

Reflection Friday Week 17 St Jean Marie Vianney 2023

St Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars (1786 - 1859) was the son of a peasant farmer, and a slow and unpromising candidate for the priesthood: he was eventually ordained on account of his devoutness rather than achievement or promise. In 1818 he was as parish priest of Ars-en-Dombes, an isolated village near Lyon, and remained there for the rest of his life. His parishioners would not let him leave. He was a noted preacher, and a celebrated confessor: such was his fame, and his reputation for insight into his penitents' souls and their futures. He could spend eighteen hours a day in the confessional so great was the demand. The tens of thousands of people who came to visit this obscure parish priest turned Ars into a place of pilgrimage. The Curé refused to sit for a portrait. When the sculptor Cabuchet tried to capture his features in a ball of wax during the catechism, Vianney sternly bounced him out of the church. The French State recognised his eminence by awarding him the medal of the Légion d'Honneur in 1848, which he sold and gave the money to the poor.

It is possible to know how many people Jean Vianney saved, and to whom he gave life through the sacrament of reconciliation. He stands before us as one who may not have been gifted intellectually was gifted with being able to help live their lives closer to God. Whatever we may lack in ability in one area of life will be compensated with gifts in other areas of our lives. But the Cure of Ars also teaches us to use whatever gifts with which we may be blessed to help others even at our own cost.

A man is sentenced to death but the king is feeling merciful, and asks the man how he wants to die. After he says how he wants to die, The King sets his free. He asked to die of natural causes.