

SAINT OF THE MONTH



SAINT JOHN KANTY



Heaven's Heroes: growing in faith with a little help from the saints

This month, we are inspired by

Saint John Kanty

Feast Day

December 23

Canonized

1767 by Pope Clement XIII

Catholics are encouraged to pray to the saints, blessed, and venerable people for strength and guidance.

Reading about their lives can serve as inspiration to us for our daily lives. May the following lesson, follow-up questions, prayer, and activities bring us closer to Jesus and help us to grow as missionary disciples.

Goals of the Lesson:

- To inspire children to have a love for saints
- To help students understand that we are all called to holiness
- To teach children to turn to saints in prayer

Materials Needed:

- This lesson plan
- A map or globe

It may be helpful to remind students that a saint is a person who lived their lives in a way that honored Jesus' teaching and by doing so, taught others about Him. Also, it is important for them to know that it is not only those whom the Church has proclaimed a saint who are in Heaven. The official recognition simply allows us to venerate them.

In the Classroom

Prepare students to listen to Saint John Kanty's story by inviting them to remember that he was holy because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus. Read, or have read as much of the story as you deem appropriate for children of your grade level.

Use the suggested follow-up questions to begin or enhance your discussions about Saint John Kanty, also known as Saint John Cantius.



SAINT JOHN KANTY



To most people in the United States, Saint John Kanty — also called John from Kenty, Canty, or Cantius — is a relatively unknown saint. Yet, this professor priest was deeply admired by someone most of us know, Saint John Paul II.

Born to Anna and Stanislaus Kanty in 1390, just 13 miles from the late Holy Father's hometown in the Polish countryside, young John showed academic talent at an early age. He found himself attending one of the finest schools in the nearby city, Krakow Academy. He went on to study at the same University (Jagiellonian University) that would see the future brilliance of students like Nicolas Copernicus, the famed mathematician and astronomer, and Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II.

John Kanty received his bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees and began teaching at the very school he had attended

He was known for his kindness not only to his students but also to the poor of Krakow. He kept only what he absolutely needed of his salary for his basic daily maintenance and gave the rest to the poor. As a way to save funds and live in solidarity with the hungry, he ate no meat. John also gave of himself constantly, sleeping little.

His popularity and success at such a young age led other professors to be envious, resulting in a plot to have him wrongly accused of a rules infraction. John was relieved of his teaching job and sent to be a parish priest—something he had been ordained for but for which he had no experience. His new parishioners were less than pleased with the idea of a disgraced professor as their new pastor and they did not give him a warm welcome.

Knowing people could not be forced to accept him, John pretended not to notice and simply lived and worked every day with the love of Christ as his guide.

After eight years, John Kanty was cleared of the false charges against him and summoned back to teach in Krakow. His formerly cold parishioners were said to have lined the streets calling after him to stay!

John returned to Krakow and taught Sacred Scripture for the rest of his life. He continued his humble lifestyle and outreach to the poor. A story is told of him arriving at a dinner given by a nobleman in an old, raggedy cassock and being turned away at the door by a servant who thought John's outfit was too frayed to be in such high company. He went home and put on new garb and returned, only to have a servant spill food on him! "No matter," he joked, "My clothes deserve some dinner, too. If it hadn't been for them I wouldn't be here at all."

When John Kanty died, he was considered one of the holiest, well-loved men in the city. He was known for his care for the poor and his special love for students—in mind, body, and spirit.

John was also known as a great defender of the faith. Not long after his death, his tomb became the destination for many European Catholic pilgrims, praying for his kindly intercession.

Throughout his own years in Krakow, Saint John Paul II drew great inspiration from his visits to Saint John Kanty's grave. On his 1997 trip to his homeland, it was no surprise to his fellow Poles that the then-Pope's itinerary included a trip to the tomb of Saint John Kanty.



SAINT JOHN KANTY



Pray

Saint John Kanty, during your life, you were treated unjustly. You bore it with the quiet dignity of a Christian, neither holding a grudge nor seeking to return the offense. Instead, you lived a life focused on Christ and His presence in others, especially the young and the poor. Help us to keep our focus like yours—on a life of holiness and service to the poor, especially children. Amen.

Think

1. Saint John Kanty was treated unjustly—he was accused of something he didn't do and lost his job because of it. How do you feel when something unjust happens to you? To whom can you go to seek justice?
2. How did Saint John Kanty show his humility?
3. Do you feel called to holiness? Why or why not? How do you see holiness in others?
4. What do you think drew Saint John Paul II to admire Saint John Kanty so much?

Act

All students: MCA members in Saint John Kanty's home country of Poland celebrate their membership by Christmas Caroling in their towns and neighborhoods. They sing, ask for donations, and give away information about the missions. Organize a similar activity at your school or parish. **OR** If your school or faith formation program puts on a Christmas pageant, charge a small admission fee, or sell baked goods and cocoa and donate the funds to MCA to help feed the poor of the missions in honor of Saint John Kanty.

Younger students:

Live like Saint John Kanty during this season of giving: think of the poor and ask for less. As we approach Christmas, make a choice to shorten your "Christmas List" a bit; ask Santa to make a contribution to MCA instead.

Older students:

Saint John Kanty had his motto (in Latin) painted on his wall: "Guard against causing trouble and slandering others, for it is difficult to right the evil done." It's easy to understand why this was meaningful to him! Write your own life motto and create a poster to hang in your own room to help you to be true to it every day.