

April 7

St. Jean Baptiste de La Salle

1651–1719 • France

When Jean Baptist was very young, his grandmother would read to him about the lives of the saints. By learning how much the saints loved God, Jean Baptist learned to love God, too. He learned to love God so much that, when he grew up, he left his hometown of Rheims for Paris to study to be a priest.

While he was gone, Jean Baptist's parents died, and he returned home to take care of his younger brothers and sisters. But even though he had returned home, he knew that God still wanted him to be a priest. He worked hard in his studies, and when his siblings were old enough to take care of themselves, he was ordained to the priesthood.

Soon after, Jean Baptist helped start a school for poor boys. He knew that if the boys were left to themselves, no one would teach them about Jesus. They needed someone to teach them to love Jesus the way he had been taught when he was young. He started the new school because he knew it would be the best way for him to save the boys' souls.

One of the hardest parts of running his new school was that the teachers themselves did not know how to teach. So Jean Baptist started a new order, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, dedicated to teaching the poor and also to educating teachers.

Jean Baptist was not only concerned for the poor boys, but all of the city's poor. When a terrible famine struck Rheims, no one had enough to eat, and the poor suffered the most. Because Jean Baptist's parents had been rich, he had inherited much wealth when they died. Because of the famine, Jean Baptist sold all of his property and used the money to buy bread for the poor. He gave bread to the boys in his school, and soon a long line of hungry people formed outside of his doors. He handed out bread to all the people in line. When his money finally ran out, Jean Baptist begged at the doors of the wealthy, asking them for money for bread.

Jean Baptist de La Salle dedicated the rest of his life to teaching the city's poor and supporting his teachers until he died a holy death. St. Jean Baptist de La Salle, help me to teach others about Jesus!



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