

On 24 May, 1900 John Baptist de La Salle was declared a saint and was canonized by Pope Leo XIII. He was inserted in the Roman Catholic calendar of saints in 1904. On May 15, 1950, because of his life and inspirational writings, he was made Patron Saint of all those who work in the field of education by Pope Pius XII. He inspired others how to teach and care for young people, how to meet failure and frailty with compassion, how to affirm, strengthen and heal. In communities that follow a pre-1970 calendar, his feast is on 15 May; while in the Catholic Church calendar his feast is celebrated on 7 April, the day of his death.

In his own words, De La Salle wrote: "I had imagined that the care which I assumed of the schools and the masters would amount only to a marginal involvement committing me to no more than providing for the subsistence of the masters and assuring that they acquitted themselves of their tasks with piety and devotedness... Indeed, if I had ever thought that the care I was taking of the schoolmasters out of pure charity would ever have made it my duty to live with them, I would have dropped the whole project... God, who guides all things with wisdom and serenity, whose way it is not to force the inclinations of persons, willed to commit me entirely to the development of the schools. He did this in an imperceptible way and over a long period of time so that one commitment led to another in a way that I did not foresee in the beginning."

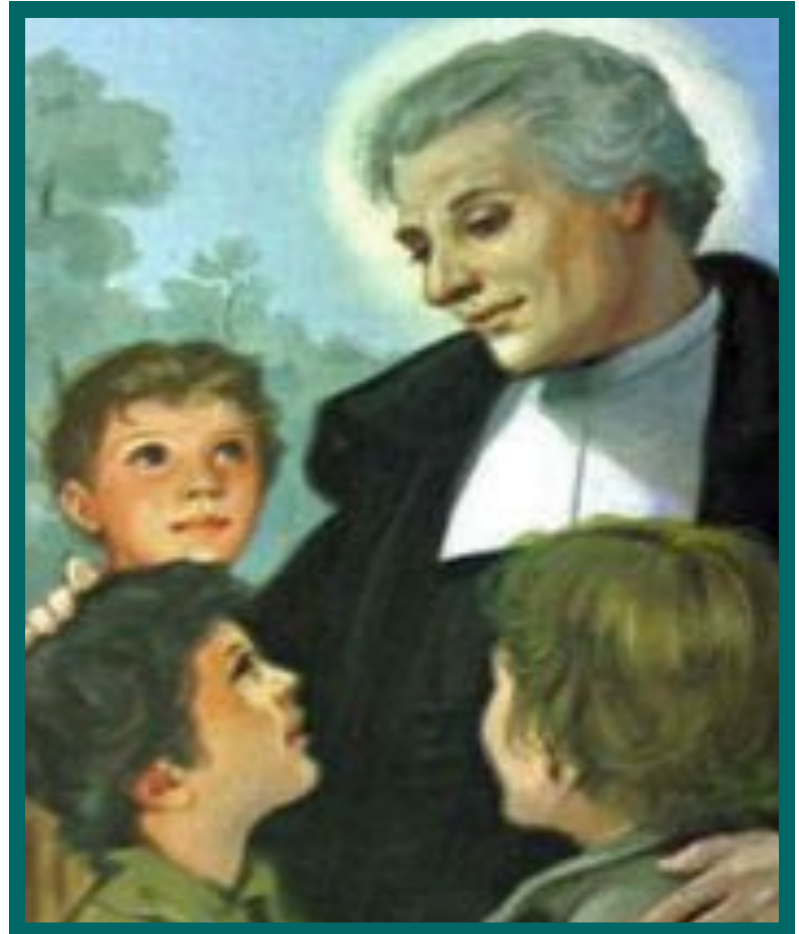
There is currently about 6,000 brothers and 75,000 lay and religious colleagues worldwide who serve as teachers, counselors, and guides to 900,000 students in over 1,000 educational institutions in 84 countries. In Saint Louis, Missouri: De La Salle Avenue is named after the saint due to its proximity to a Christian Brothers School.

\*(excerpted from: [www.lasalle2.org](http://www.lasalle2.org); [//en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org))

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## **Saint John Baptist de La Salle**

Feast Day: May 15



**Patron Saint of Teachers**

## Saint John Baptist De La Salle

\*Saint John Baptist De La Salle was born at Reims, France on 30 April, 1651, and died on 7 April, 1719. He was the first son of wealthy parents living in France and received the tonsure (shaving of the head) 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 9 April, 1678. Two years later he received a Doctorate in Theology.

He became tentatively involved with a group of rough and barely literate young men in order to establish schools for poor boys. In 1679, what began as a charitable effort to help Adrian Nyel establish a school for the poor in De La Salle's home town gradually became his life's work. He thereby began a new order, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, also known as the De La Salle Brothers, or, most commonly referred to in the United States as the Christian Brothers. They are sometimes confused with a different congregation of the same name founded by Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice in Ireland, who are known in the U.S. as the Irish Christian Brothers.

At that time, 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. The De La Salle Brothers were the first Roman Catholic religious teaching order that did not include any priests.

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 gratuitous schools "together and by association." The educational establishment resented his innovated 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 (in 1685 in Rheims, France), Sunday courses for working young men, and one of the first institutions in France for the care of delinquents, technical schools, and secondary schools for modern languages, arts, and sciences. He was a pedagogical (the art or profession of teaching) thinker of note and is among the founders of a distinctively modern pedagogy. Worn out by austerities and exhausting labors, he died at Saint Yon near Rouen on 7 April 1719 on Good Friday, only three weeks before his sixty-eight birthday. His work quickly spread through France and, after his death, continued to spread across the globe.