

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

A brave widow — Jane Frances de Chantal

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

Jane Frances' mother died when Jane was only 18 months old. Jane's father, an important political leader in France, raised his daughter. He saw that she received an excellent education from tutors at home. She grew up to be a beautiful, sensitive woman, cheerful and full of life.

When Jane Frances was 21 she met a nobleman, Baron Christophe de Chantal. They grew to love one another and were married in 1592. They lived together in his castle.

They had six children but two died as infants. Christophe was often away, serving in the king's army. Jane Frances raised the children. She had to supervise the work in the fields as well as inside the castle.

Jane Frances was good to the servants and workers. She was very generous to poor people who came to the castle. She was particularly kind to people who

were sick or elderly.

The happiest days for Jane Frances were when Christophe was home with her. They were happily married for nine years. Then Christophe was killed in a hunting accident.

That sad moment changed Jane Frances' life. She was a young widow with four young children. Jane became very depressed. She wondered how she could go on alone. For four months she could hardly cope.

Christophe's father was very angry with his daughter-in-law. He demanded that Jane Frances and the children live with him. He threatened to disinherit the children if they did not live in his home. But his housekeeper did not want Jane and the children there. She made life difficult for them.

Jane missed her husband terribly. Still she struggled cheerfully to make the best of a difficult situation. She taught her children to read and to count. She also taught them their prayers. She

took good care of them.

One day she met a great and holy priest, Francis de Sales. They became friends. She shared with him her problems and her hopes. He helped her see God at work in her life. Francis told her one of his dreams.

He wanted to bring together young girls and widows to form a new kind of religious community. They would live together, praying and working. But they would not stay inside the convent like other religious women. They would go out to visit the sick and poor in their homes.

Jane Frances felt God calling her to that kind of life. Her children were grown. One was already married. After much thought and prayer Jane Frances decided to begin a new life as a nun.

She became a founder of the Visitation Sisters. She lived the rest of her life with the other Sisters, working, praying, caring for others. St. Francis de Sales said of her later, "She was one of the holiest people I ever met."

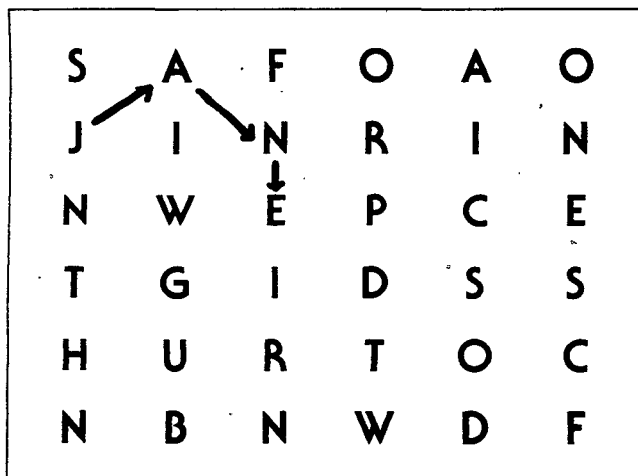


The church honors her as a saint.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

Hidden Words

Find the words hidden in the puzzle below. The letters to the words are all mixed up. Look at the example. Draw a line from one letter to the next. The words are all from this week's children's story.



SAINT, FRANCES, NUN, WIDOW, PRIEST

HOW ABOUT YOU?

□ What kind of person was St. Jane Frances de Chantal? What did she do that caused history to remember her? Are there people like her today?

Children's Reading Corner

In their imaginations, children develop ideas of what a family is and should be. Sometimes, if they are in a one-parent family, they construct their own ideas of what the other parent would be like if he or she lived with them. In the story, "A Father Like That" by Charlotte Zolotow, a little boy gives his mother a detailed description of the kind of father he would be. Read it together. Afterward talk over your thoughts, feelings and questions about the book's characters. (Harper and Row Publishers, 10 E. 53 St., New York, N.Y. 10022. 1971. Hardback. \$10.53.)



Frontier

There is a frontier ruggedness about young men studying for the priesthood in Alaska. They have to be tough. After ordination, planes, boats and snowmobiles will take them to remote missions in Eskimo villages, logging camps and outposts in the Aleutian Islands.

With funding from the Catholic Church Extension Society, they are now able to pursue the priesthood with intense missionary zeal. They are part of a team that brings God's Word to isolated people here in the United States. But that team can't do

the job alone. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in remote home mission areas.

Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.



The Catholic Church
EXTENSION Society

35 East Wacker Drive, Room 400F • Chicago, Illinois 60601