

Why St. John Vianney Signed a Petition to be “Canceled”

By Philip Kosloski – aleteia.org

St. John Vianney is widely known for his holiness as a simple parish priest. However, during his lifetime, many parishioners and clergy wanted him "canceled." They didn't like the way he preached and the hours he spent in the confessional.

A 19th-century biography by Abbé Alfred Monnin explains the opposition he faced.

[A] meeting was held of some of the most influential clergy of the neighborhood, which came to the resolution of making a formal complaint to the new Bishop of Belley of the imprudent zeal and mischievous enthusiasm of this ignorant and foolish cure. This their intention was made known to M. Vianney, in a letter written by one of the party in the bitterest and most cutting terms. The letter included a petition to remove St. John Vianney from his office of pastor.

When St. John Vianney saw it, he went ahead and signed it!

[B]elieving himself fully to deserve it, he looked for nothing less than an ignominious dismissal from his cure. "I was daily expecting," said he, "to be driven with blows out of my parish; to be silenced; and condemned to end my days in prison, as a just punishment for having dared to stay so long in a place where I could only be a hindrance to any good." One of these letters of accusation happening to fall into his hands, he endorsed it with his own name, and sent it to his superiors. "This time," said he, "they are sure to succeed, for they have my own signature."

St. John Vianney wasn't afraid of being "canceled," because he did not want to get in the way of God's work. He was a mere instrument, and if God didn't need him anymore, he was content with such a destiny.

Furthermore, he believed that pride was a deadly sin, and detailed what a proud man would look like in this homily:

Pride is an untrue opinion of ourselves, an untrue idea of what we are not.

The proud man is always disparaging himself, that people may praise him the more. The more the proud man lowers himself, the more he seeks to raise his miserable nothingness. He relates what he has done, and what he has not done; he feeds his imagination with what has been said in praise of him, and seeks by all possible means for more; he is never satisfied with praise. See, my children, if you only show some little displeasure against a man given up to self-love, he gets angry, and accuses you of ignorance or injustice towards him. . . . My children, we are in reality only what we are in the eyes of God, and nothing more. Is it not quite clear and evident that we are nothing, that we can do nothing, that we are very miserable? Can we lose sight of our sins, and cease to humble ourselves?

If we were to consider well what we are, humility would be easy to us, and the demon of pride would no longer have any room in our heart. See, our days are like

grass—like the grass which now flourishes in the meadows, and will presently be withered; like an ear of corn which is fresh only for a moment, and is parched by the sun. In fact, my children, today we are full of life, full of health; and tomorrow, death will perhaps come to reap us and mow us down, as you reap your corn and mow your meadows. . . . Whatever appears vigorous, whatever shines, whatever is beautiful, is of short duration. . . . The glory of this world, youth, honours, riches, all pass away quickly, as quickly as the flower of grass, as the flower of the field. . . . Let us reflect that so we shall one day be reduced to dust; that we shall be thrown into the fire like dry grass, if we do not fear the good God.

Good Christians know this very well, my children; therefore they do not occupy themselves with their body; they despise the affairs of this world; they consider only their soul and how to unite it to God. Can we be proud in the face of the examples of lowliness, of humiliations, that Our Lord has given us, and is still giving us every day? Jesus Christ came upon earth, became incarnate, was born poor, lived in poverty, died on a gibbet, between two thieves. . . . He instituted an admirable Sacrament, in which He communicates Himself to us under the Eucharistic veil; and in this Sacrament He undergoes the most extraordinary humiliations. Residing continually in our tabernacles, He is deserted, misunderstood by ungrateful men; and yet He continues to love us, to serve us in the Sacrament of the Altar.

O my children! what an example of humiliation does the good Jesus give us! Behold Him on the Cross to which our sins have fastened Him; behold Him: He calls us, and says to us, “Come to Me, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” How well the saints understood this invitation, my children! Therefore, they all sought humiliations and sufferings. After their example, then, let us not be afraid of being humbled and despised. Saint John of God, at the beginning of his conversion, counterfeited madness, ran about the streets, and was followed by the populace, who threw stones at him; he always came in covered with mud and with blood. He was shut up as a madman; the most violent remedies were employed to cure him of his pretended illness; and he bore it all in the spirit of penance, and in expiation of his past sins. The good God, my children, does not require of us extraordinary things. He wills that we should be gentle, humble, and modest; then we shall always be pleasing to Him; we shall be like little children; and He will grant us the grace to come to Him and to enjoy the happiness of the saints.

catholicsaints.info/on-pride-by-saint-john-vianney/



Above all, St. John Vianney accepted every cross in his life as coming from the hand of God. He didn't try to defend himself, and on multiple occasions was willing to be removed as pastor. St. John Vianney simply wanted God's message to be relayed, and not his own.

St. John Vianney's Reliquary is located at St. Thomas the Apostle.
Fest Day: August 4th