**St. John Vianney**, in full **Saint Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney,**also called **Curé d’Ars**, (born May 8, 1786, Dardilly, France—died [August](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/August) 4, 1859, Ars; canonized May 31, 1925; feast day August 4 [formerly August 9]),

French [priest](https://www.britannica.com/topic/priest-Christianity) who was renowned as a confessor and for his supernatural powers. He is the [patron saint](https://www.britannica.com/topic/patron-saint) of parish priests.

Because of the [French Revolution](https://www.britannica.com/event/French-Revolution), Vianney received little education. Given the anticlerical [sentiment](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentiment) of the Hébertists during the [Reign of Terror](https://www.britannica.com/event/Reign-of-Terror), he was forced to make his first communion and [confession](https://www.britannica.com/topic/confession-religion) secretly and was impressed by the heroism of the nuns and priests who risked their lives for their faith. He felt called to pursue the priesthood but struggled with Latin and needed private tutoring to supplement his lack of formal education. His studies were interrupted when he was drafted into [Napoleon](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Napoleon-I)’s armies in 1809. Whether deliberately or by [serendipity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/serendipity), he was separated from his draft group and ended up in a rural village with a number of army deserters, where he was forced to hide until the decree of amnesty for all deserters in 1810. He was ordained in 1815 and was made assistant priest at Écully, [France](https://www.britannica.com/place/France).

In 1818 he became priest of the small village of Ars, which he made a model parish and from which reports of his holiness and his supernatural powers soon spread. He was known for his devotion to the [Virgin Mary](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-mother-of-Jesus) and to St. Philomena and was dedicated to the sacrament of [reconciliation](https://www.britannica.com/topic/confession-religion) (confession) for his parishioners. From 1824 he suffered attacks that he believed were caused by the Devil, who allegedly on one occasion set fire to Vianney’s bed. By 1827 Ars had become a [pilgrimage](https://www.britannica.com/topic/pilgrimage-religion) site, and, every year from 1845 until Vianney’s death, about 20,000 persons visited Ars to see Vianney and especially to make their confession to him. The holy curé spent as many as 12 or 15 hours daily in his confessional. He was [canonized](https://www.britannica.com/topic/canonization) by Pope [Pius XI](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-XI).