

MISSION INTENTIONS

JANUARY 2022-2023

We pray that educators may be valuable examples of Christ, teaching friendship rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable first.

Country Focus: Finland

Although a nation of only 5.5 million people (less than the population of Minnesota), Finland has long been recognized as having one of the best education systems in the world. Its students continually receive some of the highest scores on international tests, and Finnish educators say this is because of their whole-child centered approach to learning. School days are shorter in Finland to give students more time to rest, and teachers make sure students have frequent breaks during classroom learning. Finland also does not give its students standardized tests, so that teachers have more flexibility in curriculum choices.



Finland also allows religion to be taught in public schools. The Diocese of Helsinki, the only Catholic diocese in Finland, helps public school teachers by offering training, and preparing and publishing Catholic education materials. Let us join Pope Francis in praying for all teachers this month, that they may be witnesses of Christ to their students.

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Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

It is important to always be learning about our faith, but even more important to grow in relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In fact, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis wrote in the 2020 Directory for Catechesis, that this should be the main focus of Catholic instruction:

“At the center of every process of catechesis is the living encounter with Christ...Communion with Christ is the center of the Christian life, and as a result the center of catechetical action” (75).

Saint Spotlight

Saint John Baptist de la Salle

While Saint John Baptist de la Salle devoted most of his life to education, it was a vocation he discovered by accident.

John de la Salle was born to a wealthy French family in 1651, at a time when most people were poor, and an education was something only the rich could afford. He knew from an early age that he would be a priest, and was ordained when he was 27 years old. Because of his wealth and family status, John de la Salle seemed destined for a high position in the Church. However, a chance encounter with a friend several years after his ordination changed the course of his life forever.

His friend, Adrien Nyel, was building schools



for boys whose families could not afford to send them to school. After helping Adrien open one of these schools, John de la Salle realized the importance of making education available for everyone. He gave up his family fortune and began opening schools and teacher training centers. He also founded the religious community that became known as the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Together, they continued opening schools throughout France, and opened 22 by the time John Baptist de la Salle died. He was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1900.

He is the patron saint of teachers. His feast day is April 7.

Formation for Life in Christ

What do you think of when you hear the word “catechesis?” Perhaps it calls to mind the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or a favorite catechist. Simply speaking, the word “catechesis,” refers to the passing on of the Catholic faith. It helps us develop a deeper relationship with Christ, learn about the teachings of the Church, and apply these teachings in our daily lives.

For some, catechesis is primarily experienced through a faith formation program at their parish. For others, catechesis happens in religion class at their Catholic school. But catechesis also happens outside of the classroom, and isn’t just the responsibility of those called to a vocation in education.

The first people who teach us about the love of Christ and our faith are our parents. By modeling Christ’s love and Christian living, teaching us how to pray, taking us to Mass and encouraging us to be involved in parish life, and by helping us discern our own vocation, our parents are the first people who introduce us to the Gospel. It is through their example that we begin to learn how to be a disciple of Christ.

We also experience catechesis at Mass. We learn about the Word of God in the readings. During the

homily, the priest shares with us what the readings mean and how they can help us be better disciples.

Catechesis happens in our daily lives as well. Anytime someone is an example of Christ, they are teaching us about the Gospel. Donating food to a food shelf, visiting a relative who lives in a nursing home, or even something as simple as holding the door for someone are all ways to share Christ’s love.



Catechesis is a life-long process. We always keep learning, even after we have graduated or received the

Sacrament of Confirmation. And in addition to being students, we are also teachers. All Catholics, by virtue of baptism, are called to share the Gospel of Christ. That means we also tell others about our faith when given the opportunity.

As we watch this month’s video, which focuses on Saint John Baptist de la Salle, think about what you know and can share about your Catholic faith, and also about what more you’d like to learn. What information could help you on your faith journey?

Celebrating the Mystery

If you’ve ever attended an Easter Vigil, you’ve probably seen people of all ages received into the Church. Some might be making a profession of faith, others might be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, and some might be receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. This is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or RCIA. For adults and children who are converting to the Catholic faith, or who were baptized Catholic but were unable to receive these sacraments previously, this is how they enter the Church.

Through the RCIA process, candidates spend time learning about the Catholic faith and discerning their commitment to the Church. To learn more about the RCIA process, click [here](#).

Teaching Prayer: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the guide that helps us journey into an ever-growing and deeper faith in Christ. Praying to the Holy Spirit and asking for understanding before Mass, religion class, or faith formation, can help us to better learn the truths that God wants to reveal to us. The Church even has a special prayer we can use: the Prayer to the Holy Spirit. To pray this prayer, click [here](#).

St. John Baptist de la Salle [Click Here>>](#)



✚ Saint John Baptist de la Salle believed that we are all given gifts to help build up the Church. What are some of your gifts, and how might you use them to help build your parish community?

✚ What do you think Saint John Baptist de la Salle meant when he said to teach the Gospel with the “Spirit of the Living God,” and not with ink?