



## The Year of the Priest

**>> Father Ron Hutchinson,**  
is director of priestly vocations for  
the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

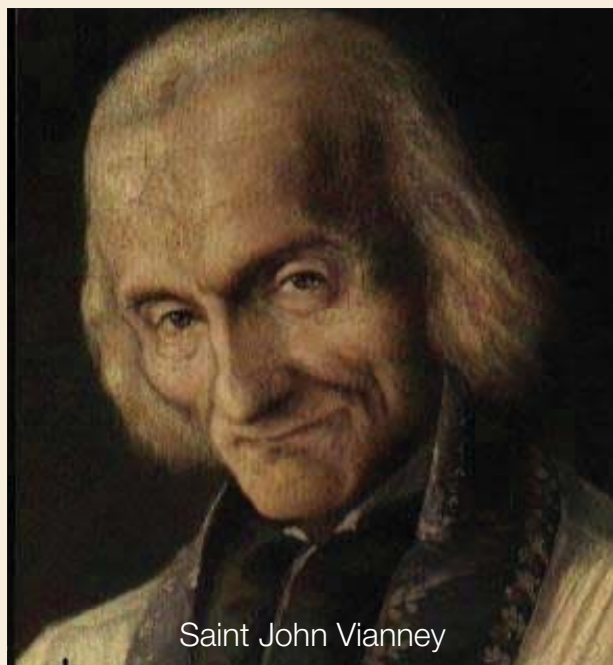
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he yearlong celebration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of St. Paul is quickly coming to a close. Now Pope Benedict XVI has announced that the focus for the coming year will be on the priesthood. At the close of the annual plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy, Pope Benedict said that, with this year marking the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, the Curé d’Ars and patron of parish priests, he would open a “Year of Priesthood” on June 19. The pope went on to say that St. John Vianney, a 19th century saint, represents a “true example of a priest at the service of the flock of Christ,” and that is why during the jubilee year the pope will be proclaimed as the patron saint of all the world’s priests.

This year is meant to provide opportunities to promote the importance of the role and mission of the priest in the church and contemporary society. At first glance, one could ask why it is necessary to have a year focused on the priesthood. However, it is my hope that diocesan and parish leaders, as well as priests themselves, will use this opportunity to help all the faithful, especially young men, to see the blessing and value of priestly ministry for the life of the church as well as those who answer God’s call to serve the church as priests.

Often we hear how the vocation of priesthood is a blessing for the church and for the faithful, but it is also a blessing for the one who says “yes” to God’s call. At times, I think that I receive the greater blessing. I know that my ministry and service help to spread the good news of Jesus Christ; empower people to have a deeper relationship with the God who loves them; and allow me to be an agent of God’s sacramental grace. However, it is in serving the people of God that I see and hear the good news of Jesus Christ in new and more meaningful ways each day.

It is in loosening the bonds of others through the sacrament of reconciliation that I recognize with humility that I am continuing this vital ministry of our savior. It is in presiding at the celebration of the Eucharist that I realize that I am an unworthy instrument being used by God to bring Christ to a world starving for holiness. It is in responding to the needs of my brothers and sisters placed on my life’s path that I live out Christ’s reminder to his disciples that it is greater to serve than to be served. Priestly ministry can seem to be focused on what



Saint John Vianney



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online vocational resources:

Priestly vocations

[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/vocation/welcome.htm)

Religious orders

[dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/clergy/religiousorders.htm)

the priest is doing for the other, but it is also the means by which the priest has been called by God to strive for holiness.

I am blessed that my means to holiness is the service of the church I love, and my brothers and sisters in the Lord. I wouldn’t ask that it be any other way. Yes, some days are harder than others, but every day of my nearly 15 years of priesthood have drawn me closer to Jesus Christ. Some days it is because I could only do what was before me with His help; others it was because I saw His hand at work in the life of the person I encountered. Either way, difficult or easy, every day has been an opportunity to deepen my relationship Jesus.

At the beginning of the month, Bishop Hurley ordained two men to the priesthood and they began what I pray will be many happy years of service to the people of our diocese. It has been a pleasure to be part of the process by which these men accepted, more and more each day, their call to priesthood and grew in their willingness to give their lives in service to God and the church. Please pray for Fr. Aaron Ferris and Fr. Michael Burt (as well as all the priests of our diocese). Pray that through the intercession of St. John Vianney, those ordained to priestly ministry will continue to be a blessing for the church and that their ministry will bring them closer to the heart of Christ whose ministry they share.