

Meeting of the OIEC Council

Eucharistic Celebration - Memory of St John Baptist de La Salle

Rome, 7 April 2022

[Extract - Homily]

Dear friends of the OIEC, I am happy to celebrate this Eucharist today, at the heart of your meeting and especially on the day on which we celebrate the liturgical memory of St John Baptist de La Salle, patron saint of teachers and educators.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the founder of a lay religious family, is undoubtedly an example of living and active faith applied to the field of education. For him, his children were called to the great adventure not of preaching the Gospel from pulpits or printing it on sheets of paper, but of imprinting it in the very hearts of young people through schools and education. In the midst of the many difficulties that he encountered in giving life to the religious family of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, De La Salle went forward driven by a superior strength in the conviction that the work that was being born was not his own but God's. And we all know how much well has been accomplished by his spiritual sons and daughters and continues to be accomplished today throughout the world, through the numerous schools and universities, following the Founder's teaching and example, giving priority to the poorest and neediest classes. Because of the relevance of his educational method, in 1950 Pius XII proclaimed him 'heavenly patron to God of all teachers'.

In the line of pious humanism, typical of the French school, John Baptist de La Salle taught his followers that in order to prepare young people for life it is necessary first of all to put them on a solid religious foundation, not so much and not only intellectual, but vital, giving them the possibility of a strong experience of the fatherhood of God. This is the mission entrusted by the Lord to his children. To fulfil it, they must feel that they are children of the same Father and brothers to each other, living together at home; then each one at school will reproduce this family atmosphere with his students, brother among brothers, all disciples of the one Master.

+ A. Vincenzo Zani