

Saint John Neumann

- Feastday: January 5
- Patron Saint of: Catholic education
- Birth: March 28, 1811
- Death: January 5, 1860
- Canonized: on June 19, 1977 by Pope Paul VI



"How much do I
love Thee, O my
Jesus!
I wish to love
Thee with my
whole heart, yet
I do not love
Thee enough."



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Saint John Neumann was born in Bohemia in 1811. He knew that he had a vocation to the priesthood, but in 1835 when he desired to be ordained, there were so many priests in Bohemia that the bishop would not ordain any more. He looked for an opportunity to serve the Lord and wrote to the bishops in America. Finally, the bishop in New York agreed to ordain him. To follow God's call to the priesthood John would have to leave his home and travel across the ocean to a new and rugged land.

In New York, John was one of 36 priests for 200,000 Catholics. John's parish in western New York stretched from Lake Ontario to Pennsylvania. His church had no steeple or floor but that didn't matter because John spent most of his time traveling from village to village, climbing mountains to visit the sick, staying in attics and taverns to teach, and celebrating the Mass at kitchen tables. On one visit to a rural parish, the parish priest picked him up in a manure wagon. Seated on a plank stretched over the wagon's contents, John joked, "Have you ever seen such an entourage for a bishop!"

Because of the work and the isolation of his parish, John longed for community and so joined the Redemptorists, a congregation of priests and brothers dedicated to helping the poor and most

abandoned. John was appointed bishop of Philadelphia in 1852. As bishop, he was the first to organize a diocesan Catholic school system. A founder of Catholic education in this country, he increased the number of Catholic schools in his diocese from two to 100.

John never lost his love and concern for the people. The ability to learn languages that had brought him to America led him to learn Spanish, French, Italian, and Dutch so he could hear confessions in at least six languages. He died in Philadelphia on January 5, 1860, at the age of 48.