

## Heaven's Heroes: growing in the faith, with a little help from the Saints.



**This month, we are inspired by:**  
Blessed Lucien Botovasoa

**Feast day:**  
April 14

**Beatified:**  
April 15, 2018

Catholics are encouraged to pray to the saints for strength and guidance. Reading about lives of the Saints can serve as inspiration to us during our daily lives. May the following activities bring us closer to Jesus and grow as missionary disciples.

**Goal of this activity:**

To inspire in children a love for the saints and help them understand that we are all called to a life of holiness, inspired by those who came before us, and in whom we can trust to intercede on our behalf when we are struggling.

**Materials Needed:**

This lesson plan, the accompanying story and prayer card, which we encourage to be shared through the parish and/or school's social media accounts if available. Depending on each month's lesson and the age of the students, other materials, such as coloring pencils, might be necessary.

**It might be useful to remember, and remind the students...**

that a saint is a person who lives like Jesus and teaches others about Jesus with their example. And that even though it is not only those who have been proclaimed by the Church as saints following their deaths are in Heaven, the official recognition of sainthood also allows us to venerate them.

**With this month's activity we hope...**

you will be able to introduce to your students Blessed Lucien, sharing with them as much - or as little - of his story as you deem appropriate for the children at your grade level.

With this activity, which will help children develop their listening skills, you are invited to share Blessed Lucien Botovasoa's story with them. We hope that they will learn that Lucien was holy because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus, and that we are all called by God to share the Gospel with others.

**In the classroom:**

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



# Blessed Lucien Botovasoa

In 1908, Lucien Botovasoa was the first born of nine children in his family in a rural part of southeastern Madagascar. Lucien was baptized into the Catholic faith at age ten and received his First Holy Communion at age fourteen. After studying at state-run schools for a few years, Lucien attended the Jesuit College of Saint Joseph.

After graduating with a teaching certificate, he became an instructor at that school. He liked to end every class with a short story on the life of a different saint - just like the one you are reading now! Lucien took the Jesuit Latin motto 'ad maiorem Dei gloriam', which translates to 'All for the greater glory of God'.

Lucien Botovasoa tried to live his life every day so that people would see Christ in his words and actions. On October 10, 1930, Lucien married Suzanne Soazana in his local parish. They became the parents of five children. Because he had a prayerful demeanor and lived a life of obvious piety, a nun that Lucien worked with once asked him if he ever regretted marrying instead of becoming a priest. Lucien replied immediately, "I do not have the slightest regret at all." He felt that he was well able to serve God through his marital vocation.

Lucien was a man of many talents. In addition to Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, he spoke Italian, Latin, German, and Chinese. He was also known for his musical gifts and used them to praise God as a singer and musician in his parish choir. Eventually, he became the choir director.

The people who knew Lucien best described him as always smiling and joyful. He radiated the love of God!

Although happily married and devoted to his family, Lucien desired a closer tie to religious life. He found the perfect fit for him when he read about the Rule of the Third Order of Franciscans. This is a world-wide community of Catholic men and women who follow a code of simple living set forth by Saint Francis of Assisi.

Sadly, there was no such group in his country. Undeterred, Lucien sought out other like-minded people and established a local branch in 1944. He began to dress in brown as Franciscans do, instead of the usual black of a Malagasy teacher.

After the end of World War II, political upheaval came to the island of Madagascar. Some people urged Lucien to run for political office but he wanted no part of serving anyone but God. His wife feared that his public holiness was casting an unwanted spotlight on him in this time of unrest in the country, but Lucien was not afraid. In 1947, a persecution of Christians began with priests and nuns being arrested and random people being killed for their faith. His own church was burned on Palm Sunday of that year.

On April 14, 1947, as Lucien sat eating lunch with his pregnant wife and four other children, he heard that the anti-Christian forces were coming for him. He entrusted his wife and children to the care of his brother. Lucien was arrested, condemned without trial, and killed that night by men whom he had taught when they were school boys. He prayed for them as he died, saying, "If my life must redeem the life of many others, don't hesitate to kill me." Incredibly, not long after, the man who had judged him and passed sentence on him converted to Christianity.

Pope Francis declared that Lucien had died "in odium fidei" and he was beatified by Cardinal Maurice Piat on April 15, 2018, in the town of Vohipeno, Madagascar. Blessed Lucien is counted among the patrons of married couples, fathers, and teachers.

# Follow-up Activities:

## Younger students:

1. Blessed Lucien was known to be joyful at all times because of his love for God. Think about the happiest person you know. Ask them if they'd be willing to share their joyful inspiration with you.
2. Blessed Lucien loved to learn more about the lives of saints. This month, make a plan to read books or watch videos about saints' lives. Pick a favorite and pray for that saint's help on your own path to holiness.

## Older students:

1. Many Saints that we hear about had a vocation to religious life, while Blessed Lucien, was called to being a teacher, husband and father. In a group discussion, talk about vocations. What do you want to be when you grow up? How does that relate to the vocation of religious life, marriage, or being single. In what ways, can you make Christ the center of your life, now and in the future?
2. As we honor the spirit of Blessed Lucien Botovasoa, read more about the Missions in Madagascar and other areas where Christians have been persecuted. What parallels do you see between the life of Blessed Lucien Botovasoa and Christ?

## All students:

1. Blessed Lucien lived simply as a Third Order Franciscan. As missionaries, we are called to live as simply, too. For example, give up extra treats and snacks, be sure to turn out unneeded lights, or pack your lunch instead of buying it. Any money saved by living simply, you can donate to children in the missions.
2. Many children in Blessed Lucien's home country of Madagascar go without the basics of education that he cherished. Thank God for your school and teachers and make a small sacrifice for mission children into your Mite Box. Don't have one? Make a mission bank from a shoe box or other container.