

INTO YOUR HANDS – JANUARY 2026

Putting it Together Bit by Bit

When I was a young child, I enjoyed playing with building blocks. Frequently, my siblings would come and topple my construction, but I would simply start building again. Soon, those blocks were replaced with Legos to construct much stronger and more intricate things. As much as I enjoyed playing with Legos, I did not follow the path to becoming an architect. Instead, I heard the voice of Jesus the Carpenter calling me to priesthood and inviting me to join Him in the construction of holy lives and the Kingdom of God.

But I haven't forgotten the lessons learned from those Legos. You may recall that Legos are made to build both upward and side-to-side. This is a good reminder of what God calls us to do. We must live our lives in such a way that we journey upward, with our sights set on heaven and a desire to find our home in the heart of God. We must also live lives that reach outward, building relationships with each other and never allowing ourselves to think only of ourselves. In the Stephen Sondheim song "Putting It Together," we find some wonderful lyrics about the creative process of the journey of life. "Bit by bit... putting it together... piece by piece... only way to make a work of art. Every moment makes a contribution. Every little detail plays a part. Having just a vision's no solution. Everything depends on execution. Putting it together... that's what counts!"

In these lyrics we can imagine the voice of the Creator, who first knitted us in our mother's womb, uniting cell to cell and giving us the gift of life with purpose and intention. We hear God's challenge to us to build a life that is not self-focused and that recognizes the important contribution of others, playing a part in living a life that counts.

God's creative process with us does not conclude at our birth. God continues to give shape and direction to our lives, placing us within a family and communities that assist us in becoming all that God wills and wishes for us.

As we come together, whether at home, school, work, or church, we learn what counts. We discover that we are wonderfully made by the hand of God and placed into this world not as some unmoving, never-changing work of art, but as God's living, breathing, and thinking creation that continues to learn and grow throughout life, enriched through so many encounters in the world.

In this month when we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we recognize the important foundational work of our schools. Catholic schools offer their students a firm base on which each of them can build a life. Our schools teach their students that even after graduation they must continue to seek further development and discovery. Every part of one's life—from early days of learning, through entry into the workforce, and on to later years—can contribute to the work of art God wishes each of us to be.

Our lives are continuous works in progress. There are moments of construction that make us joyful and grateful. There are moments, too, where life seems to topple around us and we find ourselves confronting sorrow and confusion. Thankfully, we have Jesus the Carpenter accompanying us. This Jesus not only learned the art of carpentry from St. Joseph but also was present when our Heavenly Father first began assembling the building blocks of creation.

Bit by bit, brick by brick, may we never tire in our efforts to join Jesus in building a holy life for ourselves and in building up the Kingdom of God. ✦