

The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc

PRO TIP
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CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 1617

MATERIALS

- ▶ [The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

40 minutes

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY STANDARDS

8.11.1 TOB Describe the idea of a vocation and how it is the way one makes a total gift-of-self. (TOB 78, 86; CCC 915-916, 929, 932, 1579, 1603, 1605, 1618-1620)

Teacher Background

It is the vocation, or calling, of every Christian to dwell eternally in the blessed happiness of Heaven with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all the angels and saints. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that our identity is self-created, and that, if we so choose, our feelings in a way can actually define us. But the truth is that our feelings do not define us. God gives each person a vocation (or a call) to serve Him and others in a special way. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others. This gift may be made in marriage, or as a priest, religious, or consecrated virgin.

Gender ideology also asserts that our sex or so-called gender identity is self-determined. But our sex is in fact determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. Nothing we can do to our body or clothing we put on it can ever change that.

Activity

- A. Begin by asking students to name their favorite saints (and/or their Confirmation saints) and discuss briefly the different walks of life represented in that group. Then ask them to think of ways their chosen saint lived out extraordinary courage in the face of difficulty, was especially devoted to the pursuit of justice, or lived out any other virtue. Finally, ask what each saint's vocation was (i.e. whether it was to marriage, to the priesthood, or as a religious or consecrated virgin).
- B. Explain that it is the vocation, or calling, of every Christian to dwell eternally in the blessed happiness of heaven with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all the angels and saints. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a life-long gift of yourself in service to God and others. This aspect of your vocation will mean a permanent commitment. The *Catechism* explains that "the entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church" (CCC 1617). In other words, we are called to give ourselves fully and permanently to another: to our spouse, or to the Church.

C. Continue to explain that the saints give us many different examples of just how rich and varied the call to holiness looks among the members of the Church. The saints lived lives of heroic virtue. This means they exemplified virtue in extraordinary ways, over a long period of time. One such saint was Joan of Arc, an illiterate farmer's daughter whom God called to lead the French army to victory against the British.

D. Distribute [The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc](#) and read over the information. Then read aloud (or ask students to read aloud) the story of St. Joan of Arc.

E. Before you begin, or after you complete the reading, you may wish to spend a few moments looking at the paintings and discussing what we can know about St. Joan from looking at them.

F. Next, have students get into small groups and discuss the conversation questions. Circulate around the room keeping students focused. Then after some time has passed, call on groups to share their responses.

The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc

Directions: Read the information and the story of St. Joan of Arc. Then discuss the questions.

A person's vocation is the unique call from God to love and serve Him in business, in family, or in any other way. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a gift of yourself in service to God and others. This respect of your vocation will mean a life-long commitment: it may be in marriage, where you love your spouse and help them get to heaven as long as you both live, or as a priest, religious, or consecrated virgin, where your whole life is given to the Church.

This story gives us many examples of how rich and varied the call to be a saint (our vocation to beatific life) looks among the members of the Church: from the young Dominic Savio to intellectual giant Thomas Aquinas, from the "Little Flower" Therese of Lisieux who struggled to find her voice when she was young to the courageous Joan of Arc. Each lived out their individual call from God with the unique gifts God had given them, great or small. As St. Therese wrote, "The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its sweet nor the daisy of its simple charm."

St. Joan of Arc
Joan was born in a tiny French village. A farmer's daughter, she had never learned to read. Joan had responded to God's calling—her vocation—and had taken it on as a consecrated virgin before the Lord.

At the age of 13, the unique adventure God had planned for her took a dramatic turn: she heard the voices of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, telling her to lead the French army to victory against England. At first Joan was frightened, but she trusted God.

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G. You may wish to explain that while St. Joan is known for wearing men's clothing, it is false and misleading to imply that she did so as a political statement or because she identified as a man. Joan wore men's clothing so it would be harder for men to try to take advantage of her. As she endured unwelcome advances, she was keenly aware she remained a female even though she was dressed as a man! Gender ideology asserts that our sex or so-called gender identity is self-determined. But our sex is in fact determined at conception, observed in utero or at birth, and never changes. Nothing we can do to our body, no clothing we put on it, and not even the way we feel about it can ever change our sex.

The Heroic Life of St. Joan of Arc

Directions: Read the information and the story of St. Joan of Arc. Then discuss the questions.

A person's vocation is the unique call from God to love and serve Him in holiness. It is like an adventure that God has planned just for you, and the adventure ends with becoming a saint. While every vocation is special in some way, they all will include one thing in common: making a gift of yourself in service to God and others. This aspect of your vocation will mean a life-long commitment. It may be in marriage, where you love your spouse and help them get

to heaven as long as you both live, or as a priest, religious, or consecrated virgin, where your whole life is given to the Church.

The saints give us many examples of how rich and varied the call to be a saint (our vocation to beatitude) looks among the members of the Church: from the young Dominic Savio to intellectual giant Thomas Aquinas, from the "Little Flower" Therese of Lisieux who struggled to find her voice when she was young to the dauntless Joan of Arc. Each lived out their individual call from God with the unique gifts God had given them, great or small. As St. Thérèse wrote, "The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm."



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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

She understood that God had chosen a young and defenseless girl to win victory for France because He chooses the weak to humble the proud.

Joan went to the French court to meet the king. To test her, the king disguised himself and hid in the crowd. Immediately, Joan identified him even though she had never seen him before. She told him that God wanted her to lead his army. "I am not afraid," Joan told him, "for this I was born." The king realized that Joan had been sent by God and did as she wished. Joan's fearlessness convinced him. Charles had her clad in white armor. He gave her a sword, a charger, and a banner bearing the names of Jesus and Mary. And though it seemed impossible, Charles gave Joan charge of his army.

With God, however, nothing is impossible. Joan led the French army and pushed the English out of France. Even though victory would soon be France's, there were still small battles to fight. In one of these battles, Joan was captured and put on trial by Church officials who worked for the English, not the pope. On a technicality, they found Joan guilty of heresy — for wearing men's clothing — and condemned her to death by burning.

Joan of Arc is held up by some today as a symbol of gender ideology because she dressed in men's clothing. But Joan dressed as a man not because she identified as a male, but to protect her femininity. Within the all-male French military and during her imprisonment, Joan



endured unwelcome advances. She put on men's clothes (a hose and tunic connected by several straps) so she would be harder to attack. During her trial, Joan explained, "the clothes are a small matter, the least of all things." She knew that a woman dressed in men's clothes is still a woman.

At her execution, Joan kissed the crucifix, and her eyes never left it as she called out the name of Jesus. The pyre was set on fire, and Joan knew that soon she would be with God and the saints in heaven. She was 19 years old.

Thirty years later, a Church court declared that her trial had been unfair, and she was declared innocent of all crimes.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

Discussion Questions

- 1 What do you think St. Thérèse meant by saying “The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm”?
- 2 Think of your favorite saint(s). What special gifts did God give them to live out their call to holiness? What gifts did He give Joan of Arc?
- 3 The Cardinal Virtues are prudence (knowing the right thing to do and then doing it); temperance (avoiding extremes and moderating our desires); justice (giving God and neighbor their due); and fortitude (courage to pursue the good despite difficulties). For each of these virtues, give an example of how St. Joan lived it out.
- 4 The Cardinal Virtues are virtues that everyone, men and women alike, can and should strive for. What are some ways you can live out these virtues in the service of God and others?
- 5 Joan’s example also reminds us that women do not lose their femininity because they are strong and fearless. In fact, their fortitude inspires those around them to be better. For example, in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Toph teaches Aang combat skills so he becomes willing to face danger head-on. From *Toy Story*’s Jesse, to Zelda from *The Legend of Zelda* game series, you can probably think of other female figures whose femininity brings out manly virtues in men (i.e. inspires them to “man up.”) What other examples can you think of?

1. Each of us is beautiful in our own way, and the fact that some may have gifts that are grander or more obvious does not in any way take away from others who have simpler but still beautiful gifts.
2. Discussions of individual saints will vary. God gifted St. Joan of Arc with bravery, fortitude, cunning, determination, obedience. Accept additional reasoned answers.
3. Answers will vary.
4. Possible answers could be that she showed prudence in her command of the French army to victory, and in her decision to wear men’s clothing as a means of protecting herself. She showed temperance in her meek response to being falsely accused and unjustly executed. She lived out justice in her faithful service to the king and in her obedience to God’s call. She showed fortitude throughout the story, continuing in pursuit of the good despite great obstacles.
5. Discussions will vary. In addition to the examples given in the question, other possible answers may include Princess Leia who inspires Han Solo to be a better man in the original Star Wars trilogy; Hermione in the Harry Potter series who inspires Harry and Ron to be braver. Accept additional reasoned answers.

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