

REMEMBERING OUR FOUNDER
SAINT JOHN BAPTIST de LA SALLE
1651 – 1719
PATRON of CHRISTIAN TEACHERS
FOUNDER of the BROTHERS of the CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

His feast is celebrated by the universal Church on April 7th,
and by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on May 15th.



John Baptist de La Salle was born into a world very different from our own. He was the first son of wealthy parents living in France over 300 years ago. Born at Reims, John Baptist de La Salle received the tonsure at age eleven and was named Canon of the Reims Cathedral at sixteen. Though he had to assume the administration of family affairs after his parents died, he completed his theological studies and was ordained a priest on April 9, 1678. Two years later he received a doctorate in theology. Meanwhile he became tentatively involved with a group of rough and barely literate young men in order to establish schools for poor boys.

At that time a few people lived in luxury, but most of the people were extremely poor: peasants in the country, and slum dwellers in the towns. Only, a few could send their children to school; most children had little hope for the future. Moved by the plight of the poor who seemed so "far from salvation" either in this world or the next, he determined to put his own talents and advanced education at the service of the children "often left to themselves and badly brought up." To be more effective, he abandoned his family home, moved in with the teachers, renounced his position as Canon and his wealth, and so formed the community that became known as the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

His enterprise met opposition from the ecclesiastical authorities who resisted the creation of a new form of religious life, a community of consecrated laymen to conduct free schools "together and by association." The educational establishment resented his innovative methods and his insistence on gratuity for all, regardless of whether they could afford to pay. Nevertheless De La Salle and his Brothers succeeded in creating a network of quality schools throughout France that featured instruction in the vernacular, students grouped according to ability and achievement, integration of religious instruction with secular subjects, well-prepared teachers with a sense of vocation and mission, and the involvement of parents. In addition, De La Salle pioneered in programs for training lay teachers, Sunday courses for working young men, and one of the first institutions in France for the care of delinquents. Worn out by austerities

and exhausting labors, he died at Saint Yon near Rouen early in 1719 on Good Friday, only weeks before his sixty–eighth birthday.

John Baptist de La Salle was a pioneer in founding training colleges for teachers, reform schools for delinquents, technical schools, and secondary schools for modern languages, arts, and sciences. His work quickly spread through France and, after his death, continued to spread across the globe. In 1900 John Baptist de La Salle was declared a Saint. In 1950, because of his life and inspirational writings, he was made Patron Saint of all those who work in the field of education. John Baptist de La Salle inspired others how to teach and care for young people, how to meet failure and frailty with compassion, how to affirm, strengthen and heal. At the present time there are De La Salle schools in 80 different countries around the globe.



Let us remember that we are always in the holy presence of God.
Glory to You, O God of all creation;
glory to You, O Lord Jesus, our Brother and Savior;
glory to You, O Holy Spirit, Who calls us to live and to goodness.

HYMN St. LA SALLE, OUR DEAREST FATHER

Saint La Salle, our dearest father,
To your children's prayer incline.
While today we sing your triumphs
And the glories which are yours.

Saint La Salle, our dearest father,
Hear Your loving children pray.
Grant that we, by your protection,
Grow in virtue day by day.

Saint La Salle, our dearest father,
Earnestly we ask of you:
Pray to Jesus that His Spirit
Comes alive in us anew.

Model of the Christian teacher,
Patron of all searching youth;
As we follow your example
May You lead us in the truth.

So we praise the name of Christ,
Who for His work has chosen you.
Saint La Salle, inspire us always.
Pray that we may serve Him, too.
And to light a new beacon for the people of today.

PRAYER

O God, who for the Christian education of the poor and for the preservation of youth in the way of truth raised up John Baptist de La Salle, ad did form by him a ew religious family in the Church, mercifully grant that through his intercession and example, we may be animated with zeal for Your glory in saving souls, and merit to share in his crown in heaven. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 31:

Into Your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Be my Rock of Refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety.

You are my Rock and my Fortress;
for Your name's sake You will lead and guide me.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit;
You will redeem me, O Lord, O faithful God.

My trust is in You, my Lord;
I will rejoice and be glad of Your mercy.

Let Your face shine upon Your servant;
save me in Your kindness.

Hide me in the shelter of Your presence.

Glory to You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As it was, is now, and forever shall be. Amen.

ROMANS 12: 1-2

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

2 CORINTHIANS 3: 2-3

You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, shown to be a letter of Christ administered by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are hearts of flesh.

MATTHEW 11: 25

Blessed are You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; You have revealed to the childlike the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

REFLECTION

BROTHER MICHEL SAUVAGE, FSC

John Baptist had experienced in his own personal history that the Gospel could become, in the here and now, a powerful force for change. In the events that led him to the point where he had arrived, he recognized the active presence of God. It was God who had freed him from his chains, from his wealth, from his prejudices. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to commit himself with determination, if not to change the world, at least to change something in his world, to contribute to a breaking up of that infernal circle of which the poor were the victims.

That was to be his project. He would often express it in later years by saying that the Institute was founded to put the means of salvation at the disposal of poor and abandoned youth. The contrast between the two social worlds of which we have spoken always remained foremost in the mind of John Baptist de La Salle, as his biographer writes, between "the children of quality who are rich, well born, refined and amiable" and the "poor children of both sexes." The first

group were not lacking in people willing to devote themselves to their education. Colleges were available to them and it seemed as if the whole society was concerned about them and with considerable success. But the others, "the vagabonds roaming the streets, where were they supposed to look for Christian instruction"?

Once he was converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, John Baptist and his Brothers had some assurance that God willed the salvation of these poor youngsters as well. God was not the author of the unjust situations of which the poor were the victims. In their decision to make the Gospel the rule of their lives, John Baptist and his Brothers had proof that the poor children were equally the sons of God, just as much as the others, just as much as they themselves. They understood that if Christ called them to be his followers, it was in order to help these youngsters realize their dignity as sons, to open up to them the freedom of the sons of God. Thus the foundation of the project undertaken by De La Salle was rooted in the Gospel just as it was the power of the Gospel that inspired him to devote himself to it. The Institute of the Brothers was founded to announce that Gospel to a class of young people that had been otherwise abandoned. That purpose became very clear to the Founder at the time of his own conversion to the Gospel; thenceforth he would devote himself to it entirely and with all his powers.

The result of all this has lasted into our own day as it has been passed on in the tradition of the Institute. The fundamental principle of the spirituality of De La Salle remains the same.



PRAYERS of INTERCESSION

Response: Through the intercession of Saint La Salle, Lord hear us.

That we may always be people of faith who live out our baptismal call and with a spirit of zeal strive to promote the Christian education of our youth, we pray:

That all in our Lasallian Family, by listening to the Word of God and sharing in the Eucharist, will become true witnesses of Jesus Christ and credible witnesses of the Gospel, we pray:

That mothers and fathers, teachers, coaches, workers, benefactors and students will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to live lives of faith, community and service, we pray:

That all the De La Salle Brothers and all the members of the Lasallian Family as well as our colleagues in ministry will be faithful to the dream of De La Salle, we pray:

That all the sick, the elderly, the marginalized and the lonely will know the consoling presence of Jesus, we pray:

That all in our Lasallian Family who have grown weary through age, illness or infirmity, support by prayer our educational mandate, we pray:

LITANY:

RESPONSE: PRAY FOR US

De La Salle, holy priest of God,
De La Salle, our Father and Founder,
De La Salle, patron of Christian teachers,
De La Salle, innovator of teaching methods,
De La Salle, animated by a great zeal for the salvation of souls,
De La Salle, always aware of the presence of God,
De La Salle, lover of Sacred Scripture,
De La Salle, continually led by the Spirit of God,
De La Salle, concerned for the poor,
De La Salle, always resigned to the Will of God,
De La Salle, interested in the education of the
working class and the poor,
De La Salle, patient in tribulations,
De La Salle, instrument in gathering together and
forming the first Brothers,
De La Salle, always living in a spirit of faith,
De La Salle, man of prayer,
De La Salle, devoted to our Blessed Mother,
De La Salle, always solicitous for the Brothers,
De La Salle, continually obedient to the Church,
De La Salle, spiritual director of souls,
De La Salle, model of holiness,

Let us pray:

Father and founder of the Institute of the Brothers
of the Christian schools, you realized the value of
competent Christian educators and worked
untiringly for the instruction of the working class
and the poor always relying on the providence of
God.

Send generous followers to live your ideals of a
spiritual life through the service of Christian education.

May we be filled with the spirit and zeal of those first Brothers who ministered
so diligently for the salvation of youth through Christian education.

May we and our Lasallian colleagues be Christ-like models for others and may
the spirit of Jesus be forever in our hearts. Amen.



Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!

WRITINGS OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

These documents were written by John Baptist de La Salle and were originally intended for the use of the Brothers and teachers.

Meditations

Meditations for the Time of the Retreat

Meditations for all the Sundays of the Year

Meditations on the Principal Feasts of the Year

Six Additional Meditations for Certain Feasts that Occur During the Year

Two Lives of the Saints

Saint Yon, Priest and Martyr

Saint Cassian, Bishop and Martyr

Other Writings

Method of Mental Prayer

The Conduct of Schools

*I adore in all things the holy will of God in my regard.
Saint John Baptist de La Salle*

