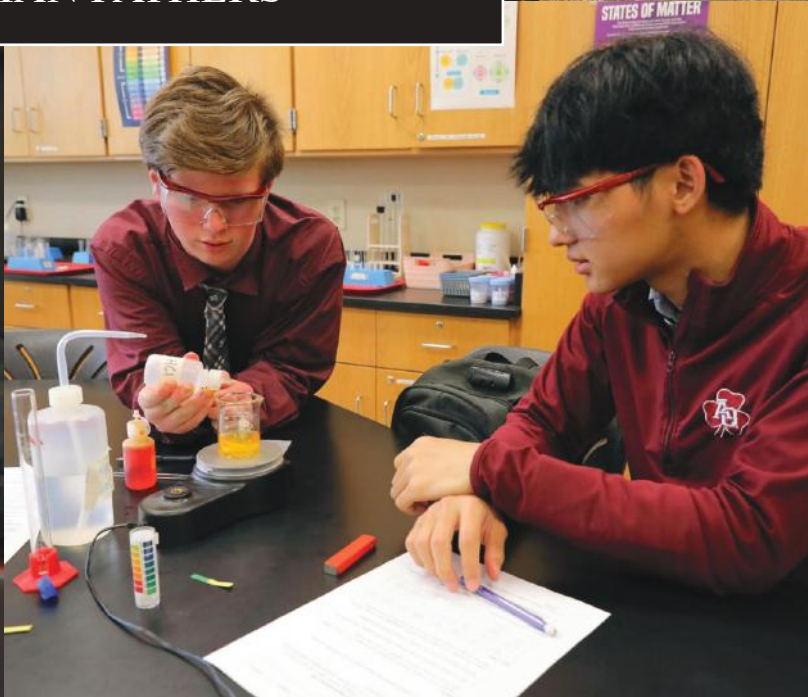




TEACHING GOODNESS,
DISCIPLINE, AND KNOWLEDGE
THE EDUCATIONAL CHARISM AND MISSION
OF THE BASILIAN FATHERS



INTRODUCTION

The Congregation of St. Basil (also known as The Basilian Fathers), and the lay people who work alongside them, have been serving in schools teaching Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge around the world for over 200 years. The Basilian Fathers were founded in 1822 when ten diocesan priests defied anticlerical laws passed during the French Revolution to bring Christian education to a small village in southern France. The founders' devotion to work, involvement in the Church, simplicity of their life, and a call to deeper community life continue to inspire the priests of St. Basil today.

The Basilians have been resilient and successful for over two centuries: growing, changing, and adapting. They have made courageous choices throughout their history, and as a result, this small but persistent order now serves students and parishioners in four countries. The values and traditions of the Basilians position them well to serve the needs of an increasingly diverse global community through their two-fold mission of education and evangelization.

Basilian Network for Education and the New Evangelization (BNENE)¹

The Congregation of St. Basil established the Basilian Network for Education and the New Evangelization with the intention of engaging in ongoing formation on the Basilian approach to Catholic education in the schools carrying on the Basilian tradition.

Mission of BNENE

Prepare, inspire and empower every educator in a Basilian school to prepare young people for a faith-filled life of service, fidelity, success and love through solid formation of Basilian and Catholic principles.

Initiatives

BNENE seeks to contribute to the New Evangelization², and specifically to Catholic Education as one of its integral components. We strive to teach Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge through three initiatives:

- The ongoing formation of school leaders, teachers, support staff and communities in the apostolate of Catholic Education;
- Teaching what the Church teaches with clarity and conviction (i.e., through thoughtful and prayerful reading of and reflection on key magisterial teachings on Catholic Education);
- Promoting the educational ministry of our schools by encouraging Basilian educators to share and collaborate with the other schools we serve. 

1. Learn more about [BNENE on the website of the Basilian Fathers](#).

2. While evangelization refers to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ and bringing them to the faith, the New Evangelization is the Catholic Church's ongoing efforts to find fresh and compelling ways of spreading the Gospel, especially to Catholics who have left the Church or who are simply lukewarm to its message.

The Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to offer a description of what it means to be a Basilian educator. It should be understood that before we are Basilian, our schools are first and foremost Christian, and more specifically Catholic. It is only within this context that a Basilian education finds its meaning and purpose.

In our endeavors, it is imperative to remember that “Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school.”³ Each of our schools is primarily a community that is “animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity...[which] also prepares [our students] for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God...”⁴

This document assumes the healthy Catholic Christian identity of each of our schools, but in practice we should not make this assumption. A primary goal of all Basilian educators is to ensure that the Catholic faith is the lens through which we view and evaluate all that we do.

The intention of this document is to give its readers a better understanding of the educational charism and mission of the Basilian Fathers, so its focus is on the uniqueness of their approach. It is only through this understanding that we can achieve our goal: to carry on the work of the Basilian Fathers in our schools and fulfill their ultimate mission of building the Kingdom of God. 



3. [*The Catholic School* #34](#) by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

4. [*Declaration on Christian Education* #8](#), Vatican II, 1965

1 THE BASILIAN FATHERS

Who are the Basilian Fathers?⁵

The Congregation of St. Basil, also known as the Basilian Fathers, is a Roman Catholic community of priests, students for the priesthood, and lay associates focused on Christian education and evangelization.

Motto

The motto of the Congregation of St. Basil is *Bonitatem et disciplinam et scientiam doce me*, or in English: “Teach me goodness, discipline, and knowledge.” It comes from the Douay-Rheims translation of Psalm 119. The passage is also adapted into one of the prayers in Liturgy of the Hours:

*Lord, teach me goodness, discipline, and knowledge,
and these gifts will keep me from becoming hardened by evil,
weakened by laziness, or ignorant because of foolishness.*



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION OF ST. BASIL⁶



Founding

The Congregation of St. Basil was born in France in a time of turmoil, revolution, and harsh persecution targeting the Catholic Church. After the revolution, in 1790, all religious orders⁷ were abolished. Clergy⁸ became employees of the state and were forced to take an oath of loyalty that would override the authority of the Pope. Those who refused to take the oath were sent to the guillotine. This period became known as the Reign of Terror during which over 30,000 French citizens were publicly executed, priests and seminarians were imprisoned and massacred, and churches were destroyed.

5. [About Us](#), from the website of the Basilian Fathers.

6. Adapted from [History](#), from the website of the Basilian Fathers.

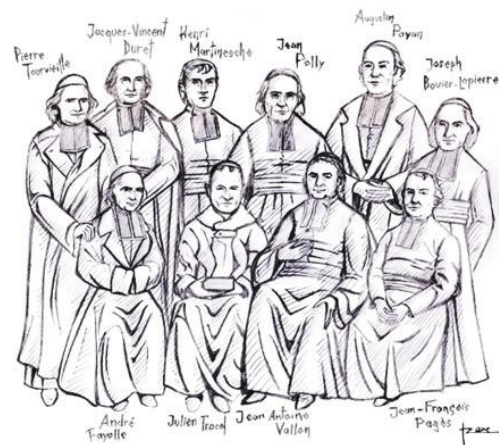
7. A Catholic religious order is a community of men and/or women who dedicate their lives to God through prayer and service. They often focus on specific missions such as education, healthcare, feeding the hungry, or other types of service.

8. Clergy refers to ordained bishops, priests, and deacons.

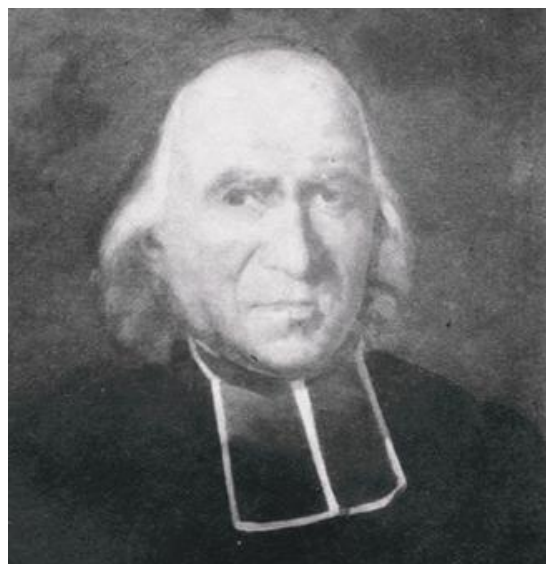
In 1797, after fleeing the Reign of Terror, Archbishop Charles-François d'Aviau of Vienne returned to France and asked Father Joseph Lapierre to open a clandestine seminary school to train priests in the southern French region of Ardèche, in the village of Saint-Symphorien-de-Mahun. In 1802, a year after the Church reached an agreement with the Emperor Napoleon, the tiny school moved to the town of Annonay, where the population of about 5,000 could support the growth that was expected. Despite ongoing political pressure and persecution, the school in Annonay flourished, and by 1813, two more schools opened: Ste. Barbe and Ste. Claire. The schools became known for their exceptional range of teaching including humanities, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, physics and chemistry. The teacher-priests devoted themselves to Christian education, preaching, and life in community.

After several years of operation, the Annonay teachers put forward a proposal to the bishop to form an association or society. These men – Jacques Duret, André Fayolle, Joseph Lapierre, Henri Martinesche, Jean-François Pagès, Augustin Payan, Jean-Baptiste Polly, Pierre Tourvieille, Julien Tracol, and Antoine Vallon – became the founding fathers of the Congregation of St. Basil. On November 21, 1822, on the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, the ten founders chose Father Joseph Lapierre as the first superior general.

The Chapel of Saint Basile, located in the hamlet of Saint Basile in the Ardèche, dates back to the 13th century. It was there that the Basilian founders from the nearby school, Maisonseule, came to celebrate Mass and the townspeople began to call them “Les prêtres de Saint-Basile” – the Priests of Saint Basil – or the Basilians. St. Basil was chosen as their patron “because of his holiness and the example he gives us, and because of two aspects of his life and teaching. Imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, he taught men and women how to live a Christian community life in the conditions of his time; and he found even in pagan learning, values which, seen in the light of revelation, might contribute to a full Christian life.”⁹



The Ten Founders of the Basilian Fathers



Father Joseph Lapierre
One of the ten founders and the first superior general of the Basilian Fathers



9. *The Basilian Way of Life* #4, 2013

10. Photo by Fred Seiller

Arrival in the New World

In 1850, Bishop Armand de Charbonnel, a former Basilian student in Annonay, was named the Archbishop of Toronto, Ontario. He invited the Basilians to come to Canada to establish a school for the Irish Catholic immigrants in Toronto. The Basilians sent four priests, which was a significant percentage of the total number of available priests at the time. This decision represented a huge sacrifice and risk for the young congregation. In 1852, St. Michael's College opened its doors, offering in the French style a combination of high school and university education.



**St. Michael's College, Toronto, Ontario
Founded 1852**

However, back in France, Catholic schools were once again the target of the government's anticlerical agenda. In 1881, the Basilians were forced to close one of their schools. By 1904, all religious congregations were suppressed; many French Basilians became secular priests while others were dispersed to Italy and England. Basilian property was sold at auction.

In North America, the Basilians were thriving and responding to the call of various bishops who needed Christian educators. They established schools and seminaries across North America including St. Thomas High School in Houston, Texas, in 1900.



Some of the Basilian Fathers in France circa 1887

Decree of Amicable Separation of 1922 and Reunification

Tensions rose between the North American Basilians and the French leadership of the Congregation. These tensions, which included both political conflicts and disagreements about the Basilian way of life, resulted in an amicable Decree of Separation in June of 1922. The outcome was two distinct congregations: the Basilian Fathers of Viviers and the Basilian Fathers of Toronto. At its first General Chapter in 1922, the Basilian Fathers of Toronto voted in favour of becoming a religious congregation who also took vows of poverty.



The newly established North American congregation enjoyed rapid growth. They opened Catholic Central in Detroit, Michigan, in 1928, and in 1937 they took over the administration of Aquinas Institute in Rochester, New York. In 1942 there were 171 priests, and by 1964 there were nearly 500 Basilian Fathers. This period of growth was also marked by the establishment of new institutes for higher learning including the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, in 1947 and St. John Fisher University in Rochester, New York, in 1951.

The split between the French and North American congregations did not last long. In 1955, under the leadership of Father George Bernard Flahiff, CSB, who would later become Cardinal Archbishop of Winnipeg, the Congregation celebrated the reunion of the French and North American Basilians, a union which remains to this day.

Along with their co-sponsors, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (I.H.M.), the Basilians opened Detroit Cristo Rey in 2008. It is part of the Cristo Rey Network of high schools in the United States, which was founded to prepare youth from low-income families for post-secondary educational opportunities.

Growth into Latin America

Thanks to the large number of priests available in a post-WWII world, the Basilians continued their growth with missions to Mexico in 1961 and Colombia in 1987. The mission work in Mexico was a natural extension of their existing work with the Mexican-American population in South Texas since the 1930s. The desire to establish a center of education in Latin America led the Basilians to take over a school and parish in Cali, Colombia. Since then, they have expanded their ministry to Bogotá and Medellín.

Throughout their history, Basilians have willingly and repeatedly made these courageous choices to meet the needs of those they serve. Today, they work hand in hand with the lay people¹¹ who serve with them to teach Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge to communities around the world. 🇺🇸

11. Lay people are those who are not ordained ministers.



THE CHARACTER OF A BASILIAN EDUCATION

A *charism* is a spiritual gift that comes from God that allows his followers to become channels of his love and presence in the world. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul says that “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts...but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.”¹² Wisdom, faith, healing, and prophecy are some of the gifts God grants us to do his will. At least to some degree, we have access to all of these gifts, but there are those who are quite exceptional in their ability to embody certain charisms. The Basilian Fathers are a unique expression of God’s love for the world through their work in evangelization and education.

It is a testament to the powerful character of Basilian education that it has thrived for over 200 years, a time which has seen them crossing an ocean, moving into new countries, as well as traversing language and cultural barriers. The Basilian Fathers attribute their success not only to their willingness to face difficult challenges, but also to their collegial approach toward the lay people who share their work. It is precisely this spirit of collaboration and humility that has allowed their work to flourish since 1822.

Considering all this, it might be surprising to learn that defining the character of a Basilian education has not been a clear-cut undertaking, in part because the Basilian Fathers do not have a central founding personality. “Some religious congregations were founded by distinctive central personalities such as Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola or Vincent de Paul. Such central personalities give a strong, distinctive quality to the congregations that they have founded, and one can get a fairly good idea of the congregations’ qualitative charisms by looking at the founders.”¹³

On the other hand, the Basilian Fathers originated from a fellowship of ten priests who boldly undertook the task of secretly educating candidates for priesthood in the early 1800s in France. This occurred during a time of religious persecution when the French government was sending many of the faithful to their deaths at the guillotine. Risking their lives, these parish priests embraced this undertaking. “Classes were occasionally interrupted by the visit of the National Guard, and the priests had to hide in the surrounding forest. The older students studied theology on the sly, as it were, and the first ordinations took place in utmost secrecy.”¹⁴

It seems prescient that the ten founders’ early success relied on their ability to avoid calling too much attention to themselves. While the Basilians’ infrequent attempts at self-promotion have at times endangered their survival, their unassuming nature has also endeared them to many. Rather than seeking the spotlight, they strive to place their attention on others – primarily their students.

The Basilians’ collegial nature and welcoming spirit might also be rooted in the diversity of the ten founders. In 1822, they ranged in age from 25 to 65 years old. They were sons of aristocrats, merchants, farmers, and manual laborers.¹⁵ This brought a variety of gifts and talents that benefitted their sprouting community. Their openness to a wide-ranging span of characters is evident throughout their history. Their ministries and theological leanings are both *catholic* (meaning “universal” or “broad and inclusive”) and *Catholic* (firmly rooted in the faith of the Church).

12. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

13. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

14. *Early History of the Basilian Congregation* by Kevin Kirley, CSB

15. *The Ten Founders* by Kevin J. Kirley, CSB, 2017

The Basilian Fathers also found strength in their diversity as their students were exposed to a wide variety of unique personalities. When Armand-François-Marie de Charbonnel, the second Bishop of Toronto, Ontario, needed help ministering to the impoverished immigrant community there, he reached out to several religious orders for assistance, including the Basilian Fathers. Growing up in France, de Charbonnel was a student at their school in Annonay and was well aware of their gifts.

“All of [de Charbonnel’s] teachers were characters. ...One of them was terribly strict, very austere, and slightly forbidding; the next one along was the exact opposite, very warm, and he balanced the other type. One was an absent-minded professor who said that he’d been born a quarter of an hour late and had never managed to catch up. The last one—this is one that I really liked—was the priest in charge of recreation. He had something of the flavour of a military man, a kind of sergeant major. The phrase that everybody remembered was one he once blurted out on the playground: “Messieurs, quand on joue, on ne s’amuse pas!” Which I would translate as, “Gentlemen, we’re out here playing. We’re not here to have fun!”¹⁶”

Yet despite all of this diversity, there is something uniquely Basilian in their approach to ministry.

“...de Charbonnel was moved in particular by one quality that marked these earliest Basilians, the very first generation: their complete disinterestedness, their lack of an axe to grind or a policy that had to be put in place, and the absence from their lives of all ambition. ...[T]hese are men who, by and large, do not represent a threat to the personal reality of others because they don’t have an agenda which dominates what is to be talked about and thought about and achieved. They don’t really have any ambition. They’re not going somewhere in a hurry where you the student, or you the colleague, or you anyone, are somehow in the way. They’re here, and ideally here, for the people they are with.”¹⁷

While the Basilian character is always recognizable, each of our schools are nonetheless unique. They have their own history, culture, and traditions. Each school has been marked by the particular Basilian Fathers and lay Basilian educators who have helped to shape its distinct atmosphere and personality. Yet we all regard ourselves as members of the broader Basilian community that includes other schools with whom we share our mission. We view this wider community as a great blessing and a source of support and service to one another. 



16. *Basilians as Educators: Educating Persons* by Robert J. Barringer, CSB, 1992

17. *Basilians as Educators: Educating Persons* by Robert J. Barringer, CSB, 1992

BASILIAN THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

“ The early Basilians did not lack for strong members, but there was no one strong personality among them who impressed a distinctive character upon the little group. They were just a group of good diocesan priests who got together to do a difficult and important work, and the way of life that they adopted was a mixture of things borrowed from the universal law of the Church and from other religious congregations, with a large dose of common-sense reaction to the needs of the time. ...The founders... of the Basilians did not develop a distinctive spirituality, nor did they adopt one particular spirituality for the congregation. This meant that Basilian spirituality has been eclectic.¹⁸ ”

“ Our confusion was great... All of us had pure and upright intentions, all willed the end. What must be done to attain it? Each had his own way of looking at things. ”

- Pierre Tourvielle
(One of the ten Basilian founders)¹⁹

From their inception, the Basilians have always held a broad and inclusive view in regard to its membership. Without a particular vision to assert within the Church, they have been free to accept people as they are. This wide embrace should not be confused with a nebulous or ill-defined belief system. They faithfully adhere to Church teaching, but they do it without an overly dogmatic or zealous attitude. This inclusive attitude has naturally helped to avoid the extremes on the religious spectrum.

“ While it is true that we have a common background that informs and guides our work, it is also true that we are not clones of each other. We each bring our own experiences and points of view to this work. [We have a] real openness to considering these different points of view, even (and especially) when we do not agree with them.²⁰ ”

This perspective is reflected in their schools as well. Basilian educational institutions are places where all people are embraced. While we expect the support of our mission by all members of our community (students, parents, faculty, staff, etc.), we do not demand conformity to our beliefs, and do not disparage those whose consciences lead them to conclusions different than our own. We must remember that “Christian education can sometimes run into the danger of a so-called proselytism, of imparting a one-sided outlook. This can happen only when Christian educators misunderstand the nature and methods of Christian education.”²¹ The focus on providing an authentically Catholic educational environment does not in any way conflict with a welcoming attitude to those of other faiths, or those with none at all.



Pierre Tourvielle (1795–1861)

18. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

19. *Basilian Spirituality* by James N. Carruthers, CSB, 1993

20. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

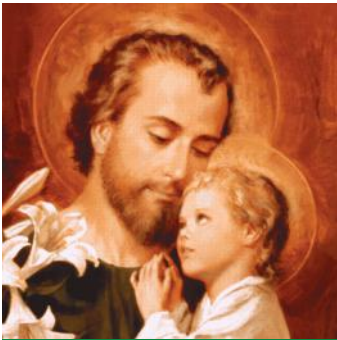
21. *The Catholic School* #19 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977



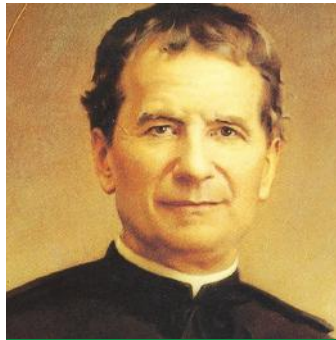
The Blessed Virgin Mary



St. Thomas Aquinas



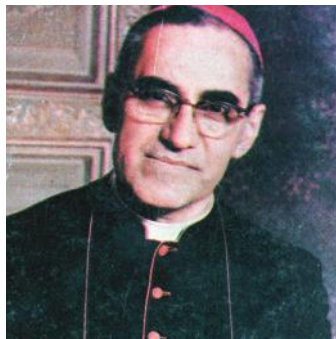
St. Joseph



St. John Bosco



St. Francis of Assisi



St. Oscar Romero

Patron Saints²²

The Ten Founders chose St. Basil the Great (330-379 AD), a Greek Bishop and doctor of the Church, as its patron. He was known as a theologian and champion of orthodoxy who took special care of the poor and underprivileged. As a teacher, he believed in incorporating secular learning, particularly the “pagan classics,” into a Christian education. Like our founders, St. Basil lived at the end of another period of persecution.

Other patrons of the Basilians are: the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John Bosco, and St. Oscar Romero who were chosen because they embody the common values of education, prayer, life in community, and service. 



St. Basil the Great (330-379)

22. A saint is someone who has died and is in heaven. Catholics do not worship saints, but rather ask saints to pray for us. A patron saint is someone who, because of some element of their life (ministry, miracle, location, etc.), has been designated as appropriate to intercede to God on our behalf.

2 GUIDEPOSTS FOR BASILIAN EDUCATORS

You Are a **Catholic** Educator!

You Are a **Basilian** Educator!

Am I really? But...

Yes, you are a Catholic and Basilian educator! You might be thinking that you are not a priest, so how could you be a Basilian? Maybe you are not Catholic, or even Christian. Perhaps you are not a classroom teacher, but you work in the business office. How is it that you are an educator?

We Are a Catholic Community

A majority of our faculty and staff share our belief in the challenging and liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, many as practicing Catholics, along with others who belong to other Christian denominations. The dedication to your faith, to the Church, and to the teachings of Christ enhance our mission in an essential way, for which we are grateful. The example of Christian witness that you give to the students and indeed the entire community is more valuable than you will ever realize.

But even if you are not be a member of the Catholic Church, you are definitely a member of our Catholic community, and we are grateful to have you! What makes us a Catholic school is not simply because we celebrate Mass, have theology courses, and pray at the beginning of our classes. What makes an education “Catholic” involves not only what we teach, but how we teach, as well as our purpose for teaching. “...[T]he Catholic school aims at forming in the Christian those particular virtues which will enable him to live a new life in Christ and help him to play faithfully his part in building up the Kingdom of God.”²³ It is vitally important that you support this mission. Even if you are not Catholic or Christian, your support of this mission makes us truly a Catholic school. “The fact that

in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school ‘Catholic.’”²⁴ Because you support this mission, you are a Catholic educator.

We Are a Basilian Community

We are so glad that you are a member of our Basilian community whose mission is to teach Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge to the young people entrusted to us. This mission originated with the formation of the Congregation of St. Basil in 1822 in France, but it is important to note that the “Basilians have always shown a spirit of cooperation with the lay teachers who have joined them on their staff.”²⁵ As you will see in the following pages, you do not have to be a priest to embody the qualities that make a Basilian education special. Because you are continuing the legacy of the Basilian Fathers, you are a Basilian educator.

We Are a Community of Educators

The old adage that “what you do is more important than what you say” still rings true. Surely, students learn far more from what we do than what we say. Our words only have real value when they mirror our actions. You can have the best theology teacher in the world offering inspiring insights into Jesus’ teachings about love, but a thoughtless insult from a part-time coach might still convince a teenager that the school is full of hypocrites. In this light, it does not matter what our job description says, we are all educators. When someone in the admissions department or the business office acts with empathy and compassion, students learn empathy and compassion. When a cafeteria worker smiles and welcomes the students in line for lunch, they learn to be joyful. When the guidance counselor goes on a spring break mission trip with the students, they learn the importance of service. Because actions are the most impactful form of education, we are all educators. 

23. *The Catholic School* #36 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

24. *The Catholic School* #34 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

25. *Early History of the Basilian Congregation* p. 35 by Kevin Kirley, CSB

THE QUALITIES OF A BASILIAN EDUCATION: TEN GUIDEPOSTS

“ [Consider] the teacher’s experience of walking into a class on the first day and looking at the students, whether they’re first year, fourth year, grade two, or grade twenty-two, whatever... it’s not that these students are already wise, or that they are already accomplished and noble, or that they command your admiration. At least in respect to what you’re going to teach them, they’re out to lunch. They don’t know anything yet. They haven’t caught on. They haven’t seen anything of what there is to be seen, whether it’s a French novel or whether it’s a problem in math.

It’s the teacher’s love for the students, the teacher’s solicitude for their good, a good that he [or she] sees down the line...that somehow reflects this way in which God deals with us as persons... If there is such a thing as educating persons, somehow this image reflects, at least in a pale way, the love of God that causes us to be, that relates to us before ever we can respond, and is faithful even when...we sometimes use our freedom, as the students do, to respond with indifference or even rejection.

To be able to reflect God’s love in that fashion, in that form, to be in a tangible way almost a sacramental expression of that kind of love, a love that creates persons, that calls persons into being, to educate persons for their personal destiny within the life of God: that is challenge enough for any Basilian, and for anyone who would want to teach in a place of education which is influenced by Basilian tradition.²⁶ ”

While there is an intangible quality to Basilian education that makes it difficult to define, there are some common features that act as guideposts on our journey. These ten guideposts do not completely define Basilian education, but they do give us a sense of what Basilian educators have embodied in their schools for more than two centuries.

It has been noted that “the experience of a Basilian education is often expressed in terms of stories. In fact, the Basilian educational tradition seems best described anecdotally. These stories are usually about the relationship an individual had with this or that Basilian priest or seminarian.”²⁷ In describing the particular qualities of Basilian education, the following pages include numerous quotations from both Basilians and students of Basilians. We hope these convey some of the personality and character of the Basilian Fathers, a group filled with many unique personalities and characters.

1. Teaching Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge²⁸

Basilian educators are dedicated to teaching Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge. The motto of the Basilian Fathers addresses interdependent qualities that guide us to live as a Christian community.

Teach Me

The words “Teach Me” signifies an openness to another perspective and new ideas. It is a humble acknowledgement that there are things in this world that we do not yet understand, but we embrace them as opportunities for discovery. Saying “Teach Me” is an act of courage as it leads us into unknown territories.

26. *Basilians as Educators: Educating Persons* by Robert J. Barringer, CSB, 1992

27. *The Charism of Education of the Congregation of St. Basil* (An early BNENE document found in folders of Fr. Dennis Noelke)

28. This section is adapted from *Teach Me* document from St. Thomas High School and *The Charisms of a Basilian Secondary Education* pamphlet.

“Teach Me” is also a request for community. We reach out to God, the source of all wisdom and knowledge, and we also seek help from one another. This humility recognizes our interdependence and the necessity to rely on God and our community. Hearing the words “Teach Me” is also a call to service – a chance to respond to a need and to love one another as Christ loved us.

Goodness

Goodness comes first. Goodness is the description God gives to humanity at the time of creation. All human beings are essentially good and are made in the image and likeness of God.²⁹ Our interactions with all members of our community should be rooted in the belief that everyone has dignity and is worthy of our care and respect, no matter how sinful our behavior might be.

Goodness also refers to our ability to make morally right choices. As St. Augustine pointed out, human beings have to learn to choose the greatest good. One learns goodness by reflecting on how Jesus lived his life. Basilian educators aspire to show God’s goodness through their humility, as well as how they care for their community.

Goodness alone does not bring about the Kingdom of God. It requires a determination strengthened by discipline and an understanding fed by knowledge. It is only with goodness that discipline and knowledge are able to be practiced in a way that is fruitful and life-giving. To emphasize the priority of goodness, Fr. John Huber, CSB, has often said, “Even Adolph Hitler had discipline and knowledge.”

Discipline

The term “disciple” refers to someone who follows or learns from another. In this most basic sense, discipline refers to our roles as followers of Jesus Christ.

Discipline also means an adherence to study and training in a particular arena such as academics, athletics, or the arts. In this sense, discipline corrects, refines, strengthens, and perfects our abilities and our character. Discipline is needed for self-control and for making decisions with integrity.

Discipline often carries the connotation of imposing order upon or maintaining control over a group of people. Imposing control and order are certainly sometimes necessary, but only when they are in service to the first two meanings. Rather than conformity, true discipline provides freedom to do what is right. Self-discipline is being faithful to obligations and responsibilities, even when times are tough.

Discipline only has a meaningful purpose when it is rooted in the knowledge of truth, both human and divine, and guided by God’s goodness.

Knowledge

In biblical language, Knowledge implies intimacy and union. We are called to know and be known by our community. These relationships unite us with those who share a hope for our ultimate destination: union with God in heaven.

Knowledge also refers to the content delivered in the experience of learning and teaching. For Basilian educators, there are some important implications to praying for knowledge. We seek knowledge, not as we think it should be, but as it really is. We are open to new possibilities and are willing to reassess and change our minds as new truths are revealed to us. Our quest for knowledge leads us to the truth, and understanding truth leads us to knowing God and his creation.

Basilian educators are aware that human knowledge is not a fixed body of material, but rather a constantly refined and deepening understanding of the world. Considering this, we strive to be innovators in our areas of expertise, prepared for engagement in scholarly dialogue with our colleagues and students.

Seeking Knowledge for its own sake is an empty undertaking. Only when directed by and toward Goodness, and fueled by Discipline, can the true function of Knowledge find its fruition.

29. Genesis 1:26-27

“ I think everything centers around our motto. We’re not just imparting academic knowledge: we’re teaching students how to be citizens of the world, by teaching goodness, discipline, and knowledge. I think that order of words is important: it reminds us that goodness and discipline come before knowledge. In other words, teaching someone to be a good person and to have discipline in their life is more important than just imparting knowledge to them.³⁰ ”

In recognition that students learn more from our actions than our words, Basilian educators embrace the responsibility to be both teachers and models of Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge.

2. Strong Personal Student Engagement

Basilian educators cultivate healthy relationships with their students. We don’t just teach. We are truly present to our students and are involved with them beyond the classroom, participating in retreats, service work, attending extracurricular activities, and providing personal mentorship. We show concern for each student, especially those whose families are facing personal or financial challenges, as well as those struggling academically or socially. Often those who are socially awkward find the acceptance and support they need from the teachers and staff members. This creates a positive environment in which we are able to model the expectation to treat everyone with kindness, especially those lacking certain social skills. We celebrate their joys and accomplishments and care for them in times of personal loss and hardship. We call our students to engage with the real issues affecting their lives. Recognizing appropriate boundaries, we share our own struggles, hopes, accomplishments, and failures with them. The relationships formed between students and Basilian educators extend beyond their years in the classroom, with alumni maintaining strong bonds with their schools throughout their lives.



30. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.



“...what I remember about Fr. Whitley is that he welcomed students into the library after school who had to wait for their ride home. We did not have to keep silent but could study and/or get to know the others (about 12) and converse with them. Fr. Whitley would be part of the group, so we got to know him as a funny, caring, loving person who related well to us young men.”³¹

“In the middle of this century, we added Saint John Bosco to our list of patrons precisely to highlight this aspect of our work, that education means being close to students. In a recent discussion among Basilians involved in higher education, several men pointed out that this emphasis on closeness to students may sometimes mean sacrificing the academic prestige that comes from volumes of publications.”³²

“Fr. Canning Harrison was the band moderator at Catholic Central, as well as a French teacher. He helped me to be the best person possible through his chats with me and his willingness to help me understand life.”³³

3. Accompaniment

Basilian educators are companions on our students' journeys and accept them as they are. In contrast to leading from the front, or pushing from behind, to accompany means to be present to or to walk alongside someone. Accompaniment is other-centered, much like the role of a pianist who plays alongside, listens, and provides the setting that allows a singer to shine. We are called to be a presence that emboldens our students' confidence, allowing them to be open and honest with us, without fear of judgement. Attentive listening allows us to better understand them and provides a welcoming atmosphere in which they feel comfortable voicing their questions and apprehensions. Through this we become better equipped to gently guide or goad our students as needed. Pope Francis said, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”³⁴ Jesus provides the model for this when he accompanied the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).



31. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

32. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

33. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

34. *Evangelii Gaudium* #172 by Pope Francis, 2013

“Basilians accompanied their students in easy and natural ways... [They are unique in their] special attention to the need to accompany students in their development and to develop a personal interest in their welfare and progress... Basilians are also interested in each student as a unique person with a story.”³⁵

“When I was in high school, I never went to Mass on Sundays, but I had a job working every day in the Basilian residence at St. Anne. None of the priests ever complained or pushed me to go to church. They spent a lot of time with me and probably figured that if pushed, I would only run the other way! Really, I think their kindness and acceptance of me provided a more profound invitation. They seemed to trust the slow work of God, and the seeds they planted flowered later in my life.”³⁶



Even when it might invite uncomfortable, and perhaps even unwarranted, criticism, engagement with difficult questions is valued. Respect should always be paid to the young people who are still developing critical thinking skills. Basilian educators look for opportunities to affirm the small steps of intellectual growth in their students and have confidence that our encouragement will spark continued development.

4. Respect for the Intellect and Excellence in Teaching

Basilian educators are competent, dedicated, and passionate for education. We are committed to the liberal arts and critical thinking. We encourage open dialogue, intellectual curiosity, and engagement with broader cultural and secular perspectives. We hold ourselves accountable for our students' success, through rigorous academic challenges, engaging teaching styles, and personal mentorship.

“Basilians generally learned to have a healthy respect for the intellect. By this I don't mean an emphasis on academic accomplishments, or the notion that intelligence makes you a more admirable person than are those less gifted. I mean a profound appreciation that the truth is important, that truth is not to be subordinated to any other purpose. I remember... one of the brightest students in St. Thomas More College stated that the Basilians had taught her to be critical, and that this meant also being critical of the Church. I was a little bit surprised at the time, because none of the Basilians that she had met were particularly critical of the Catholic Church. ...She had been taught in class not to be afraid of questions, to go ahead and ask them. Behind that confidence in asking questions was a respect for the intellect that had become so much a part of her teachers that they might not have noticed that they were conveying it to their students.”³⁷



35. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

36. Interview with Chris Wardwell (STH '84), April 2025.

37. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

5. Formation of the Whole Person

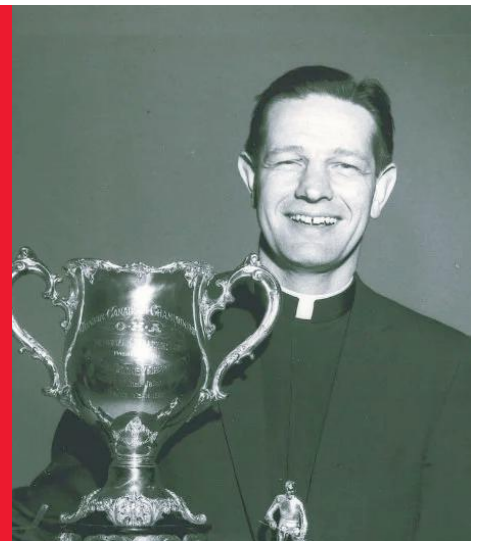
Basilian educators emphasize a holistic education that pays attention to the intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, and personal growth of each student. “The school must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.”³⁸ While academics naturally holds a prominent place in the life of a student, its role should not be overemphasized. Our expectations of students should always reflect a respect for family life and other valuable pursuits.



The spiritual life of the community should be both respected and fostered through opportunities for prayer, the sacraments, retreats, service, and other forms of divine nourishment. The academic curriculum should offer a wide variety of studies that capture and nurture the imagination of young people. Extracurricular activities should provide opportunities for the community to express themselves and explore their interests. Athletics, the visual arts, drama, music, and other activities should provide even the most unique person with the opportunity to discover themselves. All these should have as their goal the building of the Kingdom of God.



“ [Basilian] Father David Bauer was elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame... I suspect that those who elected him to the Hall of Fame had mainly in mind that he introduced Canada to a new dimension of international hockey. That is not what Dave Bauer had in mind when he started the Canadian Olympic hockey team, however. He was convinced that there was a noble human and even Christian meaning possible for athletics, and that this was being neglected. Those who played for him on that first Olympic hockey team... claimed that it was an educational experience that changed their lives, and changed them much for the better. Father Dave had a vivid sense that athletic performance has much to do with character, and that character has much to do with your relation to God.³⁹ ”



6. Faith Integration

In all of our endeavors, the work of Basilian educators plays an integral role in the spiritual development of our students. “For Basilians evangelization is not a new work to be added on to education. It is a dimension of all the work that we do, including our principal work of education.”⁴⁰ Our Catholic faith is not simply delegated to theology teachers and campus ministers; it is naturally woven into all aspects of community life.



38. *The Catholic School* #29 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

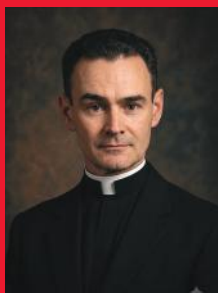
39. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

40. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

Not only are we careful to ensure that all our undertakings are in harmony with the Catholic values we profess, we also look for opportunities to integrate Christian moral and spiritual principles into the subjects we are addressing, including science, literature, art, history, and other academic courses. This does not mean that every class is a theology class. “Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching [theology].”⁴¹ Instead teachers are expected to identify and incorporate these elements into their curriculum when it is relevant.

Prayer is an integral element in all activities. All classes, practices, games, rehearsals, club activities, etc. begin with prayer. It is the responsibility of the adult in charge to ensure that prayer occurs, but the prayer itself can be led by student volunteers.

“Fr. Bob Ritz taught Spanish. He would often take students with him when he went to one of the migrant workers camps outside of Rochester to celebrate Sunday [Mass] in Spanish. We could spend a couple of hours immersed in Spanish, but it also made us aware of the poor and marginalized as he educated us in our discussion [as we went] home.”⁴²



“The first work of our Congregation was that of Christian education and preaching, and we have always been a teaching community. ... Whatever apostolic work we do, we are doing a single work of service, “building up the Body of Christ.”⁴³

7. Cultivating Community

Basilian educators are deeply committed to the well-being of their community. The school is not simply an educational institution, but first and foremost, it is “a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its



members.”⁴⁴ Basilian educators create an environment where faculty and students feel a sense of belonging, support, and mutual respect. Only in this atmosphere can faith be “assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community.”⁴⁵

“The Basilian way of life is life in community.”⁴⁶

We view our colleagues as members of our community. We care for their well-being and appreciate the entirety of their lives beyond their role as employees of the school. “We do not choose our confreres; they are given to us by God. We are called to live with them as brothers, finding in them the presence of Christ among us, compassionate with their faults as God our Father is compassionate, and refusing to judge or condemn them.”⁴⁷

“During the time I spent at [Catholic Central], a few different tragedies occurred: deaths of parents, etc. The way the school community rallied in support of those who were suffering is a testament to the character of Basilian education. It shows how the work we do in our schools extends far beyond the classroom.”⁴⁸



41. *The Catholic School* #39 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

42. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

43. *The Basilian Way of Life* #64, 2013

44. *The Catholic School* #32 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

45. *The Catholic School* #53 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

46. *The Basilian Way of Life* #31, 2013

47. *The Basilian Way of Life* #35, 2013

48. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

“ [I joined the Basilians because] I saw the joy in their faces and the comradery that they had with each other. They enjoyed working together, and I wanted my life to be like theirs. They were competent and helpful and cared for the students and for each other.⁴⁹ ”



8. Human and Down-to-Earth Presence

Basilian educators are approachable, lighthearted, humble, flexible, and practical. We look for common sense solutions to problems. We listen and consider the bigger picture, always seeking what is best for the people in our community. We understand the developmental stage of adolescence and have appropriate expectations while seeking creative ways to encourage the growth of our students. Discipline is upheld with understanding and even humor, fostering respect without harshness.



9. Education as a Vocation

Basilian educators view their roles as callings imbued with meaning and purpose. Education is not just a way to make a living; it is also a sacred mission. We hold a profound sense of responsibility for the formation of our students and care deeply about our colleagues. We view our work as an expression of our God-given gifts and talents. We value our place in a community where our creativity and contributions are appreciated.

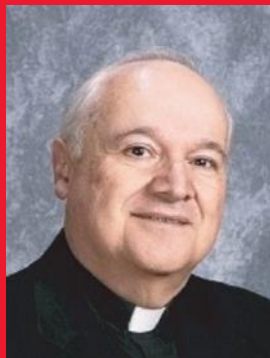
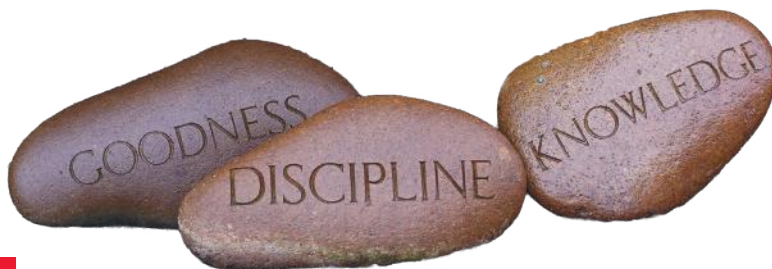


“ The best story I’ve ever heard came from a gentleman who went to St. Thomas in the 1940s or 50s. He and some friends used to skip school and go to the River Oaks theater to watch a matinee movie. One day, Father Higgins, the principal, told him that he knew he was cutting school, and that if he ever caught him doing so, “God help him!” A few days later, the guys cut school again. When they were in line at the theater, Father Higgins tapped one on the shoulder and said, “Buy two more tickets.” The two priests sat behind the three guys as they watched the movie. Afterwards, they never mentioned it again. Nor did the guys ever skip school again! I think that demonstrates a creativity and humor, yet a sincere commitment to discipline.⁵⁰ ”

49. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

50. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

“ [I] sensed that my Basilian teachers really loved what they were doing.⁵¹ ”



“ When I was in 11th grade, I had trouble with trigonometry. The teacher that I had could not get through to me. One of my friends suggested that I see Father Ranalletti, who was vice principal at the time. He had an ability to teach math in a way that the average kid could understand. I went to see him after school. It was a rainy day,

and Father Menner came in and told Father Ranalletti that he would drive him home. But Father Ranalletti said no. He would stay with me instead and not to worry that he had a warm winter coat with him. The fact that he did that for me always impressed me greatly.⁵² ”

“ Rather than try to impose their own system of education, Basilians endeavoured to adapt their teaching to local needs and conditions. Rather than stand in opposition to public instruction, they sought means of cooperation, without compromising the essentials of the Catholic faith.⁵³ ”

“ Basilians are like Ontario farmers; it was mainly Ontario farmers and small-town boys who were the early North American Basilians. (This is not quite the same as being like Saskatchewan farmers. Perhaps to be like Saskatchewan farmers is an ideal to which Basilians can aspire. Right now, prior to the parousia⁵⁴, we are more like Ontario farmers.) Now there is one thing about farmers - when something has to be done, they just go ahead and do it. When it is time to do the seeding, you don't hold a meeting about it. You do the seeding. When the wheat is ripe you don't check your master plan or consult a committee. You harvest. You respond to the obvious need. ...This is more or less what the North American Basilians did.⁵⁵ ”

Basilian schools are places that serve the needy and vulnerable. “Concern for students who struggle academically and those from underprivileged backgrounds is a hallmark of the Basilian educational apostolate.”⁵⁶ It is essential that our schools include students from a broad expanse of economic classes because “if the Catholic school were to turn its attention exclusively or predominantly to those from the wealthier social classes, it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position, and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust.”⁵⁷

10. Serving the Needs of Others

Basilian educators work to meet the needs of others. Many of the Basilian endeavors in education have been responses to a need, as well as to those in need. Throughout their history, Basilian schools were often established to fulfill a need to educate a particular group of people. The origins of the Basilian Fathers are rooted in the need to secretly train priests in the wake of the French Revolution. They came to North America at the request of the Toronto bishop who needed a school for the Irish immigrants. Many other schools were established at the request of bishops who knew the Basilian Fathers' reputation as excellent educators. The Basilians generally did not try to impose their own system upon a community, but rather worked within those situations to help others. It is in these acts of service that the unique Basilian mission is lived.

51. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

52. Anonymous comment from the February 2025 survey of the Basilian Fathers.

53. *Early History of the Basilian Congregation* by Kevin Kirley, CSB

54. The term “parousia” refers to the Second Coming of Christ.

55. *The Basilian Charisms and Education* by John C. Gallagher, CSB

56. *The Basilian Customs: The Non-Constitutional Document of the Congregation of the Priests of St. Basil (Basilian Fathers)*, 2022

57. *The Catholic School* #58 by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977

“ The French Basilians of the early period devoted their time and resources to the work of conducting minor seminaries, first at St. Symphorien-de-Mahun, then at Ste Barbe in Annonay. This latter was a school for sons of poor parents who could not afford to pay much, or any, tuition. ...Any surplus funds which individual Basilians might have at the end of each year were turned over to help the needy students, particularly minor seminarians at Ste Barbe...the priest-educators led a life of utter poverty, a fact which in some cases cost them their health, but which also endeared them to their students.⁵⁸ ”

“ Our founders made it their special concern to serve the poor in their need for Christian education. We must do all we can to see that our schools do not exclude the poor, and in all of our apostolates that we do not compromise with any form of social injustice.⁵⁹ ”

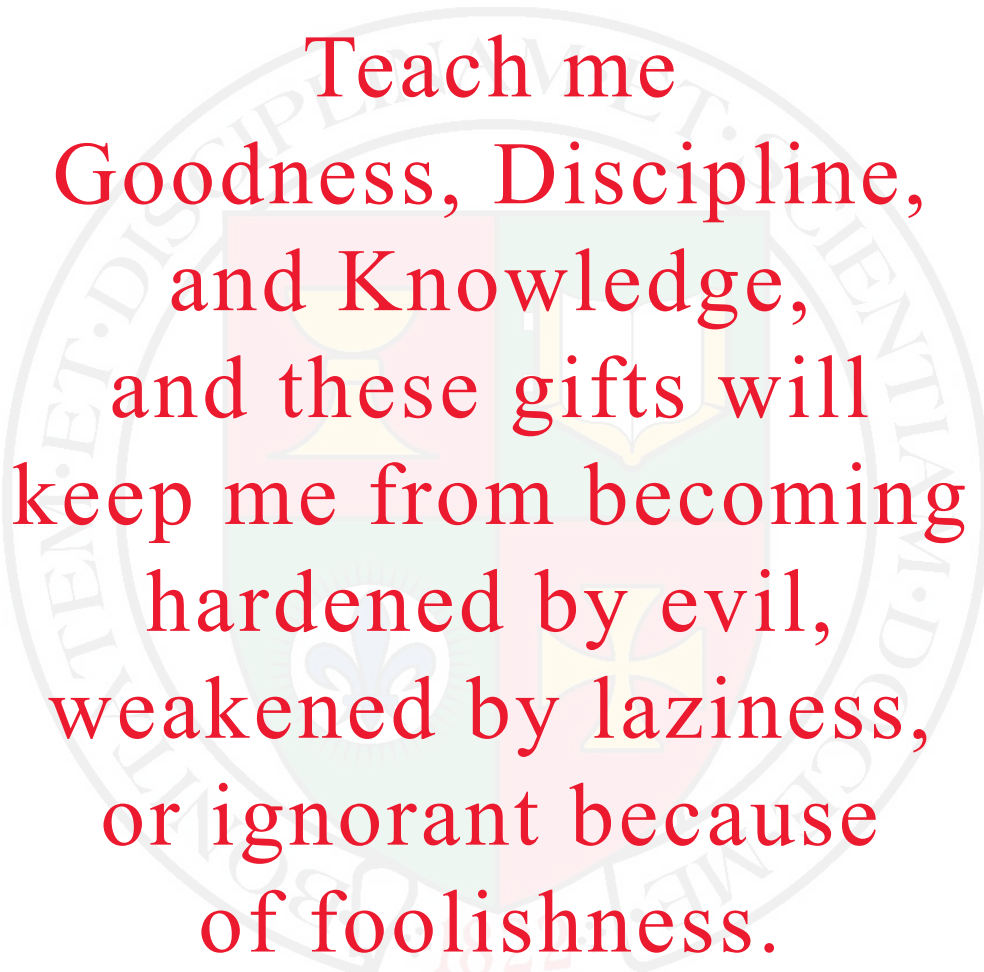
Basilian communities not only teach and learn about Jesus' call to serve those in need, but they also put it into practice. Our communities should participate in meaningful service activities that broaden their understanding of injustice and how it affects the most vulnerable in our society. 



58. *Early History of the Basilian Congregation* by Kevin Kirley, CSB p. 30

59. *The Basilan Way of Life* #65, 2013





Lord,
Teach me
Goodness, Discipline,
and Knowledge,
and these gifts will
keep me from becoming
hardened by evil,
weakened by laziness,
or ignorant because
of foolishness.

For more information:

The Congregation of St. Basil (Basilian Fathers)

www.basilian.org

**Basilian Network for Education
and the New Evangelization (BNENE)**

www.basilian.org/bnene

Chris Wardwell, Executive Director

cwardwell@basilian.org

4500 Memorial Dr. | Houston, Texas 77007

713-864-6348 ext. 140