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Cure of Ars
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St. John Marie Vianney
 The Curé of Ars

Biography of St. John Marie Vianney

(1786 – 1859)

The saint, for whom our parish is named, St John Vianney, is the patron saint of parish priests. He can; however, be an inspiration for all of us, especially when we are shy, have a hard time in school and find it tough to be good.

John Vianney grew up in France during the French Revolution. His parents were hard-working farmers who taught him prayer, piety and charity. John was blessed with a great love of God, and prayed constantly as he worked in the fields. His parents shared what little they had with beggars, and John, when he was a little older, tried to teach the little children because there were no priests to instruct them. By the time he was eighteen, he knew that he wanted to be a priest and was encouraged in his ambition by his parish priest. After some years, he was admitted into the Seminary. He had a very hard time with his studies, particularly Latin. He was slow to understand ideas and had a poor memory. Sometimes he was teased by his classmates because of this, but they admired him for his piety and humility.

He was promoted to the next level in the Seminary even though his professors were worried that he would not be able to do the work, and after six months he flunked out! Imagine how heartbroken he was; he wanted so much to be a priest but just could not learn. His parish priest came to his aid, tutored him privately, and this time he passed his exams.

After his ordination at age twenty-nine, his superiors let him say Mass, but would not allow him to hear confessions! He later became one of the greatest confessors the Church has ever known.

He was made pastor (curé) of a small church in Ars, a little town in France. Slowly his parishioners came to love him for his wonderful example of piety, humility and fairness. As the years passed, people in the villages around Ars heard of the wonderful comfort he brought to people who came to him for confession. By 1828, people were coming from all around, and he sometimes spent eleven or twelve hours in the confessional!

However, even though he was becoming so well-known, John Vianney was not always happy. He longed for solitude, and even tried to retire, but his bishop asked him to stay. The devil often came to him disturbing his rest, intruding on his prayers and trying to discourage him from serving his people.

After forty-one years of an incredible life of fasting, prayer and service to the faithful in Ars, he died on August 4, 1859. (August 4th is now his feast day.) He was made a saint in 1925 after many miracles were attributed to his intercession. On October 10, 1926, our church in Merrick officially became a parish and was dedicated to the guidance of St. John Vianney.

What an amazing saint! He overcame many obstacles to do what he wanted most, to love and serve God. Please remember to pray to him for the welfare of all our priests, and ask him to pray for us so that many young men will choose to become priests for our diocese.

This is our glorious duty, to pray and to Love- St. John Vianney