

Who was Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney?^[1]_[SEP]

The patron saint of our parish is Jean Marie Baptiste Vianney. In English he is called Saint John Vianney. He was born on 8 May 1786 in the village of Dardilly in France. After serving 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 hard time with Latin. Many, including his formation directors, his 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.^[1]_[SEP]

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 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 hours of sleep and a diet of boiled potatoes.

As the word spread of 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 who 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.^[1]_[SEP]

John Vianney was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1925. He is the only diocesan priest ever to be canonised. He is the patron saint of clergy throughout the world.

Although our patron has his feast on 4 August, here at SJV we will be keeping our principal celebration on Sunday 9 August at 10am. Usually the celebration takes the form of a festival Mass followed by a BBQ – clearly this year due to the pandemic this is not possible. So what are we going to do?

The 10am Mass on Sunday 9 August will be a Solemn Mass of S. John Vianney. Our music, readings, prayers etc will all focus on his life and ministry. Also his image will be set up in the main body of the church for you all to come and light candles and make your devotions as you seek our heavenly patron's intercession.

The period of lockdown has had a terrible effect on our parish finances and so I am offering as a suggestion that as part of our celebration we hold a Gift Day. I ask you to consider making a one-off donation either in thanksgiving or as part of our seeking of a particular grace.

There are four ways in which you can make your donation:

1. Bring your offering to church in an envelope clearly marked 'Gift Day'
2. Post it to us.
3. Make your donation online at www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/donations/?parish=clayhall – please state 'Gift Day' under 'Fund'
4. By bank transfer to our HSBC account, sort code 40-13-22, account no 41576704.

If you make the donation online or by bank transfer, please let me know that you have done so. If you would like it attached to a Mass, please let me have details.

During the month of August I will offer a Mass for all who have made a donation to this project.

Cissy Roche's Funeral Mass

Tuesday 4 August at 10:15am

Cissy was one of the oldest members of our parish and one of a very small band who remember the "hut in the camp" that served as our church before the present building was opened in 1966.

First Communion Mass

As our celebration of First Holy Communion was to have taken place while the church was closed due to the lockdown we need to reschedule this event. It will now take place on **Saturday 5 September at 10.30am**. We clearly will have to keep the event within the government guidelines, including the limit on numbers, social distancing between different families, prohibition of singing and avoidance of touching shared items.

Confirmation

For the same reasons as outlined above for First Holy Communion our Confirmations did not take place this year on Pentecost Sunday. Soon the Confirmation Team will be contacting all candidates to arrange a date and time for the celebration of this important sacrament.

Fr Rob