

**THE STORY OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST
DE LA SALLE, FOUNDER OF
THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS
OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

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The story of St. John Baptist de la Salle, founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian schools by Brother Leo & Patrick J. Hayes

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BROTHER LEO & PATRICK J. HAYES

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SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
1651-1917

The Story of
St. John Baptist de la Salle

FOUNDER OF THE INSTITUTE OF
THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

BY
BROTHER LEO

INTRODUCTION BY
MOST REV. PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK



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INTRODUCTION

THIS well-told story of St. John Baptist de la Salle is refreshing, intellectually and spiritually, coming, as it does, at a time when education is drifting steadily far away from its highest and holiest purpose, namely, the knowledge and love of God. Through the existing maze of false principle and unsound method in pedagogy, it should prove helpful to read and study the life of a Teacher Saint like that of the canonized Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Today, popular education, put by the State within the reach of all, is hailed as an accepted standard of modern progress and a pledge of civic liberty and of social welfare. If this be so, then our Saint was far in advance of his day and should be heralded a benefactor of the plain people, because of the entire consecration of himself to the training, religious and secular, of their children.

St. John Baptist de la Salle did for the common school system among the people what St. Vincent de Paul wrought for the social betterment of the masses. The God-given birthright of the children of men, that is, the right and privilege of heavenly citizenship rather than the urge of social democracy, inspired these Saints of God to labor with zeal and success extraordinary among the wage-earners of their day.

Our Saint made it possible for the sons of the toiler on farm and in shop to enjoy the opportunities of elementary, higher and technical schools—a blessing reserved generally to the children of the well-to-do. The course of study embraced the common branches of secular education together with a solid training in religious knowledge and piety. The complete thoroughness and soundness of the method turned out youth that was reverent towards God, dutiful to parents, and fitted for a useful life in the community.

This was a revolutionary change in the school world in favor of the working classes. It will be the better understood, if we remember that our ideals and practices of democracy did not then obtain; in fact, they were not known to the people. Rigid social and class distinction was the recognized custom, if not the law of the land. St. John Baptist de la Salle was of the aristocracy. Though close to the royal court, he knew that the *élite* of France was not necessarily the *élite* of Christ. He knew also that the peasant and artisan, in the humble walks of life, could never move in the circle of royalty. Nor did he lament this privation. For he knew further that there was a king—Christ the Lord, and a queen—Mary Immaculate, and princes—the Angels and the Saints, to whom the children of the plough and of the hammer should be suffered to come that they might enter the banquet hall of the Eucharistic Lord and move in the courts of the God of Infinite love. To accomplish this was the mission of the Saint.

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The extraordinary success our Saint achieved before his death has been carried on by the Religious Institute he founded, whose members are committed to the teaching of youth the world over, with a consecration that is as rare as it is inspiring, because of the spirit of faith and humility, of prayer and study that animates their own lives while they are moulding the character of others.

This little volume is most readable and instructive. The author's keen insight into the times of St. John Baptist de la Salle and the clear style that brightens nearly every page with quaint and modern phrase or with homely parable, should make the reading attractive to teachers and pupils, and to educators generally, who would know wherein is hidden the secret of true education.

✠ PATRICK J. HAYES,
Archbishop of New York.

