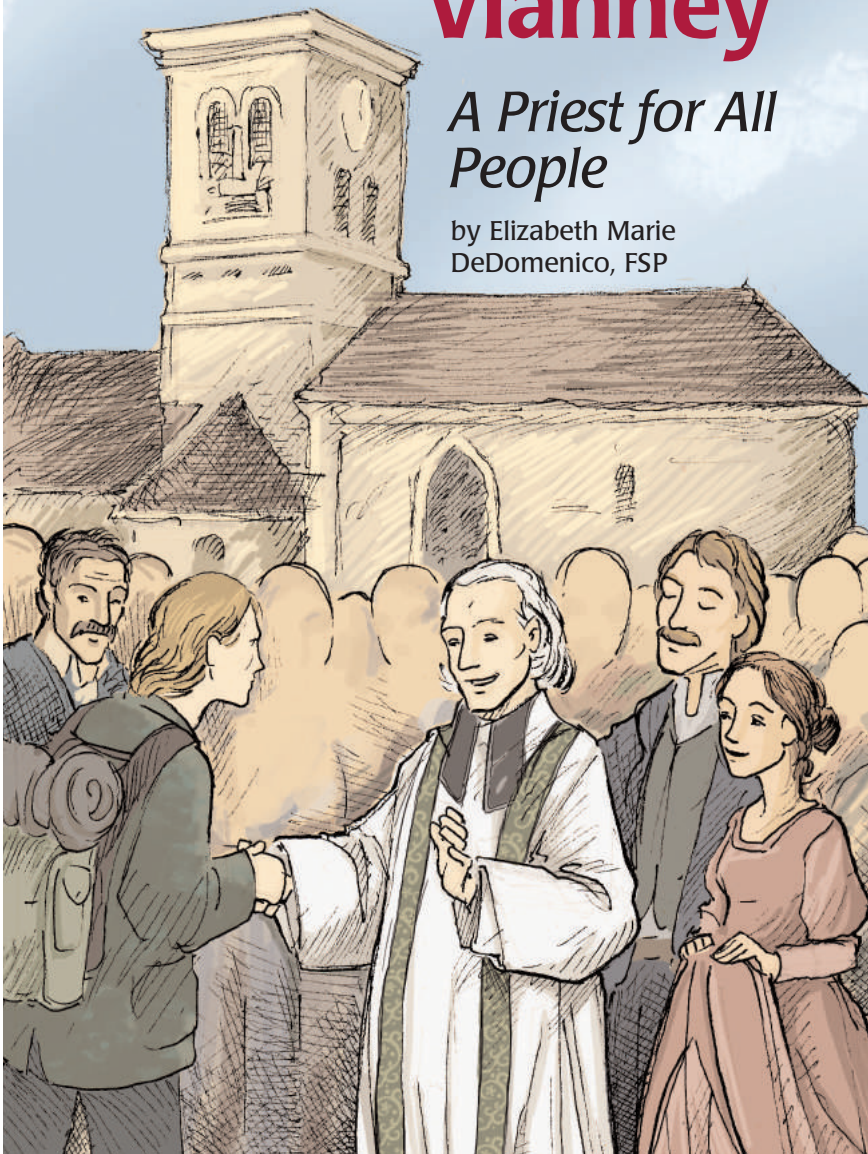


Saint John Vianney

*A Priest for All
People*

by Elizabeth Marie
DeDomenico, FSP



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Written by Elizabeth Marie DeDomenico, FSP

Illustrated by Ben Hatke

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CONTENTS

1. Life before the Revolution.....	1
2. A Secret First Communion.....	7
3. Following God's Call	17
4. The Accidental Deserter	27
5. Don't Give Up.....	39
6. A Good Friend	47
7. Does Anyone Know the Way to Ars?.....	53
8. The New Curé Begins His Work.....	63
9. Rebuilding His Church.....	69
10. House of Providence.....	73
11. A Whole New Ars	77
12. The Grappin Strikes Back.....	81
13. Flight and Return to Ars.....	87
14. Prophecies, Miracles, and Visions.....	97
15. Last Days of the Curé	101

Prayer 107

Glossary 109

LIFE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

"I want it!" Marguerite demanded fiercely, stamping her feet to get her brother's attention. "I don't have one."

"No, it's my rosary. You can't have it," John answered back.

"Give it to me, John," Marguerite insisted. She tried to grab the rosary beads away from her older brother. John was four years old and Marguerite just eighteen months younger.

John held tightly onto the rosary, but Marguerite's screams grew louder. John did not know what to do, so he did what most children his age would do: he ran to his mother.

"Mama!" he pleaded. "Tell her that it belongs to me."

Madame Vianney was busy preparing the family meal. She tried to hide her amusement as she looked down at his outraged face.

"John, please let your sister hold the rosary."

John fought back his tears and turned to his sister.

“Here you are, Gothon,” he said, calling her by the family nickname. “You can hold it. But you’re really supposed to pray with it. It’s not a toy.”

Marguerite was beaming now and ran off with the rosary. Madame Vianney smiled at her son.

“John, it was very nice of you to share the rosary with Gothon.”

She went over to the chimney and took down a wooden statue of the Blessed Mother.

“Here, this statue is for you, darling.”

John’s tears dried quickly as he took the little statue into his hands. He had often looked up at it, but he had never dared to take it down or touch it. Now it was his very own! From then on, the statue of Mary became his constant companion. He took her to the fields, around the house, and kept her beside his bed at night.

Not long after, John took his statue one evening and went outside. No one noticed that he was gone. When Madame Vianney realized he wasn’t in the house, she began to look all over for him.

“Have you seen John?” she asked his eleven-year-old sister Catherine. “It’s growing dark outside, and I can’t find him anywhere.”

“No, Mother,” answered Catherine. “Although the last time I saw him, he was toting his little statue around with him.”

“Well, I’m going outside to look for him. If your father comes in, tell him where I am.”

Madame Vianney started looking in the yard, and then she remembered the stable. What if John had fallen down and hurt himself? She became more and more worried as she thought of all the possible things that could have happened to her little boy. She stopped short when she caught sight of him in the corner of the stable. He was on his knees praying devoutly before his little Madonna.

“Dear Mary, you are my mother in heaven. I love you very much....”

“John! Here you are,” Madame Vianney cried as she embraced him. “Why are you hiding like this? We’ll pray together after supper.”

“I’m sorry, Mama,” John answered. He hadn’t meant to scare her. “I didn’t know you were looking for me. I won’t do it again.”

“It’s all right, John,” said his mother gently. *I can’t believe he was out here praying!* she thought. *I usually have to plead with the*

children to say their prayers. There is something special about this little one. I wonder what he will be like when he grows up...



In 1790, country life in Dardilly, France, should have been peaceful and serene. Matthieu and Marie Vianney were farmers, like their parents and grandparents before them. God had blessed them with a beautiful family of six children. Besides his sisters Catherine and Marguerite, John also had two brothers, François and Cadet. Another sibling, Jeanne-Marie, had died as a young child. The Vianney farm and home were located in the woods and hills not far from the city of Lyon. Together the family worked in the fields and took care of the animals. When the children's chores were finished each day, they loved to play games and have fun. They attended Mass each Sunday with their parents and received instruction in the Catholic faith.

But the world they knew was quickly changing around them. The French Revolution was just beginning. In the years ahead, the rebellion would lead to the violent Reign