

January 5, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHRISTMAS

Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg

MAN WITH A MISSION

By Julie Mussché

“Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing; we are not born at random... As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do His work, we must rejoice in ours also.”

ST. JOHN NEUMANN

Sermon, “God’s Will the End of Life”

Reflection

Today, another U.S. saint is celebrated, St. John Neumann. Unlike Elizabeth Ann Seton, John Neumann immigrated from Bohemia in 1836. Although he had completed his studies as a seminarian, he was ordained in the United States following an arduous and protracted journey through and from Europe to North America. With tenacity and perseverance, St. John pursued his call to mission in the United States.

While he felt urged to mission to the German immigrants in Philadelphia, circumstances landed him first in New York where he was ordained and then assigned to the northern part of the state. The area was rural and vast, with churches still under construction and many congregants to serve. He tirelessly travelled and ministered to people with kindness and compassion, and initiated the schooling of young people and often served as a teacher.

Like Elizabeth Ann Seton, John struggled with and met the challenges of his time. Poverty and economic uncertainty, and primitive infrastructure and transportation impacted the lives of those he served as well as his own. Over time, these hardships took a physical and spiritual toll on John. Struggling spiritually, with the advice of his spiritual director, John sought a religious community and was called to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists. He served his novitiate in Ohio and returned to New York and eventually became a U.S. citizen.

Serving in ministry in a variety of ways, St. John Neumann became the Bishop of Philadelphia in 1852 where he shepherded a large growing and ethnically complex diocese. He nurtured the growth of churches and schools. “....He organized the parochial school system into a diocesan one, increasing the number of pupils almost twentyfold within a short time” (*Saint of the Day*, ed. Leonard Foley, OFM, rev. Pat McCloskey, OFM, 56 Kindle). Unsurprisingly, St. John is the patron of Catholic education. Happy Feast Day!



National Shrine of St. John Neumann in Philadelphia
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For Pondering

- With this brief overview of St. John Neumann's life and vocation, what resonates with you?
- If St. John were to walk into the room and sit down next to you, what would you like to ask him?

The selfless prayer with St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R.

Dear Lord, make me selfless as St. John Neumann was. Throughout my life, give me the grace to direct my first thoughts to the service of You and of others. Make my prayer "Your will be done," knowing that in Your mercy and love, Your will for me is my sanctification.

Merciful Father, You have given me all that I have in this world, even life itself. In all my daily needs, help me to remember the needs of others too. Make me aware of the need to pray to You, not just for myself but also for the Church, the pope, the clergy, and all people who suffer any need. I ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen

From: stjohnneumann.org

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