Goals: To provide a lesson for children about a saint or saints who exemplify a deep relationship with God and the ability to share it with others

Materials Needed: This lesson plan, accompanying story, and any necessary materials for follow up activities

Objectives:
1. To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a saint?
   One who:
   - lives like Jesus
   - teaches others about Jesus by their example
   - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
3. To introduce one of our Church’s saints, Saint Louise De Marillac, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Louise is a saint because she lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
5. To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
6. To help the children develop listening skills

Procedure:
1. Prepare the children to listen to Louise de Marillac’s story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Louise. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Louise de Marillac

Louise de Marillac was born in 1591 near Le Meux, France, north east of Paris. Her parents were not married when she was born, and Louise never knew her mother. Her father was a member of a well-to-do local family and Louise grew up among wealthy society. When her father married, his new wife did not accept Louise and treated her poorly. Although she grew up in comfortable surroundings and received an excellent education at a royal monastery run by Dominican Sisters, her homelife was not a happy one. When Louise was twelve, her father died, and she left school and lived with a faith filled single woman in her town who taught her not only how to run a household but also how to tend a garden and use herbs for healing.

A few years later Louise felt called to become a cloistered Sister, living a life of prayer and service in a convent. She was understandably sad when she was not accepted, but decided that God must have other plans for her.

When she was twenty-two, Louise married Antoine Le Gras, who was the secretary for Queen Marie of France. Together they had a son, Michel and were happily married. Louise loved her husband and son and became active in her parish’s activities, especially the Ladies of Charity, which was a group of wealthy women who helped women who lived in poverty. When Antoine contracted a chronic illness and became bedridden, Louise nursed her husband for years until his death; she was only 35 when she became a widow.
Louise went to a local priest, Fr. Francis de Sales – who would later become a saint himself – for counseling. With encouragement, she wrote what she called her “Rule of Life in the World”, which detailed the structure of her day. This included spiritual things like attending Mass, spiritual reading, fasting, penance, and reciting the rosary. It also listed everyday things like caring for her son, running her house, and maintaining her friendships, and volunteer work.

Because she was a widow and had no financial support, Louise and Michel were forced to move to a different home. It was here that she met Fr. Vincent de Paul – another future saint! – who became her spiritual guide. Louise soon became involved in Vincent’s Confraternities of Charity, which was an organization of local lay women who helped the poor. She and Vincent discovered that, although wealthy women had the funds to support the work, it was the poor themselves who were willing to do the sometimes physical, hard labor of caring for the sick and neglected. They also found that the women they served were more comfortable with their peers. Thus, the Daughters of Charity was born – a non-cloistered order of religious women who served the poor and sick wherever they found them. “Love the poor and honor them as you would honor Christ Himself,” Louise was known to say.

At first, the poor and sick were served in their own homes. Eventually the women, dressed in their distinctive gray wool dresses and large white headdress, called a habit, developed a pastoral care system. They formed a partnership of doctors, nurses, chaplains, and the Daughters of Charity who worked together caring for a patient’s mental, spiritual, and physical health in many different institutions and homes. This idea was later incorporated into hospital as a standard practice.

Though busy with her ministry, Louise always made time for prayer, and spent time with her son, Michel, and his family.

Louise ministered to the poor until she fell ill and passed away at the age of 68 on March 15, just six months before her friend and mentor, Fr. Vincent de Paul. She left a legacy of more than 40 “Houses”, a combination of hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions that were using her and Fr. Vincent’s successful pastoral care model. Louise de Marillac was canonized in 1934 and was declared Patroness of Social Workers in 1960.

1. **Pray:** Saint Louise, you rose above an unhappy childhood and truly listened to what God wanted for your life. Help us to stay close to God in prayer, as you did, while serving the poor and needy among us and around the world. For it is in doing so that we honor and love the poor as we would honor Christ Himself. Amen.

**Follow-up Questions:** (add, omit, re-word as appropriate for your grade level)

1. Saint Louise had many hardships in her life. What were they? How did she stay on her God-given path?
2. Saint Louise managed to balance her daily life—being a mother and friend and her spiritual life, praying and going to Mass. Do you think it was easy? Why or why not?
3. How many saints did Saint Louise come to know in her life time? How many do you think you will know?

**Follow-up Activities:**

**All students:**

1. The distance between Le Meux France, birthplace of Saint Louise, and Boston, Massachusetts is 3,438 miles. Can your school or parish collect 3,438 quarters for the missions during Lent? Put a big water jar in your lobby and watch your donations grow!
2. Host a day in your school or parish when students dress in white—the color of the World Mission Rosary that stands for Europe—in honor of Saint Louise, and charge each student $1 for doing so. Send your donations to the Missionary Childhood Association so that more children who live in poverty can receive daily help!

**Older students:**

1. Saint Louise wrote her “Rule of Life in the World.” Write your own, including details about how you keep your relationship with God balanced throughout your everyday tasks.