

Australia has a new Catholic Saint - Meet Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

On the 9th of October 2022, Pope Francis will venerate Giovanni Batista Scalabrini (1839-1905) as a Saint. Giovanni Batista Scalabrini will be beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997 as Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, and he also holds the titles of Bishop of Piacenza, Apostle of Catechism and Father to the Migrants.

As the Father of Migrants, John Baptist Scalabrini had a vibrant vision and heart for displaced and vulnerable migrant people and communities. Ahead of his time he recognised the issues that faced Migrants and over 100 years ago, he was the first person ever to formally present a petition to the Pope to have an office in the Vatican dedicated to the care of migrants, refugees and seafarers. As well as coordinating the response of the Catholic Church and sharing his passion with others, he also petitioned to the Italian and U.S. governments to recognise the increasing migrant population and their needs.

Saint John Baptist Scalabrini not only petitioned to people in authority to see the need for a change, but he also facilitated practical social and economic advancements for vulnerable populations, including famously selling a golden chalice gifted to him by Pope Pius IX to raise funds to support the poor. He wrote many texts, mainly around religious education and pastoral care letters and met with missionaries to assist them in their care-based actions too.

He also established multiple institutions to provide holistic pastoral care for migrants and their families to improve their quality of life. Scalabrini Villages is an Australian organisation founded by the local Italian community and Scalabrini Fathers that provides aged care and complex care services. Scalabrini Villages has enjoyed the support of the community ever since and hosted the Pope and Prime Ministers as it worked hard to continue to deliver for migrants. Whilst honouring the strong Italian Catholic roots the Villages welcome all people and faiths to live with dignity and respect in a supportive community. Conscious of the original mission of supporting migrants, the poor and the oppressed across its rich history Scalabrini Villages has helped the Scalabrini Fathers and others to support migrants across the Pacific region and beyond. We still do with staff and Pastoral Care continuing to provide the best care locally whilst raising funds for the poor and disadvantaged overseas.

With thousands expected to attend the event in Rome we are proud to celebrate the strong Australian connection to the latest Saint but prouder to continue to live up to the values of Giovanni Batista Scalabrini in a world climate that still needs to support migrants and struggles with disease and war.

Canonisation will be on 9th October at St Peters Square and will be marked by various services and special lunches and morning teas across our Villages.

If you want more details or are interested in a follow up interview, please contact Doug MacColl on 0437 828 030.