

Saint John Vianney, *pray for us!*



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

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he “Year for Priests” began with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 19, 2009, and concludes with an international gathering of priests with the Holy Father from June 9 – 11, 2010 in Rome. In addition to his announcement about the “Year for Priests,” the pope also declared Saint John Vianney the Universal Patron of Priests. This announcement coincided with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the death of the *Curé d’Ars*.

When he declared Saint John Vianney the patron of all priests, the Holy Father asked all priests to model their life and ministry on a venerable and holy man whose own ministry resulted in the radical spiritual transformation of the community he served. Priests could scarcely do better when it comes to modeling their ministry on someone!

The pope set aside this entire year so that priests, as well as all the people of God, could explore the great gift that priesthood is for the church. It was also meant to provide occasion for priests around the world to take advantage of opportunities to grow in love for their own priestly ministry as well as personal holiness.

Throughout the last year, the parish community gathered for Sunday liturgy at Holy Redeemer Parish, Jenison has been praying for priests during the prayers of the faithful. In addition, we have been praying that we will have the grace to look beyond the faults of priests to see holiness in these men who serve us, and that priests will have the humility to see holiness in the people they serve. This moment within the Mass each week has been a powerful reminder for me of my responsibility to continually grow in holiness through daily prayer, regular reception of the sacrament of confession, regular opportunities for spiritual direction and unselfish service to God and God’s people. However, this intention has also reminded me to look for holiness in the people whom I serve.

It is so easy to see the faults in the people around us. In fact, we usually don’t have to look too hard to see all the imperfections in our family members, friends and our priest. Why is it that we can’t see the holiness in others as easily? Every priest I know has a story of someone who has let them



know, in no uncertain terms, and usually with a great deal of venom, that they were the worst priest ever. I have no doubt that I am not perfect, and that I have made decisions that were not wise. But I also have no doubt that I am not the worst priest ever, if only because I don’t believe that any priest can really be labeled with such a moniker. Although none of us is perfect, each

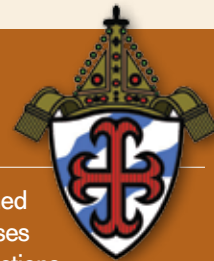
priest in the course of his ministry has done some good and touched the lives of some of those he has served.

This same thing can be said of the people who make up the body of Christ. Although I may not have the eyes to see it easily, I believe that each and every person who comprises the church has done some good and touched the lives of others around them. If each of us, priests and people, could live with this knowledge in the forefront of our hearts and minds we may have eyes that see holiness rather than faults.

I somehow believe that this is the lesson we can learn from the life of the holy priest of Ars. Transformation is only possible if we live in the Light of Christ, and he must have seen that light in others as readily as they saw that light in him.

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NEW Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids Web site



The Diocese of Grand Rapids has launched a new Web site, gpriests.org, that focuses on priestly vocations. The site includes sections labeled The Calling (discernment), Education, Current Seminarians, The Priesthood and Taking the First Step (in becoming a priest). The Calling, Education and Priesthood sections also feature a Q&A and links to other resources.