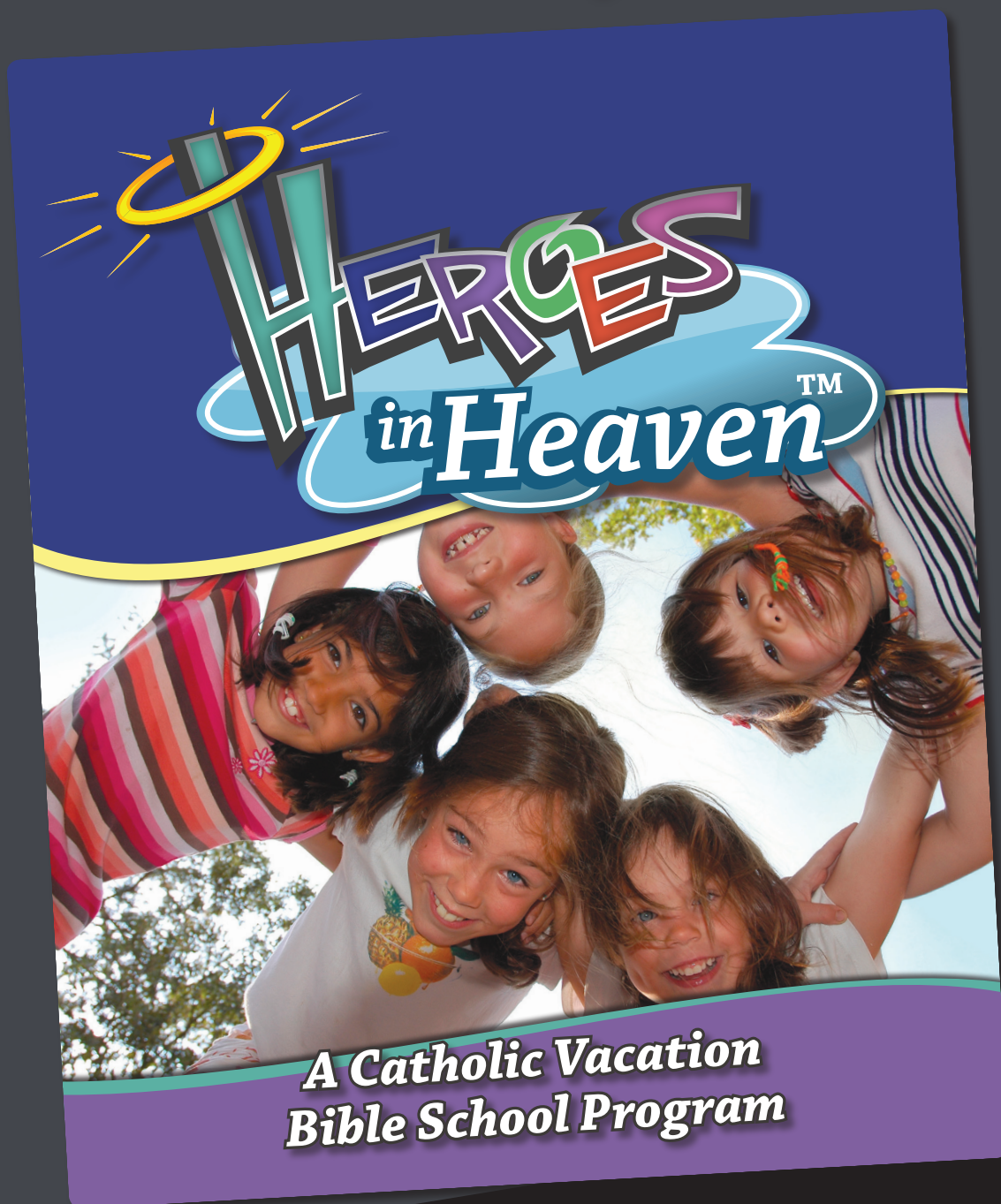




**A Catholic Vacation
Bible School Program**
by Tammy Gabrelcik

Introductory Booklet





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Introduction

Heroes in Heaven™ is a 100% Catholic Vacation Bible School program. This unique children's summer program uses saints as heavenly role models for children of various ages. Heroes in Heaven™ will instill the beautiful Catholic concept of the Communion of Saints in young people. Today, our youth often idolize movie and sports stars as heroes. The Heroes in Heaven™ program gives Catholic children an opportunity to know real people that have lived holy lives for Christ as true heroes. It will give them ideas on how to live their lives for Christ. It will help them know what real heroes, young and old can and should do with faith. It will teach children to invoke intercessory prayer with our heavenly family, the saints, and angels. Further more, it will be a special opportunity to instill the Catholic faith in a loving and exciting environment designed just for children.

The following program will fit any parish setting. Heroes in Heaven™ will be a great supplementary summer program for any Parish School of Religion.

Please enjoy your summer program and approach it with love, charity, hope, and prayer!



VBS Sample Schedule

	Preschool, Grade K	1 st & 2 nd Grade	3 rd & 4 th Grade	5 th & 6 th Grade
8:45–9:15	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass
9:15–9:30	Arrival and Greeting Children to the Program	Arrival and Greeting Children to the Program	Arrival and Greeting Children to the Program	Arrival and Greeting Children to the Program
9:30–9:45	Opening Circle All	Opening Circle All	Opening Circle All	Opening Circle All
9:45–10:00				
10:00–10:15	Snack	Games	Music	Craft
10:15–10:30	Music	Snack	Devotional	
10:30–10:45	Craft	Music	Games	Snack
10:45–11:00		Craft	Snack	Games
11:00–11:15	Free Time (memory verse)		Free Time (memory verse)	Devotional
11:15–11:30	Devotional	Free Time (memory verse)	Craft	Free Time (memory verse)
11:30–11:45	Games	Devotional		Music
11:45–12:00	Closing Circle	Closing Circle	Closing Circle	Closing Circle

If you use the 15 minute time blocks, keep groups on schedule as close as possible.





Staff Requirements

The first step in having a successful Vacation Bible School is enlisting the necessary staff. The following is a list of essential adults required for the Heroes in Heaven™ program to operate smoothly.

Program Coordinator: This person will be in charge of selecting appropriate volunteers and preparing these people for the program. The Program Coordinator will also be the contact person for staff and parents. This person will be responsible for any public relations and promoting the program within the parish and community, i.e., provide flyers, post in church bulletin, list in newspaper... This job will include putting up a sign-up sheet and arranging the groups of children. The Program Coordinator will be in charge of implementing the opening and closing circle activities. This can involve enlisting the help of other volunteers. The Program Coordinator should have good group management skills, organizational skills, and public relation abilities.

Lead Teacher: There should be one adult teacher per 10-12 children in each age group. The teachers will implement planned program activities, maintain group control, establish rapport with children and parents, and attend planning meetings. Lead Teachers will need to know additional information about each saint. Small group conversations with children will be essential to promote and reinforce the concepts of each day.

Assistant Teacher: This person will assist the teacher in the needed areas. The assistant teacher will help with group control, taking younger children to the bathroom, and be an extra set of hands at craft time. This is not a leadership role, and responsible teens are good candidates for this position.

Snack Coordinator: The snack coordinator may enroll volunteers to bring snacks for each day or prepare snacks him/herself. This person will set up and serve snacks to each group of children at designated times. The snack coordinator will clean up after each group comes through the snack area and lead a blessing before children eat. The snack coordinator may choose a child to lead the blessing.

Snack Helper: If there are many groups, the snack coordinator may need a helper to set up and keep the groups moving through the snack area efficiently. A responsible teen will work for this position.

Game Coordinator: The game coordinator will conduct the large motor activities with the help of the group's teacher. This person needs excellent group management skills because the children can get very excited during the games.

Music Director: This person needs to be able to lead songs with the groups. Adults with guitar ability will add nicely to the music program. If no one is available to play guitar, choose a volunteer with a strong singing voice.





Opening and Closing Circles

All groups will meet at a designated area for Opening and Closing Circle times. The large cardboard Rosary is placed on the ground, forming a circle upon which the children are to sit. The Rosary is a nice visual and makes a good marker to keep children in their places.

Opening Circle is a time for the program coordinator to welcome children each day, getting the children excited about the day's activities and telling the story of the saint of the day. Depending on how long the story, skit, or presentation is, there may be time for singing or a brief devotional activity.

All teachers and assistant teachers should accompany the children to the Circle times and remain nearby for crowd control.

Closing Circle is a time to wind down the program and recap any announcements. Review the major points about the saint, sing songs, and discuss the devotional. Always remind children to memorize their Bible verses. Always remind them to wear their name tags for the next day. Remind them to always try to act like a saint, using good manners, being charitable and so on.

Dismiss groups to return to individual group areas for parents to pick up. Some parishes may wish to use sign out sheets for parents picking up children to ensure the right child goes with the right adult.



Scripture/Name Tag Holder

- Supplies**
- Plastic cord or yarn cut 34 inches in length per child
 - Business card holder sleeves cut out individually or
 - Plastic badge holders sold at office supply stores, one per child
 - Hole punch
 - Color cardstock
 - Markers assorted colors
 - Shipping tape if using business card sleeves

- Directions**
1. Pre-cut yarn or plastic cord for each child.
 2. Pre-cut individual business card sleeve or purchased plastic badge holders.
 3. Reinforce business card sleeve with shipping tape on both sides where hole will be punched.
 4. Punch hole on one end of sleeve or badge holder.
 5. Thread yarn through hole and tie knot to make necklace.
 6. Pre-cut cardstock to fit inside of badge holders or business card sleeve. Children will write their names on this piece.
 7. Scriptures memory verses should be printed on a piece of cardstock the same size as the name tag piece.

Suggestion Remind children and parents that children are to wear name tag everyday of VBS. Let parents know to look for the scripture memory verse inside the name tag holder.

This prevents lost scripture verses. The children enjoy coloring decorations on name tag to personalize it.





Treasure Box Activity

Supplies

- Bible
- Box decorated as a Treasure Box
- Small Catholic items in box such as Rosaries, small holy water fonts, medals, prayer cards, small statuettes, saint stickers, magnets... (www.catholicdirect.com)
- 3 Scripture verses

Directions

During Vacation Bible School the children will be memorizing scripture verses. Each day the staff will read the scripture for the day using a Bible. Discuss what it means and how it can apply to the children's lives. Begin to discuss how the saint of the day may have used the Bible verse in his or her life. Pass out the verse to the children. Verses should be put in children's name tag holder when group is finished with scripture talk.

The following day each child should be able to recite the verse from memory. If the child is successful he/she may choose a treasure from the group Treasure Box. The effort will be the gauge for reward. Each child should be able to take home a treasure for trying. Younger groups, such as the preschool group may recite the verse together for their rewards. Most often if the parents help a little at home and the teacher will go over the verse several times throughout the day, the children will be able to recite the verse from memory.

This activity is to promote Holy Scripture and the Holy Bible, not to frustrate or embarrass the children.

Each teacher should use discretion on how to implement this in their group.

*Note: The first day the children should get scripture verse #1 and review it with their teacher at VBS. Memorize it with the teacher as a group or individually. They will then get to choose an item from the Treasure Box on the first day of VBS. This will motivate them to study at home for the next verse. They should get scripture verse #2 at the end of the first day of VBS too. Scripture verse #2 should be taken home and memorized to be recited on the following day.



Introduction to Crafts

The craft projects for Heroes in Heaven™ are a very exciting part of the program for the children. Directions and supplies for each activity are provided for the teachers as a basic guideline. All crafts may be altered according to the teacher's preference and creative ability. Yet, if the teacher wishes to follow the directions without changing anything, the craft will be successful.

All feedback to the children should be very positive no matter at what level the child is performing. The crafts are designed to be product oriented. Children like seeing something they made turn out nicely. The creative process should not be stifled in order to get "perfect replicas" of the project. Allow all children to express their creativity in a manner that they enjoy. VBS is fun! Enjoy the projects.

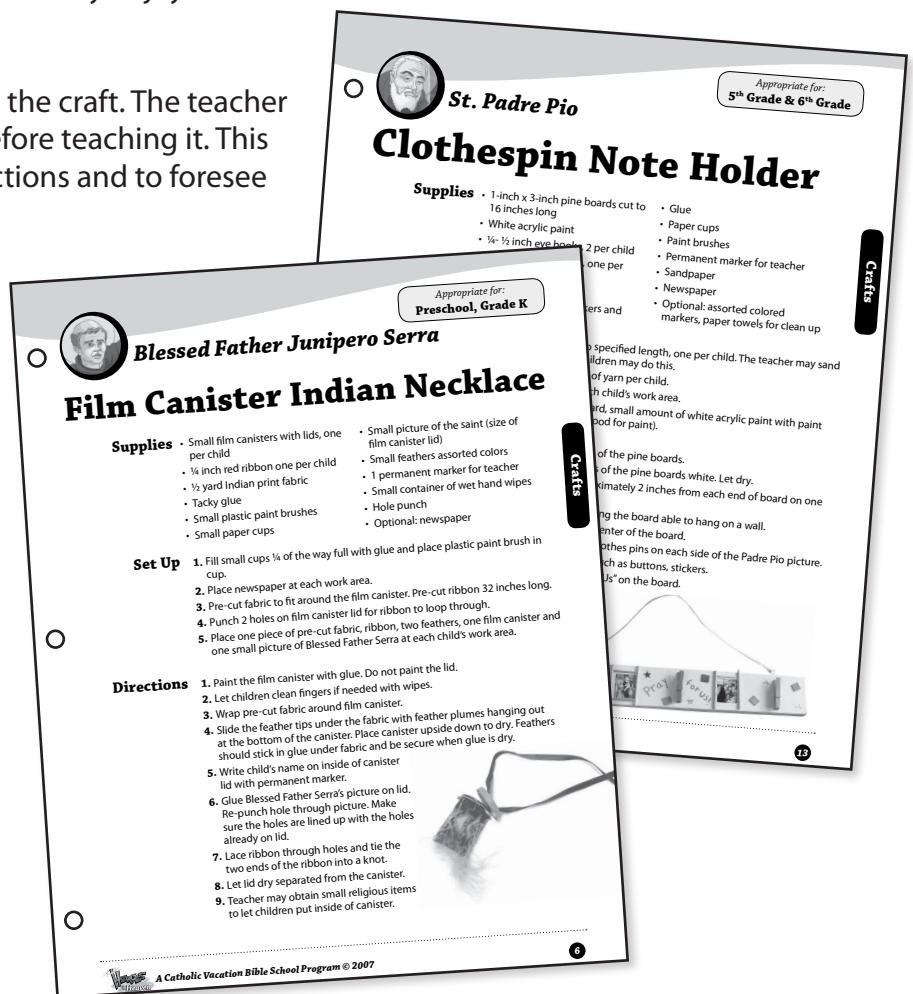
Prepare pre-cut items the day before the craft. The teacher should assemble the craft the day before teaching it. This will help the staff to explain the directions and to foresee any difficult areas.

• **The best way to succeed in teaching a craft is be prepared!**

• **Have fun!**

• **Don't panic if things don't go the way you had hoped.**

• **Remember: Children enjoy the process as much as the product!**





Introduction to Music

Music in the Heroes in Heaven™ is used as a fun way for the children to learn and retain information about the saints. Songs about the saint should be sung during Opening Circle and/or Closing Circle. The teachers and music director should learn the songs and sing them during transition times, for example, walking to the snack area. While they are doing the independent part of craft time songs can also be sung. The more they sing the more they will remember. Singing will also keep the group on-task during potentially restless times. Singing is fun! Enjoy the music aspect of the program and use it to build on the saint of each day.

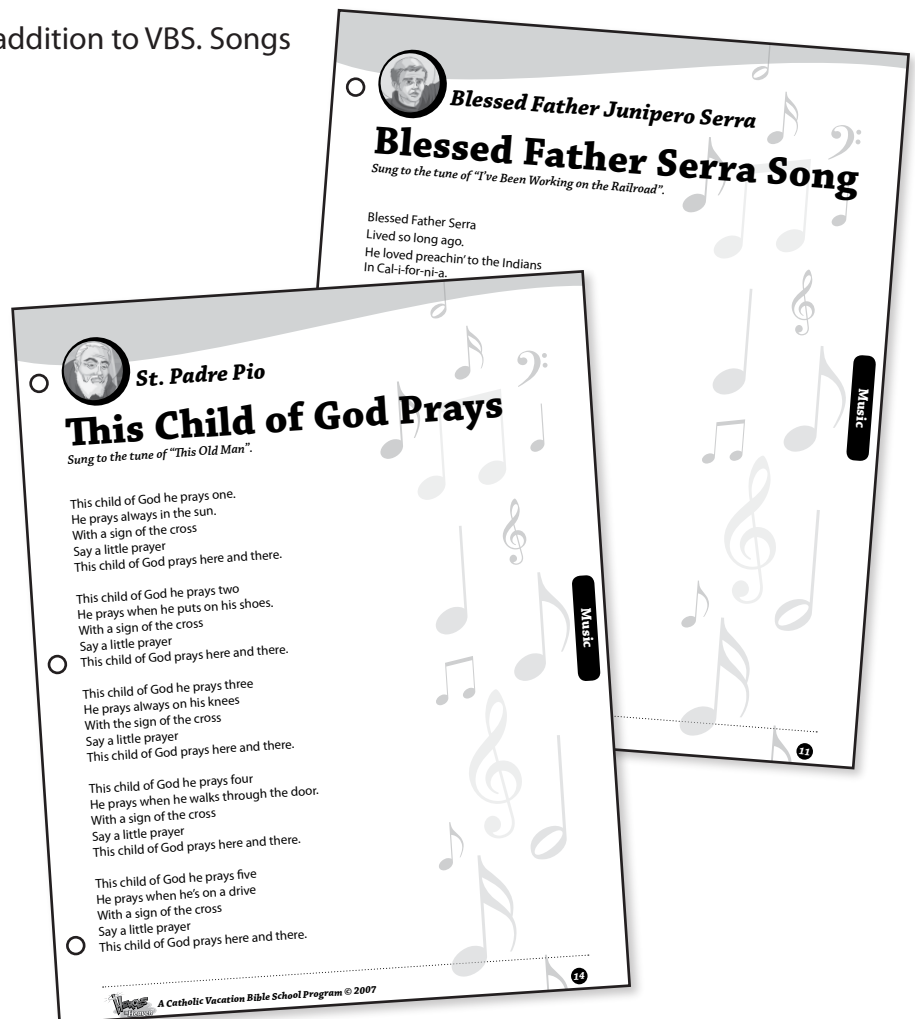
Praise and Worship songs are a nice addition to VBS. Songs to Include:

"This Little Light of Mine"

"I Believe in the Son"

"Noah's Ark Splish Splash Splish
Splash Splish Splash"

"When the Saints Go Marching In"





Introduction to Games

The following steps will help you set up for game time:

1) Locate the game area somewhere that is isolated from other group areas. The noise and activities may distract the other groups.

2) Welcome the children to the game area.

3) Introduce game leader and any helpers.

4) Review rules for the game time.

a) Follow directions completely.

b) Be polite.

c) Stay in your place.

d) Listen carefully.

5) Explain that many of the games do not work if the children do not follow the directions completely.

6) **What to do if children do not follow the rules:** Because the schedule is a short amount of time, it is essential that the children cooperate and follow rules. After the rules have been reviewed, give one warning to any child breaking any rule. The second time a rule is broken by a child, the child should be asked to leave the game and take a 1-2 minute time-out. The child may return when he/she has had this time-out and is ready to cooperate and follow rules. If the child returns and does not follow rules, the child should be asked to leave the game and remain sitting out for the rest of game time.







Introduction to Snacks

The snack coordinator may choose to prepare the snacks ahead of time. Another option is to recruit parent volunteers to prepare the snacks and bring to VBS.

The snack ideas are suggested to help reinforce the lessons taught about the saints. When the children are eating a snack that will remind them about the life of a saint, it helps them retain the concepts.

The snack coordinator should talk about the food and how it relates to the saint as the children are eating.

**St. John Vianney**
Vianney Tater Skins
Ingredients • 1 ½ tablespoons Italian-style salad dressing
• Peelings of 4 potatoes
Directions
1. Preheat oven to 375°
2. Scrub potato skins, and pat dry. Place in a medium bowl, and pour salad dressing over. Toss to coat. Spread the potato skins out in a thin layer on a baking sheet.
3. Bake for 20 minutes in preheated oven until crisp and golden.
Easy Alternative: Chips & Dip
Ingredients • 1 ¼ cups non-fat sour cream
• ½ cup fat-free mayonnaise
• 1/8 cup chopped green onion
• 1 (1 ounce) package dry onion soup mix
• ¼ teaspoon dried minced onion
Directions
1. In medium bowl, stir together non fat sour cream, fat free mayonnaise, green onion, dry onion soup mix, dry minced onion.
2. Chill until serving.
Easy Alternative: Potato Sticks
Ingredients • Potato snack sticks
Directions 1. Serve as-is or with dip above.

**St. Padre Pio**
Stigmata Jello Jigglers
Ingredients • 2 ½ cups boiling water
• 4 pack (4 serving size) or 2 pack (8 serving size) Jello gelatin any flavor
• Mitten-shaped cookie cutter
Directions
1. Stir boiling water into gelatin. Dissolve completely.
2. Pour the mixture slowly into T3-inch x 9-inch pan.
3. Refrigerate at least 3 hours.
4. Press cookie cutter into Jello and lift cutter straight up. Remove jigglers from pan. If jigglers are difficult to remove from pan, dip bottom of pan in warm water for a few seconds to loosen gelatin.
Easy Alternative
Ingredients • Pretzel sticks
Directions 1. Children can make cross shapes with pretzels before eating.

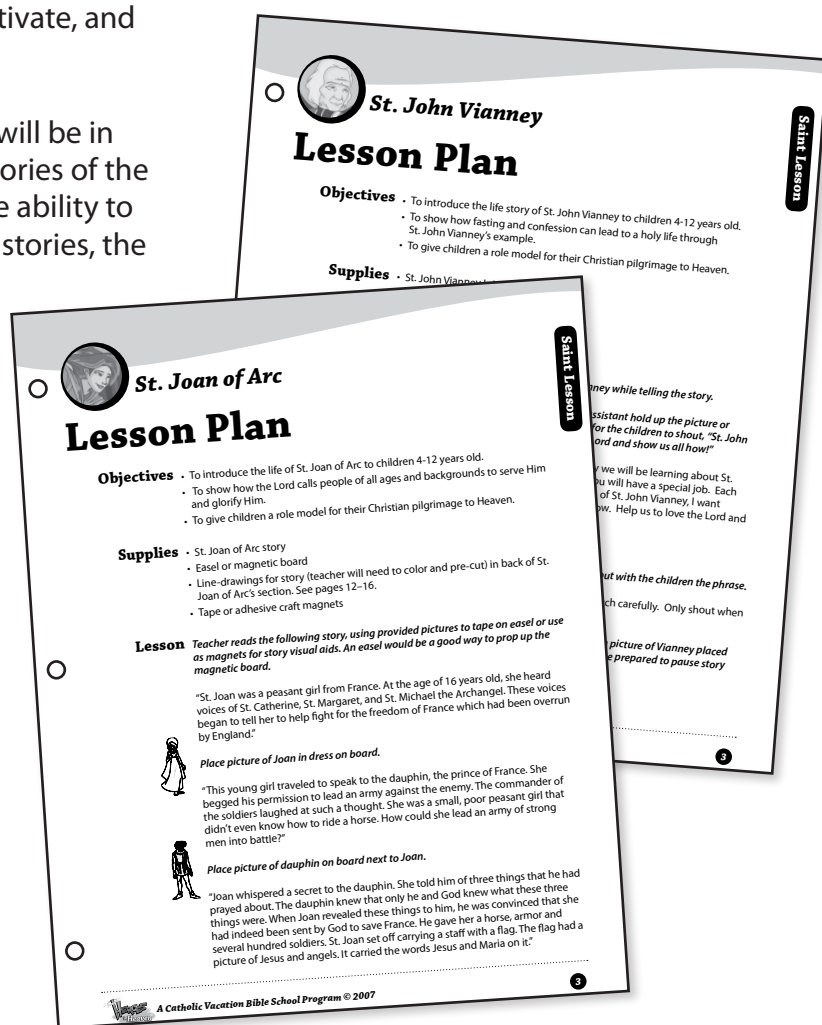


Introduction to the Saints

Heroes in Heaven™ VBS stories of the saints are designed to explain the lives of each saint. The form that each story takes has been created to keep children's attention. The facts are presented in creative and fun ways. The adults and the children of VBS will learn, remember, and revisit these holy stories about our heavenly family. Parents will be amazed that their children know about the saints' lives in detail. The children will retell the stories to their friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Child participation in the stories is an essential part of keeping the group on task. Each story will have child volunteers or audience participation. Both of these teaching techniques will inspire, captivate, and educate children of all ages.

Suggestions The program coordinator will be in charge of organizing and presenting the stories of the saints. It is vital that this individual have the ability to be dramatic. When reading any part of the stories, the program coordinator needs to read with expression. This means to express emotion appropriate to the text. If there is a suspenseful event, read with a looming, somewhat scary tone of voice. Loud and soft fluctuation in volume will also keep the children's attention. Read parts with a loud booming voice when appropriate, and at other times in the same story, read with a softer tone, almost a whisper. Children will have to tune in and listen carefully if the reader is whispering. Besides, no child can miss out on a potential secret! This dramatic experience is one of the most important aspects of the whole program. It should be rehearsed and well prepared to be effective. Good luck and enjoy the stories!





Dear Parents,

Welcome to Vacation Bible School! This week we will be discussing the following saints:

Each day your child will bring home an art project, a scripture memory verse card, and lots of smiles. Your child will have a name tag and a memory verse inside the name tag holder. Please help your child memorize the verse on the card in order to be able to choose a prize from our Catholic Treasure Box. Remind your child to wear the name tag each day to VBS.

We hope that you will join our team to instill in our Catholic children a love for our Heavenly Family, the saints, and angels. Please discuss each saint sometime each day, on the drive home or at dinner time with your child(ren). Parents are the foundation of faith for their children. The VBS staff have donated their time, love, and prayers for your child(ren). Please help to promote this work for the sake of your child's faith. As a team, Vacation Bible School and parent support can plant a precious seed of faith for God to water in your son(s) or daughter(s) life.

May God Bless You and Your Family

VBS Staff





Child's T-shirt Order Form

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Size: X-small Small Medium Large X-Large

.....

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Size: X-small Small Medium Large X-Large

.....

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Size: X-small Small Medium Large X-Large

.....

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Size: X-small Small Medium Large X-Large

.....





Catholic Vacation Bible School

Date: _____

Time: _____

Children (ages 4–12) will be learning about five saints:

There will be songs about the saints, crafts, games, and stories along with snacks and fun! Please sign up your child on the bulletin board by:

Hope to see you there!





Staff's T-shirt Order Form

Date: _____

Adult's Name: _____

Size: Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large Other

.....

Date: _____

Adult's Name: _____

Size: Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large Other

.....

Date: _____

Adult's Name: _____

Size: Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large Other

.....

Date: _____

Adult's Name: _____

Size: Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large Other

.....





Please Save the Following Items For VBS

Small Cardboard Boxes (jewelry boxes are great)

Buttons

Crystal Light Cans and Cups

Film Canisters with Lids

Small Glass Jars with Lids

(bouillon cube jars size: 2 1/4-inches x 5 1/4-inches)

Laundry Detergent Scoops

Round Oatmeal Boxes (any size)

Small Photo Albums

Empty Check Boxes

Milk Jug Lids

Empty CD Cases

Plastic Peanut Butter Jars

Please place items:



About Devotionals

The devotional part of Heroes in Heaven™ is woven into the program daily. It may be done with the Closing Circle activities or in the individual groups during free times. The smaller groups work the best because each teacher can modify the activity to make it more meaningful for each age group. Enjoy discussions with the children about the meaning of each devotional. Allow time for the children to reflect.

This should be a rapport-building time for the teacher. Children enjoy adults listening to their feelings, fears, hopes and desires. Life is very busy for many families. This devotional time at VBS should be a special loving atmosphere for the children to express their reverence for Jesus, and their love for others.

Before beginning the devotional time, children should be calm and focused. Each child should be ready to pray and listen. Part of talking to God involves being quiet and listening for Him to answer back. A child's world is filled with much noise. Take this devotional time to give them some quiet meditation.

Enjoy listening, praying, and talking to the children.





Children's Stations of the Cross

Softly and reverently let each child read a Station. Non-readers will have to have the teacher read.

There are many children's versions of the Stations of the Cross. If your parish has children's Stations of the Cross they may be used. Heroes in Heaven™ uses the *"Children's Stations of the Cross"* by Susan Andrews Brindle, Joan Andrews Bell and Miriam Andrews Lademan, from Precious Life Books, St. Martin de Porres Lay Dominican Community, New Hope, KY

Suggestion Heroes in Heaven™ recommends that pictures of the Stations are erected outside in an out-of-the-way place. There are many nice laminated or 8 x 10 inexpensive paper reproductions of the Stations. Tape the pictures to sturdy cardboard. Obtain 14 tomato stakes from a gardener or local gardening store. Duct tape the pictures to a tomato stake and place into the ground. Place each Station at least four feet apart from the next one. If you have room, position each Station in a manner that the next one cannot be seen until the group moves to the area. Children work well when they get to move with this activity. Rural parishes will have more opportunity to find this quiet place. Parishes in larger cities may find that inside the church would be the best secluded place and use the Stations on the walls.





Merry Go Round

Supplies • Small parachute (www.toysrus.com)

- Directions**
1. Children face the same direction, all holding the parachute with left hand.
 2. Divide the group down the middle of the parachute.
 3. Start walking slowly and one side walks and pulls the parachute up while the other side walks slowly and pushes the parachute down. Continue walking and alternating up and down on opposite side of the parachute.
 4. Have one adult on each side to help the kids know when to go up or down.
 5. Play Merry-Go- Round music if available.





Parachute Floating Cloud Game

Supplies • Small parachute (www.toysrus.com)

- Directions**
1. Children sit around parachute in a squatting position, holding onto the parachute edge.
 2. When the teacher yells "UP" all children pull the parachute up over their heads and as soon as the parachute reaches the highest point.
 3. The teacher yells "LET GO!" and all children let go of the parachute and slap hands down to their sides and do not move.
 4. The parachute should balloon up and slowly float a short distance in the air. Do not let children run after it. It may float onto some of the kids. All children should stay in their places no matter where the parachute goes. Sometimes the smaller parachutes ripple in the air more than float, but it's still a fun thing to try a couple of times.



Good Deed Parachute Game

- Supplies**
- Small parachute (available at www.toysrus.com)
 - 10 small, soft balls (fiber-filled balls, lightweight plastic balls or tennis balls will work)

- Set Up**
1. Have the parachute spread out on the ground before children arrive.
 2. Children should gather around the parachute and sit down by the outer edge. At this time directions and rules will be given to children. Keep all children looking at teacher and listening quietly.

- Directions**
1. Give each child a ball.
 2. Each child will put the ball up against his/her head to represent thinking.
 3. Talk about good deeds. What are good deeds? What are some examples of good deeds? Tell some examples of good deeds, e.g., helping a little brother or sister get a drink, shoveling snow for a neighbor. The children should think of their own good deed.
 4. Take turns going around the circle and let the children shout out their good deed and throw the ball into the parachute. The ball represents this good deed.
 5. When all the "good deeds" are in the parachute; it's time to hold the parachute by the edges or handles and stand up carefully.
 6. Turn on the good deed machine to send our good deeds up to Heaven. The children shake the parachute up and down in a standing position until all the balls have bounced out.
 7. Try to keep the balls in as long as possible. Older children will be able to do this longer than the younger ones.
 8. When all balls have bounced out, turn off the "machine," all children stop shaking the parachute and sit down at the edge of the parachute.
 9. Choose 2-3 children to collect the balls and put them in a box or basket.

Suggestion Pretending to turn on and off the "machine" can be up to the imagination of the leader. You may pretend to turn an invisible knob underneath the parachute or make machine noise when turning on or off the parachute. You may act like the machine is not working because the leader forgot to plug it in. Adding drama will make the game more fun and will keep the children's attention. You may also have the children help make machine noises for the activity.



Catch a Saint Parachute Game

Supplies • Small parachute (available at www.toysrus.com)

- Set Up**
1. Parachute should be spread out before children arrive.
 2. Have children sit down around the edge of the parachute to listen to directions of the game.

- Directions**
1. When the teacher says "Go" all children should hold onto the parachute and stand up.
 2. Pull the parachute all the way up, as high as your arms will reach. This will make a mushroom-like effect.
 3. At this time the teacher will shout a child's name. That child will run under the elevated parachute across to the opposite side.
 4. The children holding the parachute will try to bring the parachute down quickly to capture the child running underneath.
 5. This activity needs to be monitored carefully. Children holding the parachute should not slam the parachute down with too much force. This could make the child getting captured fall down.
 6. Repeat the game until all have had a turn running under the parachute.



Saint, Saint, Angel, Game

This is a Catholic version of Duck, Duck, Goose.

Directions

1. Children make a circle by holding hands.
2. Once they have the circle formed they may drop hands and sit down.
3. Choose one person to be the angel.
4. The angel walks around the outside of the circle tapping each person's head saying "saint, saint," until he says "angel".
5. The person chosen as angel must get up and run to catch the one that tapped them as angel.
6. Run until the tapper gets back to the spot of the person they tapped. If the person tapped catches the "angel" he goes in the middle we call Purgatory until someone gets caught again.