



Episcopal Commission on Clergy  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines  
470 General Luna Street  
Intramuros, Manila 1002

## ST. JOHN MARY VIANNEY SUNDAY 2024

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### **St. John Mary Vianney: Our Guide as We Journey Together as One Church**

St. John Mary Vianney, the Patron Saint of Parish Priests was well-known for the difficulties he experienced in his path and journey towards the Priesthood. He had his weaknesses and shortcomings – and they were many. At even a point in his life, he almost did not make it to his ordination.

Throughout his life and ministry, it was his sheer dedication to the ministry and his piety and holiness that accounted for his many successes as a shepherd to the faithful in that tiny and insignificant Parish of Ars. Yet he is acclaimed today as Patron Saint and Model of all Priests worldwide, especially Parish Priests and all Priests who care for the souls of those entrusted to their spiritual and fatherly care. Now that in itself is amazing! God truly writes straight with crooked lines. Our Lord, as always, has his mysterious ways even today at this present moment.

The Church today, as she embarks on this unfamiliar but necessary path of walking together as one family united in love and compassion for each other, is also beset by many doubts and apprehensions, precisely because the synodal path is yet uncharted and unfamiliar to most, especially among our priests. And yet it is they who have the role to lead in fostering this united effort of journeying together towards the eternal Kingdom which is our goal. To get there is indeed familiar and already marked out throughout the centuries of the Church's existence – but to get there together in the synodal sense, to move towards that goal as a family or a loving community – this is quite new and as yet unfamiliar.

Apparently, there are indeed lots of uncertainties and unanswered questions; there may be a lot of trial-and-error experiences. But God is present; God is in control; God will never abandon us. We just have to devote ourselves entirely to this leading or prompting of the Holy Spirit with faith and trust – just as St. John Mary Vianney did for most of his life in his day-to-day ministering to the faithful as a Priest and Man of God.

Total dedication and zeal, agape love and utter selflessness for the faithful whom we serve, coupled with unceasing cultivation of personal piety and holiness through prayer, the liturgy and the sacraments, the meditation of the Word in union with the faithful – and this openness of heart with faith and trust in the Spirit of God who leads us eventually to Christ – this is all we need, as priests and shepherds of God's People, to embark on this walking together, journeying together, towards the Kingdom where all our dreams and hopes will be fulfilled.

Mary, Mother of Priests, pray for us!

St. John Mary Vianney, Patron of Priests, pray for us!