

he could find lodging elsewhere. He chose to move to the village. However, Fr. Raymond still saw himself as the boss, and Fr. Vianney regularly had to calm down the parishioners who were often far from happy.

Henri Gleon says, "Fr. Raymond could not guess how much he made the Cure suffer. If he made him suffer, he made him progress in the path of humility, self-abnegation, and penance... so that souls did obtain a sort of profit out of it."

If Fr. Raymond was not a saint, he made M. Vianney more of a saint than ever. That is why he came; that is why he remained. Fr. Vianney wanted him there. "If you make trouble for him... very well, I shall leave with him," said Vianney.

A LETTER TO SEND

But the pressure to do something about Fr. Raymond continued to build up. At last, Fr. Vianney was pushed to his limits, and he agreed to write a letter to the bishop asking for Fr. Raymond's removal. He dictated a letter to Br. Athanasius requesting that the Bishop remove Fr. Raymond.

A wise person, having expressed his feelings in writing, will then review what he has written and think whether it is wise to send it.

It was Holy Week, Fr. Vianney picked up the letter, read it and then *tore it up*, saying, "Our Lord bore His cross during these holy days. I can quite well do the same."

In Fr. Vianney's eyes, Fr. Raymond was an excellent instrument of penance sent by God. Fr. Raymond himself, after eight years, finding that he had built much opposition, asked for, and got, a transfer.

The day after he left, Fr. Vianney wrote a letter of encouragement to him. In it he stated, "You have been so useful to me. You have done me so many services that you have my heart in chains."

Fr. Raymond's successor was a different type, full of admiration for the now elderly Fr. Vianney. To him, Fr. Vianney said, "You say nothing. You do not rebuke me. I am no longer as good as before."

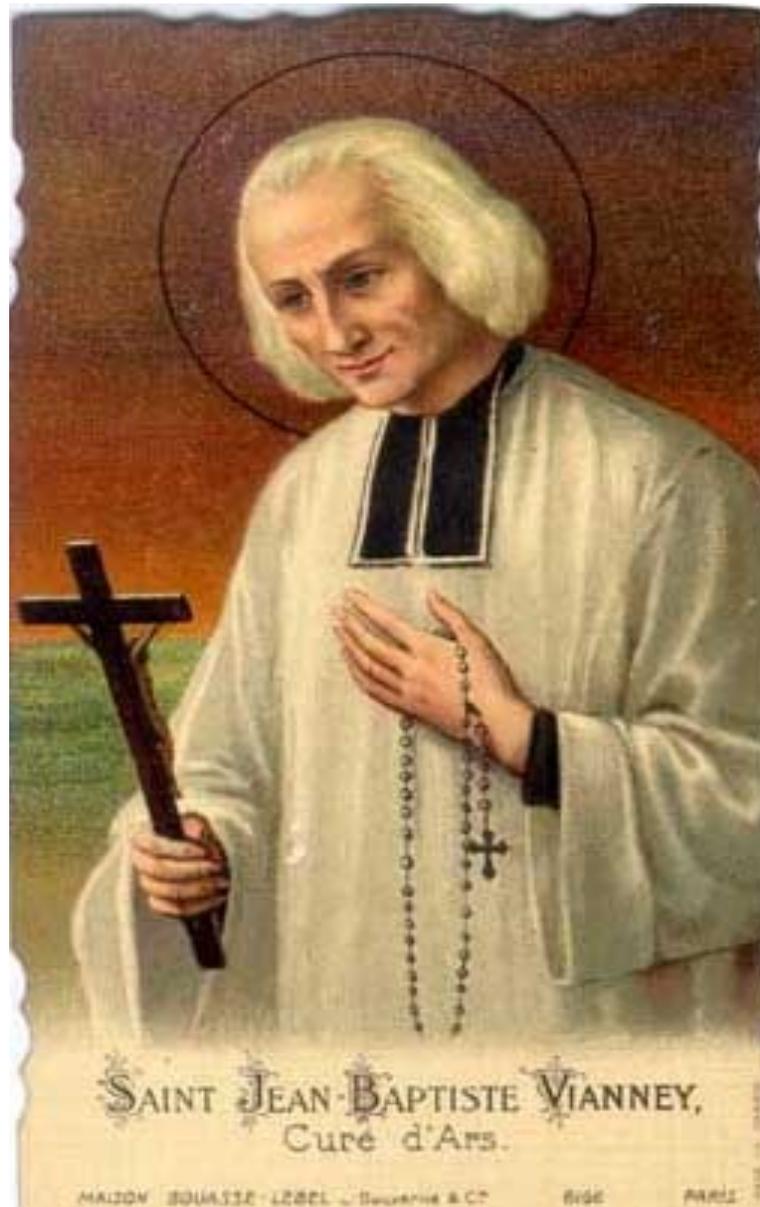
Fr. Vianney was still running the hostel for homeless girls with just three volunteers. It was an everyday work of faith, depending on God to provide each day. Fr. Vianney had no difficulty operating like this. His bishop, however, felt the need to put it on a more secure footing, so he invited the Sisters of St. Joseph to take charge of both the girls school, and the home for homeless girls.

Shortly after taking control, however, they closed the home for homeless girls while retaining the school. One cannot put new wine into old skins. + + +

Opposition to Fr. Vianney

Feast Day: August 8

from *The Curate's Diary*



OPPOSITION TO FR. VIANNEY
from *The Curate's Diary*
by Fr. Thad Doyle

When young John Marie Vianney was entering the seminary, he almost didn't make it.

At 31, he entered Ars. It had only 40 clay houses and an unkempt church. Before entering, he prayed to the guardian angel of the place and Fr. Vianney spoke this strange prophesy: "This parish will not be able to contain the number of people who shall journey here." It was his *first and only* parish.

Some of his parishioners objected violently to this new priest. Throughout his priesthood, he received a number of letters of severe threat. Even the devil intimidated him!

When he became a so-called "living saint," the majority of priests of his time couldn't stand him. Eventually, a petition, listing the causes of complaint against him, was drawn up and sent to the bishop. One priest, presumably seeking to disturb or frighten Fr. Vianney, sent him a copy of it. At that, Fr. Vianney promptly signed the petition himself and forwarded it to the bishop.

But, Fr. John Vianney was also a sensitive human being. He felt these things deeply. Later, he said, "I expected at every moment to be driven out of the place with rods...to be suspended and condemned to end my days in prison."

He said, "to suffer lovingly is to suffer no longer. To flee from the cross is to be crushed beneath its weight. We should pray for a *love of the cross* — then it will become sweet. I experienced it myself during four or five years."

"I was grievously calumniated and contradicted. Oh, did I have crosses; almost more than I could bear." Then I started praying for a love of crosses, and I felt happy. I thought to myself: "*Truly, there is no happiness, but in the cross!*"

A SAINTLY BISHOP

Henri Gleon, in his book, "*The Secret of the Cure D'Ars*" (now out of print), notes that, "The diocese of Belley, in which Ars lies, might well have fallen, like so many others, to a timorous and fearful bishop — an administrator rather than an apostle — but in the present instance, to protect a Cure who *was* a saint, God made the choice of a bishop who *was* also a saint."

Regardless of the strength of the opposition to Fr. Vianney, Bishop Devie had no intention of making his decisions based on clerical gossip and prejudice. He sent his Vicar General to Ars to see exactly what was happening.

One of the complaints against Fr. Vianney was that he did not have the theological competence to hear complex confessions or to guide souls. Bishop Devie asked the Cure to submit details of the more difficult cases, and the advice that he had given. Fr. Vianney submitted two hundred cases. Only on two of those would Bishop Devie himself have taken a different approach.

One day at a clerical gathering, the opposition to Fr. Vianney was running high, and Bishop Devie simply responded, "I wish you had a little more of the folly that you sometimes laugh at; it will not damage your wisdom." The priests were silenced, but their opposition did not go away.

A CURATE COMES TO ARS

Then, an opportunity arose to "moderate" the situation when Fr. Vianney himself asked for a curate. While Bishop Devie had supported Fr. Vianney against all the opposition, perhaps even he felt the need to safeguard himself by sending in a strong curate who would take charge of the situation and correct any excesses.

Thus, when Fr. Vianney then aged 59, and with his ministry ever growing, requested a curate, Bishop Devie sent him Fr. Raymond, then aged 40. On the surface, it appeared a masterstroke, and as Fr. Vianney had actually paid for Fr. Raymond's way through the seminary, they were likely to be favorably disposed to each other.

Fr. Raymond was intelligent and highly educated, and he was a brilliant speaker. Henri Gleon says, "His fine breadth of shoulder and his powerful voice marked him out as a man destined to command."

He certainly did look up to Fr. Vianney, and yet, as he saw it, he was being sent to Ars to take charge of the situation, and to "remedy" it... and he had every intention of doing so.

One of his first acts was to take the master bedroom, and to relegate Fr. Vianney to the ground floor room. Fr. Vianney, who slept little and who did not often use his bed, was quite happy to accept this, but it caused consternation in Ars.

Fr. Raymond then proceeded to take charge of the entire running of the parish. He instructed Fr. Vianney that he was to do nothing without first consulting him and obtaining his permission. Sometimes he even got up into the pulpit after Fr. Vianney had finished preaching, and "corrected" what Fr. Vianney had said.

It must have pained Fr. Vianney deeply, but he offered it up. The parishioners, however, were far less tolerant. A delegation was elected to confront Fr. Raymond. They insisted that Fr. Vianney be given back his bedroom, and that if Fr. Raymond was not happy with the ground floor room,