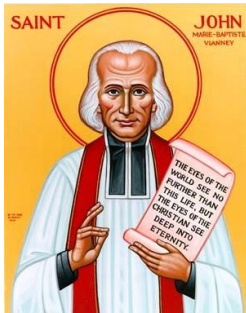




**June 2009 – June 2010**



### **Who was Jean Marie Baptiste Vianney?**

Jean Marie Baptiste Vianney (in English he is called John Vianney) was born on May 8, 1786 in the village of Dardilly in France. After serving a time in the army during the Napoleonic period he entered seminary formation to become a priest. He had a very difficult time. He struggled mightily with all of his studies and he had a particularly difficult time with Latin. Many, including his formation directors and instructors in the seminary and his own bishop, had very serious doubts that this man, who did not have strong intellectual gifts, would be suitable for the priesthood. However, John Vianney persevered and finally was ordained a priest in 1815. His bishop, acting on his estimation of this new priest as a man of few gifts, sent him to the remotest backwater village of his diocese, the village of Ars. There Fr. John Vianney spent the rest of his life except for one brief period when he tried to flee the duties and pressures of parish life and to find a quiet place where he could pray in peace and solitude. That was not in God's plan for him and he soon returned to Ars.

He was a man of great dedication to his call to be a priest and to serve his people. He preached in a very simple manner, had a great love of the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Mother and he had a special devotion to St. Philomena. Through his work as a confessor he brought about a spiritual renewal that touched not only the people of his parish but all of France. He regularly spent 14 to 18 hours a day in the confessional surviving on only a few hour sleep and a diet of boiled potatoes. As the word spread on his extraordinary abilities as a confessor, thousands, including bishops and aristocracy made the journey to Ars in order to receive his spiritual counsel. Thus a man who started his life as one whom very few thought would ever amount to anything became, by the time of his death in 1859, the vehicle for thousands of conversions. He is, for us today, an example of how God works wonderfully through those who dedicate their lives to him and who seek to do his will. John Vianney, a humble parish priest is regarded by the Church as one of its great figures simply because he was faithful.

John Vianney was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1925. He is the only diocesan priest ever to be canonized. He is the patron saint of clergy throughout the world. His feast day is August 4.

During this *The Year of the Priest*, please pray to St. John Vianney for our Priests and Priestly Vocations.