

The Year for Priests

by Fr. Mark Pavlik

June 28, 2009

Monday, June 29 is the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul and marks the end of the Year of St. Paul declared by the Holy Father last June. This year of focus has given Christians throughout the world an opportunity to focus on St. Paul's writings and his dedication to the Gospel message.

As we close out this year-long celebration, we are beginning a new jubilee dedicated to priests. In March, Pope Benedict XVI announced that on June 19, the Church would begin the Year for Priests. The Holy Father chose this day because it marks the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, who is the patron saint of priests. St. John Mary Vianney was born in Dardilly, France in 1786. Growing up, John witnessed the persecution of clergy following the French Revolution. Despite this experience, he always felt a calling to follow the Lord and serve the Church.

At age 20, he entered the seminary to begin his studies for the priesthood. He found the academic life difficult and struggled a great deal in his studies, especially in Latin. But with his perseverance and prayer, he was ordained a priest in 1815. Soon after his ordination, he was assigned to a small parish in the city of Ars. St. John served his parish with great love and dedication and soon developed a reputation of holiness. People from neighboring villages would come to Ars to hear him preach. He was known to spend up to 16 hours a day in the confessional counseling those who came in large numbers.

Because of his dedication to the Church and his model of holy living, he was declared patron saint of parish priests. As we look ahead to the coming year dedicated to priests, we invoke his intercession for all parish priests throughout the world.

The Holy Father said that his hope for this year dedicated to priests would "encourage priests in striving for spiritual perfection on which, above all, the effectiveness of their ministry depends." In the coming months, I ask you to join me in a special way for the priests of our archdiocese, that they will receive all the graces they need to serve the Lord and His Church with joy and love.

Prayer for Priests by St. Therese of Lisieux

*O Jesus, eternal Priest,
keep your priests within the shelter of Your Sacred Heart,
where none may touch them.*

*Keep unstained their anointed hands,
which daily touch Your Sacred Body.*

*Keep unsullied their lips,
daily purpled with your Precious Blood.*

*Keep pure and unearthly their hearts,
sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood.*

*Let Your holy love surround them and
shield them from the world's contagion.*

*Bless their labors with abundant fruit
and may the souls to whom they minister
be their joy and consolation here
and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.
Amen.*