



St. Jean-Marie Vianney
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1786–1859 • France

Growing up on a farm in France, Jean-Marie Vianney was better at plowing fields than studying. He had not gone to school when he was little, so as he grew up, learning was a painful struggle. But Jean-Marie had a good reason to work hard at his studies. He wanted to become a priest.

To become a priest, Jean-Marie had to pass an exam to enter the seminary (where you study to become a priest). Once inside the seminary, he would have to study philosophy, theology, and Latin to learn about the Faith. Jean-Marie knew he was not very smart, but that did not stop him from working hard. His teachers worked hard to help him too. They knew that Jean-Marie was not their smartest student. But they knew he was something more important. They knew he was holy. They knew he would make a wonderful priest.

Jean-Marie failed his first examination for the seminary. Still, he did not give up. Three months later, he passed the examination on his second try and soon became a priest at age twenty-nine. But even though he was now a priest, Jean-Marie's struggles were far from over.

Jean-Marie became the parish priest of a little town called Ars. The people of Ars did not pray, and the church was empty. But the people were curious about their new priest. First one person, and then another, went to Mass to hear Jean-Marie preach. His preaching was different from that of other priests they knew. His words were holy but also full of common sense. Slowly, the pews in church filled as more and more people went to Sunday Mass.

The townspeople also went to Jean-Marie for confession. His simple, holy words filled them with sorrow for their sins. If someone forgot to confess a sin, Jean-Marie could miraculously see into that person's heart and remind him about the forgotten sin. Jean-Marie's fame as a confessor spread. People from other towns throughout France and even from different countries all flocked to Ars to confess their sins to Jean-Marie Vianney. So many people were lined up that Jean-Marie would hear confessions sixteen and sometimes eighteen hours a day!

Near the end of his life, Jean-Marie's voice grew so faint it could barely be heard. But still people came to confession so that their sins could be forgiven and so that they could hear Jean-Marie's words of holiness and common sense. Jean-Marie Vianney served the people of Ars until he died a holy death.

St. Jean-Marie Vianney, help me to feel sorry for my sins!