

## Do Catholics Worship Relics?

No. The teaching of the Church is very clear that we are *never* to worship anything or anyone other than God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We venerate relics as holy objects that are associated with saints who now live in God's presence. A relic is venerated in recognition of the fact that God has worked through a saint, and that an object associated with a saint is holy and can lead us to God. The healing power of relics comes from God alone and never from the object.

Reference to an early form of relics can be found in the New Testament, when a woman was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment (Mt 9:18-26) and when cloths touched by St. Paul were used to heal the sick and drive out demons (Acts 19:12). A more developed use of relics began during the persecution of the early Church, when the faithful would retrieve the bones of martyrs and place them under the altar for Mass. To this day, Catholic churches place first-class relics in altar stones.

## What is a reliquary?

A reliquary is a special case that holds a relic. It may be small enough to fit in a hand or large enough to encase a saint's body. The case used on this tour is a 17th century French reliquary.

## Who made the painting of St. John Vianney that is traveling with the relic?

The painting, or religious icon, was commissioned by the Knights of Columbus for this tour. The original was painted by Italian iconographer Fabrizio Diomedes, and copies have been made to accompany the relic.

## Is the relic pilgrimage taking donations?

Yes. Since the Knights of Columbus is covering all costs of the U.S. pilgrimage, donations made by the faithful during stops of the relic pilgrimage will benefit the Shrine at Ars, France, which is renovating its facilities to provide an even deeper spiritual experience for pilgrims.

## How can I learn about the scheduled visits for the heart relic?

The Knights of Columbus has posted a web page with a printable prayer card, a copy of the icon and the latest schedule updates. Visit: [kofc.org/vianney](http://kofc.org/vianney).

## St. Jean Vianney on the Priesthood

"The priest continues the work of redemption on earth. . . . If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die not of fright but of love. . . . The Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus."

## Prayer of Total Devotion to God by St. Jean Vianney

I love you, O my God, and my only desire is to love you until the last breath of my life. I love you, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving you, than live without loving you. I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally. . . . My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.  
Amen.

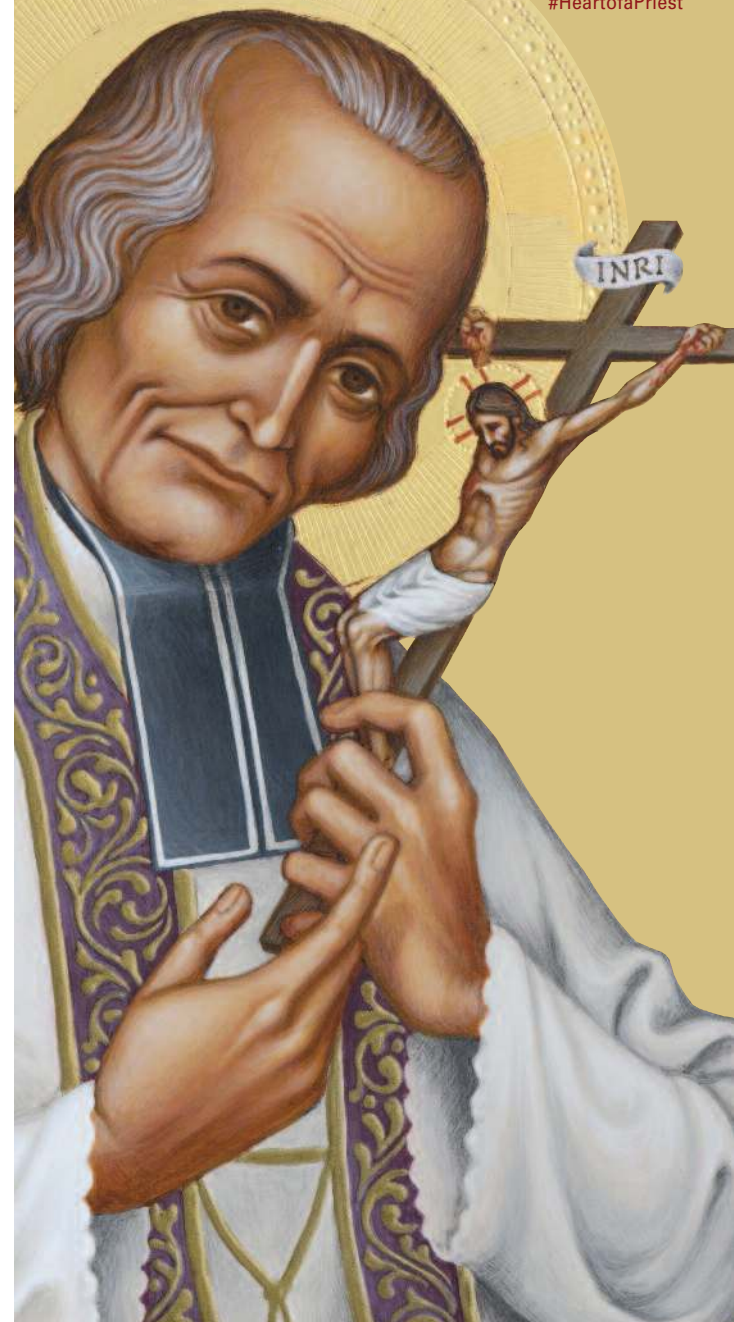


Cover Panel: Icon by Fabrizio Diomedes. (c) Knights of Columbus, 2018.

# St. Jean Vianney

PATRON OF PARISH PRIESTS

#HeartofaPriest



The heart is a symbol of love, courage and commitment, and serves as the most evident sign of life within a person. In the case of St. Jean Marie Vianney, popularly known as the Curé of Ars, his incorrupt heart is also a sign of great holiness that holds a message of hope for those who approach it today for veneration.

On the U.S. pilgrimage of the relic, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, the faithful are asked to pray for their most heartfelt needs and intentions, as well as for healing within the heart of the Church and an increase of holy vocations to the priesthood. As the patron of parish priests, whose soul is united with God in heaven, St. Jean Vianney can be a source of sanctity in the priesthood and unity within the Church.

*The relic tour is made possible through a generous loan from the Shrine at Ars, France, where the saint's incorrupt body, including the heart, is normally on display. The shrine attracts more than 500,000 visitors each year.*

### Early Life and Struggles

Born in a small village in France in 1786, Jean Vianney and his family suffered through the dark years of the French Revolution, when the faith was attacked, churches were destroyed, and bishops, priests and religious martyred. So dangerous were the times that young Jean had to receive his first Holy Communion in secret from a faithful priest. Yet hardship only increased Jean's desire to serve Jesus and his people.



After the Reign of Terror ended in France, and following the Napoleonic wars, young Jean entered the seminary, where he met with more obstacles. He found studies difficult, struggling especially with Latin, and was about to be dismissed from the seminary when an official of his diocese interceded. Knowing the young man to be earnest and prayerful, the vicar general

asked the seminary rector some simple questions: "Is he pious? Has he a devotion to Our Lady? Does he know how to say his rosary?" The rector admitted that Jean was "a model of piety." The vicar general said that he should continue his studies and "the grace of God will do the rest." At Jean Vianney's ordination in 1815, the vicar general said, "The Church wants not only learned priests but, even more, holy ones."

### The Curé of Ars

Father Vianney was assigned to the small farming community of Ars, whose parish consisted of 260 people. Walking along the road, towing a few possessions in a cart, he thanked a



local boy who pointed him the way, saying, "You have shown me the way to Ars; I will show you the way to heaven." The political turbulence, anti-clericalism and religious skepticism of the age had taken their toll on the village, and the practice of the faith was poor. Father Vianney undertook a life of heroic penance and prayer to draw his people away from sin and closer to God. Known for his wise spiritual counsels and the gift of reading hearts, he soon became a "prisoner" of the confessional, hearing confessions for up to eighteen hours a day, as people came from across Europe and beyond to see him. He also exercised great charity, building an orphanage for homeless children and receiving beggars with an open heart and hand.

*The heart relic of St. Jean Vianney will visit cathedrals, churches, chapels and seminaries, from November 2018 to early June 2019.*

Due to his success in bringing souls to Christ, he became a target of the devil, who confronted the priest on various occasions. Undeterred, Father Vianney did not fall for the devil's tricks and dismissed strange events by saying, "It's just the devil."

Jean Vianney died on Aug. 4, 1859, at the age of 73. Nearly 1,000 people attended his funeral, including the bishop and priests of the diocese. On Oct. 3, 1873, Pope Pius IX proclaimed him Venerable, and on Jan. 8, 1905, Pope Pius X beatified him. St. Jean Vianney was canonized by Pope Pius XI

on May 31, 1925. In 1929, the Holy Father declared him patron of parish priests. His feast day is August 4.

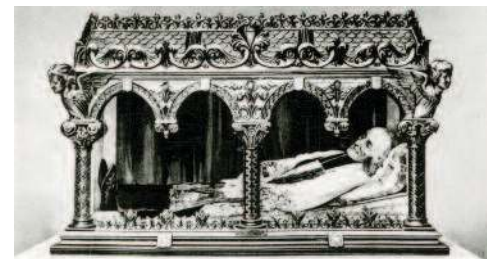
### Who is the sponsor of this relic pilgrimage?

The Knights of Columbus, the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization, is pleased to sponsor this major relic pilgrimage, through a generous loan from the Shrine at Ars, France. It is especially meaningful for the Knights to host the relic of the patron of parish priests, since the Order was founded in 1882 by a holy parish priest, Father Michael McGivney. His cause for sainthood is open at the Vatican, which has bestowed on him the title of Venerable, in recognition of his heroic virtue. The heart relic of St. Jean Vianney will be reverently displayed in cathedrals, churches, chapels and seminaries throughout the United States, from November 2018 to early June 2019.

### What is a relic?

In Catholic tradition, a relic is an object associated with a saint that may be offered to the faithful for veneration. Since the soul of a saint is united with God in heaven, an object associated with a saint is meant to draw a person closer to God. Neither the relic nor the saint are to be worshipped (see below).

*Relics are classified in three categories:*



*First Class* – A physical part of a saint, such as a piece of bone or a lock of hair. The heart of St. Jean Vianney was taken from the saint's body after his death in recognition of his burning love for God and humanity. It has remained intact, or incorrupt, for more than 150 years.

*Second Class* – An object routinely used or touched by the saint during life, such as a piece of clothing, a book or a pen.

*Third Class* – An object that is reverently touched to a first-class relic.