



Saint John Eudes

Feast Day August 19

Born November 14, 1601

Died August 19, 1680

Beatified April 25, 1909 by Pope Pius X

Canonized May 31, 1925 by Pope Pius XI

John, born in Normandy, France, was educated by Jesuits. He became a priest and joined a religious community, the Oratorians. Early in his priesthood he cared for victims of plague, a ministry that showed the courage and compassion that marked his whole life. After several years of priestly work, John became widely known as a preacher and confessor. His main apostolate was parish missions. He spent decades traveling through France preaching, hearing confessions, and renewing Christian life among the people. He saw that parish priests needed support in becoming men of prayer and action. He held conferences for them in which he outlined their duties. Later, John started his own society of priests called the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. The members were dedicated to promoting good seminary training, which would form Christlike priests.

Christian love impelled John to feel compassion for the women who were trying to escape prostitution. He wanted a place for them to live, a refuge from their former way of life. To serve the women in these refuges, John established a society of religious women called the Congregation of Our Lady of the Refuge. Today, it continues to serve the needs of troubled girls around the world.

John is especially remembered for his devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He composed liturgical texts for these devotions and celebrated the first Mass in honor of the Heart of Mary in 1648. His writings helped spread the idea that Christians should honor the hearts of Jesus and Mary as signs of their love, mercy, and holiness. The central theme of his writings was Jesus as the source of holiness and Mary as the model of Christian life. His devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Heart led Pope Pius XI to declare him the father of the liturgical cult of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

John died at the age of 78. His life remains important because it joined preaching, reform, charity, and devotion into one coherent witness of priestly sanctity.

Reflection: Holiness is the wholehearted openness to the love of God. It is visibly expressed in many ways, but the variety of expression has one common quality: concern for the needs of others. In John's case, his care was for a wide variety of people: plague-stricken, ordinary parishioners, those preparing for the priesthood, prostitutes, and all Christians called to imitate the love of Jesus and his mother.