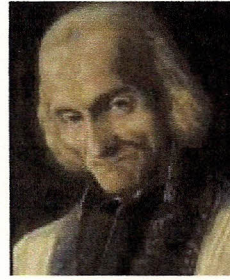


January Holy Hero

St. John Mary Vianney

Patron saint of parish priests

Feast day Aug 4



Pope Benedict XVI has declared a “Year of Priests” from June 19, 2009 to June 19, 2010. The year concludes in Rome with a gathering of priests from around the world. With the announcement of this Year of Priests, the Pope has declared St. John Vianney the Universal Patron of Priests on the 150th anniversary of the death of the Cure of Ars. (Cure means *pastor* in French.)

John was born in France in 1786. As a boy, he worked as a shepherd in his father’s fields and did not begin his education until he was 20 years old. John found learning difficult, and failed twice to pass the entrance exam to the seminary. After years of hard study, and with the help of a neighboring priest named Father Balley, he was ordained at age 30. Father Vianney was made parish priest of Ars, a little town in France, in 1818. The people of Ars lived very sinful lives. They drank too much, went to church too little, and used terrible language. Father Vianney fasted severely and did penance for the sake of saving their souls. What little sleep he did allow himself was often disturbed by the devil, who would torment him with deafening noises, insults, and even physical abuse, because he was so enraged at the number of souls being saved by Fr. Vianney.

People began coming to Fr. Vianney from far away for his wise spiritual guidance. God gave him the gift of reading people’s hearts and minds and the power of healing. He also had supernatural knowledge of the past and future. Because of these God-given gifts, he converted many sinners. People would wait in line for days to receive from him the sacrament of Reconciliation. For years, he heard confessions for 16-18 hours a day. His loving kindness and miraculous works made him well known and loved by the crowds, but he still lived his life with a soft spoken and child like simplicity. After 40 years as the priest of Ars, he died at age 73. He was canonized May 31, 1925, by Pope Pius XI.

St John Vianney is a wonderful image of a priest after the heart of Christ. During this Year of Priests remember to pray for our priests, for they give their lives to us; lives spent serving the people of God.

*“The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.
When you see the priest, think of
Our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

St. John Vianney