

## Memorials of St. Louis and St. Joseph Calasanz

### Homily of Bishop John Barres

#### St. Agnes Cathedral

August 25, 2021

Today we celebrate the Memorials of St. Louis IXth of France (1214-1270) and St. Joseph Calasanz (1557-1648).

Like all the saints, St. Louis and St. Joseph Calasanz teach us, with St. Paul in his first Letter to the Thessalonians, “to give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.”

These saints also teach us to allow the Holy Spirit, as expressed in Matthew 23, to break through our hypocrisies and lead us to deeper sincerity, charity, integrity and coherence in our Catholic witness to the world.

The Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours for both Memorials reveal key charisms for the mission of the Church in these two great saints that we are called to appreciate and live ourselves.



For St. Louis, the King of France and the father of eleven children, the Office of Readings presents an excerpt from the *Spiritual Testament of St. Louis* which is addressed to one of his sons.

St. Louis writes: “Dearest son, I give you every blessing that a loving father can give a son. May the three Persons of the Holy Trinity and all the saints protect you from every evil. And may the Lord give you the grace to do his will so that he may be served and honored through you, that in the next life we may together come to see him, love him and praise him unceasingly. Amen.”

I was so moved in reading St. Louis’ words to his son about his supernatural view of being a father, his spirit of penance and prayer, his spirit of poverty and love for the poor.

He knew so clearly as a father the importance of forming his son and his ten other children deeply in the Catholic faith. In the spirit of St. Louis, let's pray deeply for our parents, living and deceased, and the effective Catholic formation of present and future generations.

St. Louis knew his primary role as a father was to pray for the salvation of his children and to be a model of holiness and mission.

His burning desire for Eternal Life guided his life and immense responsibility as the King of France and guided the way he was a father to his eleven children.

The passage where St. Louis speaks of eventually enjoying the Beatific Vision and Communion of Saints with his son in Heaven resonates with some of the beautiful passages in the *Confessions* where St. Augustine reflects on the death of his mother St. Monica.

Our teaching on the Communion of Saints and the Catholic Mass gives the strongest support to people who grieve the loss of loved ones.

As Catholics, we believe in friendship that goes beyond the chasm of death and that the greatest comfort and consolation when we have lost loved ones is in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Catholic Mass.



We also celebrate today the Memorial of Saint Joseph Calasanz, the Founder of the Piarist Fathers and Brothers, “a religious order of clerics regular founded in 1617 by Saint Joseph Calasanz (1557-1648). It is the oldest religious order dedicated to education, and the main occupation of the Piarist Fathers is teaching children.

Members of the Order profess vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In addition, according to the wishes of Saint Joseph Calasanz, they profess a fourth vow to dedicate their lives to the education of youth, especially the poor.

In 1948, Pope Pius XII proclaimed Saint Joseph Calasanz as the ‘Universal Patron of All Catholic Schools in the World,’ in recognition of the fact that, in 1597, Saint Joseph Calasanz opened the very first free public school in Europe. Saint Joseph Calasanz proclaimed that every child has a right to an education, and he is credited with such educational innovations as arranging students in rows and organizing a

fixed schedule of classes, each lasting for a standard period of time. The Piarists have also had considerable success in the education of physically or mentally disabled persons.

Some notable individuals taught at Piarist schools include Pope Pius IX, Francisco Goya, Franz Schubert, Gregor Mendel, Tadeusz Kościuszko and Victor Hugo. Today there are over 1,650 Piarists teaching 115,000 students in 40 countries around the world. Locally, the Piarist Fathers and Brothers staff Saint Helena's Parish in the Bronx and Annunciation Parish in Manhattan."<sup>1</sup>

For St. Joseph Calasanz, the Office of Readings selection comes from his writings and illustrates the importance of catechesis in Catholic formation.

St. Joseph Calasanz writes: "Everyone knows the great merit and dignity attached to that holy ministry of (giving) instruction (to the young) for the purpose of attaining eternal life. This ministry is directed to the well-being of body and soul, at the same time that it shapes behavior it also fosters devotion and Christian doctrine...as Scripture says: Those who instruct many in justice will shine as stars for all eternity."

In the spirit of St. Joseph Calasanz, I encourage us all to champion catechesis and Catholic education and take every opportunity to catechize the young and to be instruments of connecting both their hearts, minds, souls and imaginations to the joys and riches of the Sacred Scripture and our Catholic faith.

May we all live the Church's catechetical mission vibrantly and experience at our final judgment the words of St. Joseph Calasanz: "Those who instruct many in justice will shine as stars for all eternity."

Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of Catechists, pray for us!

St. Joseph, pray for us!

St. Louis of France, pray for us!

St. Joseph Calasanz, pray for us!

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Matthew Ernest email to Bishop John Barres on August 16, 2020.