



CONGREGATIO PRO CLERICIS

Holiness is Always Now

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood,

Upon the happy occurrence of the 150th Anniversary of the birth into Heaven of Saint John Baptist Mary Vianney (4th August 1859 – 2009), it is my pleasure to address you with renewed good wishes for the Year for Priests.

The Curé of Ars stands before us as an outstanding figure of priestly holiness, demonstrated not in the extraordinary nature of his works but in his daily fidelity to the exercise of the Ministry; he became a model and a beacon for the France of the early nineteenth century, and for the whole Church, of every time and place; he is a source and consolation for each one of us, even in the midst of various “exhaustions” which can touch our priesthood.

His total dedication is a spur to our joyful self-giving to Christ and to the brethren, so that the Ministry may always be a luminous echo of that consecration from which comes the one apostolic mandate and, in it, every pastoral fecundity.

May his love for Christ, which was the bearer of his humanity and sincere affection, be for us an encouragement to love every more deeply “our Jesus”: may His be the sight we seek in the morning, the consolation which accompanies us in the evening, the memory and the companionship of every breath we take by day. To live according to the example of St. John Mary Vianney, as lovers of the Lord, means to always maintain at a high level of missionary tension, becoming progressively but concretely living images of the Good Shepherd and of him who proclaims to the world, “behold the Lamb of God”.

May the real spiritual enrapture of the Curé of Ars during the celebration of Holy Mass be for each one of us an explicit invitation to always have a full consciousness of the great gift which has been entrusted to us: a gift which leads us to sing with St. Ambrose: “And we can all, raised to a dignity such as to consecrate the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, hope in Your Mercy!”.

May his heroic dedication to the confessional, nourishes by a real expiatory spirit and sustained by the consciousness of being called to participate in a “vicarious substitution” of the one High Priest, spur us on to rediscover the beauty and the necessity, even for us priests, of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. That sacrament is, as well we know, a place of real contemplation of the marvellous works of God in souls which He delicately captivates, guides and converts. To deprive ourselves of such a “marvellous manifestation” is an irreparable and unjustified privation for us, even more than for the Faithful, and for our ministry which is fed by the wonder which is born of every miracle of human liberty which says “yes!” to God!

Lastly, that filial love bears the moving attention of the saintly Curé of Ars to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he never hesitated to consecrate himself and his entire parish; may it prompt us, in this Year for Priests and always, to allow the “here I am” of Mary to resound in our fatherly hearts with ceaseless fidelity: her “for all” and “for ever” which constitutes the one real measure of our priestly existence.

I wish you a blessed feast of Saint John Mary Vianney.

✠Mauro Piacenza
Titular Archbishop of Vittoriana
Secretary