

# John Vianney (The "Curé of Ars")

(1786-1859 AD)



August 4



## St. John Mary Vianney

John Mary Vianney was born near Lyons, France, in 1786. As a child he took care of his father's sheep. He loved to pray and when he was eighteen, he asked his father's permission to become a priest. His father was worried about losing his help on the family farm. After two years, however, Mr. Vianney agreed. At twenty, John studied under Father Balley. The priest was very patient but Latin soon became a major problem for John. He became discouraged. It was then that he decided to walk sixty miles to the shrine of St. John Francis Regis, a popular saint in France. We celebrate his feast on June 16. John prayed for help. After that pilgrimage, he still had as much trouble as ever with his studies. But he never again grew discouraged.

John was finally able to enter the seminary. Studies were hard. No matter how much he tried, he never did very well. When the final examinations came, they were spoken, not written. John had to face a board of teachers and answer their questions. He was so upset that he broke down in the middle of the test. Father Balley spoke up for John. He pointed out that John was a good and holy man, he was full of common sense, and he understood what the Church taught about the faith. It was agreed that these qualities made up for what John was lacking in learning. John was ordained.

At first, he was appointed as Father Balley's curate, assisting him until his death in 1817. Then Father Vianney was sent to a little parish called Ars, where he would spend the rest of his life. When he first arrived, the people of Ars did not care much about their faith. They drank too much, worked all day Sunday, and never went to church. Many used terrible language. Father Vianney fasted and did penance for his people. He tried to stop them from sinning. Eventually, one tavern after another closed down because business became so slow. People began to worship regularly on Sundays and attended weekday Mass. The swearing was not so frequent. What had happened in Ars? "Our priest is a saint," the people would say, "and we must obey him."

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God gave John the power to see into people's minds and to know the future. Because of this gift, he converted many sinners and helped people make the right decisions. Hundreds of pilgrims began to come to Ars each day. St. John Vianney often spent sixteen hours daily hearing confessions. Even though he felt he would be happier and more at peace in a monastery, he remained at Ars for forty-two years and died there in 1859 at the age of seventy-three. St. John Vianney was proclaimed a saint in 1925 by Pope Pius XI.

*St. John Vianney devoted an enormous amount of time to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this sacrament, our sins are forgiven and we receive the graces we need to live our life according to the teachings of Jesus. Let's make it a point to take advantage of this sacrament by going to confession more frequently.*

