

April 7 on 7
The Death of
St. John Baptist De La Salle

Period One

Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.

In prayer this day we reflect upon the final days of De La Salle's life as reported to us through Brother Luke Salm's biography, "The Work is Yours."

As the season of Lent approached in 1719, it became increasingly difficult for De La Salle to conceal the fact that he was seriously ill. A series of mishaps only aggravated his condition. One brother, trying to be helpful, pulled back a chair as De La Salle was about to sit down. The Founder lost his balance and fell on his face. What bothered him the most was that he found it increasingly difficult to concentrate so as to be able to read or write.

Reflection:

When I am sick or ill, what bothers me the most?

St. John Baptist De La Salle **Pray for us.**
Live Jesus in our hearts **Forever.**

Period Two

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Early in Holy Week, the pastor of Saint Sever, having heard that De La Salle was near death, came to visit him and to reconcile their differences over the role of the Brothers in the parish. De La Salle then asked to receive the Holy Viaticum, which was arranged for the next day. The brothers were asked to prepare the house and the sick room so as to make it a suitable place to receive the Blessed Sacrament. De La Salle, weak as he was, insisted on getting out of bed and vesting in his surplice and stole. In this way, seated in a chair, he awaited the coming of his Lord. When he heard the bell announcing the arrival of the priest, he fell on his knees to adore Christ in the sacrament. He received the sacred host and was so transformed did his face become that some wondered why Viaticum was being given to such a healthy looking person.

Reflection:

Do I respect that which is Holy in my life? What is one way my experience of the Holy change me for the better?

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Period Three

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The following day was Holy Thursday, and it was arranged to have De La Salle receive the sacrament of the sick, at that time called the "last anointing." He received it in the full position of his faculties, responding to all the prayers. When the ceremony was over, he remain in repose for many hours, giving thanks for the final graces that the last sacraments had bestowed upon him.

Reflection:

How do I take time to reflect upon the graces and blessings received in my life?

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Period Four

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Later that day, as the brothers gathered around De La Salle, he began to have difficulty speaking. Brother Barthelemy asked him for a final blessing for those present and for all the brothers of the Institute. Reluctantly, and with great effort, he lifted his eyes to heaven and said simply, "May the Lord bless all of you."

Reflection:

Who do I have in my life who blesses me? Who do I bless?

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Period Five

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Toward evening, as De La Salle's speech became erratic and he began to lose consciousness, the Brothers began to recite the prayers for the dying. At the suggestion of one of the Brothers, De La Salle invoked the Virgin Mary in the concluding verse of the night prayer: Mary, Mother of Grace receive us at the hour of our death. When asked by Brother Barthelemy whether he accepted his sufferings, the Founder replied, "Yes, I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard." These were his last words.

Reflection:

To whom do I pray in times of challenge or difficulty?

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Period Six

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At about four o'clock, he made an effort to rise from bed as though to greet someone. He then joined his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and breathed his last. It was Good Friday, April 7, 1719. He was just weeks short of being 68 years old.

Reflection:

Who in my life that has died is someone from whom I gain strength and inspiration?

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Period Seven

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De La Salle was buried the next day in a side chapel of the church of Saint Sever. Throughout all Rouen, and soon throughout the Institute, the word spread: "The Saint is dead!" But saints do not die. They live on in eternity in the blessed vision and experience of God. John Baptist de La Salle, in particular, lives on in time and history in the Institute he founded, the Lord's work as he liked to call it, that he left as his legacy to the Church and the world.

Reflection:

As a Lasallian (one who is part of St. John Baptist De La Salle's legacy) what is one way in which I am part of his story?

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