

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH

HOPE



St. John Vianney
1786-1859

Statue: Holy Cross Diocesan Center, La Crosse, WI.

In Brief:

ON CHRISTIAN HOPE

“It is important to know that I can always continue to hope, even if in my own life, or the historical period in which I am living, there seems to be nothing left to hope for. Only the certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of God’s Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can give the courage to act and to persevere.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Sacred Scripture:

“For You O Lord are my Hope...
my trust is in You.

Psalms 146:5

“I know the plans I have for you
says the Lord, to give you a
future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“Hope is the *theological* virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. ‘The Holy Spirit...poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life’” (CCC 1817). *Note: Theological means that this gift comes from God and leads us back to God. A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. Supernatural means that the virtue is above our nature.*

What is the supernatural virtue of hope?

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every person; it takes up the hopes that inspire our activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of Heaven. We receive the supernatural gift of hope from God in Baptism.

- The supernatural virtue of hope allows the possibility for Christians to trust in God. This grace is a gift of God, infused by Him.
- Hope has to do with things that seem difficult or impossible to receive, such as salvation. (See *John 11:25-26*)
- The gift of hope given by God never disappoints (cf. *Romans 5:5*).
- Hope tells us that God, Who promised us eternal salvation, will also give us the graces that we need for the journey to Heaven. He is faithful to His word, so we can put our trust in Him.
- Faith assists us to hope in God and His promise that He will always remain with us. Hope sustains us at all times, especially when feelings of discouragement or abandonment seem to overwhelm us.
- In addition, hope *keeps* us from discouragement.
- Hope opens up our heart in expectation of future blessings and eternal beatitude.
- Buoyed up by hope, we are preserved from turning inward in selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from living charity.

Why do we need the supernatural virtue of hope?

- God is almighty, merciful and good. The supernatural gift of hope helps us to trust in God’s promises, opening our heart to His mercy.
- Hope ensures the desire written on our heart by God to attain the glory of Heaven promised by God to those who love Him and do His will. We trust that God will give the grace we need to attain it.
- Hope leads us to persevere in prayer, even when all reason for hope seems absent. (cf. *Romans 4:18-21*)
- Hope offers to us joy and courage which sustains us in times of trial.
- Hope allows us to live, grow and persevere in faith.
- When we need the gift of hope, the most important thing we can do is ask for it: “The Lord hears the cry of the poor” (*Psalms 34:6*).

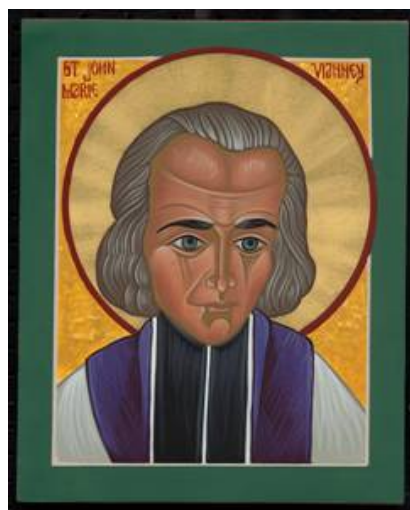
“It is only right and fitting to call the life of St. John Vianney a priestly and pastoral one in an outstanding way, because he spent more and more time in preaching the truths of religion and cleansing souls of the stain of sin as the years went by, and because he was mindful of the altar of God in each and every act of his sacred ministry!”

**SACERDOTII NOSTRI
PRIMORDIA**
ENCYCLICAL OF
POPE JOHN XXIII
ON ST. JOHN VIANNEY
AUGUST 1, 1959



Christ the King Chapel
La Crosse, Wisconsin

Hope Saint John Vianney



Icon Credit: Institute of St. Joseph

FAST FACTS

Also Known As:

Patron Saint of Priests
Patron Saint of Confessors

Feast Day:

August 4

As the reputation of this holy man of God spread, pilgrims began to seek him out, sometimes waiting days for him to hear their confession, heal their illnesses, and speak directly to their deepest needs.

His Life

- The French Revolution began when John was three. John’s parents sheltered priests in their home to protect them from deportation or execution.
- John made his First Communion in secret.
- John attended school for one year. He had difficulty memorizing and could not read.
- During his teenage years, the government permitted public celebration of the Mass.
- John enrolled at Abbe Charles Balley’s ‘presbytery school’ in Ecully at nineteen.
- At age twenty-three, John was drafted into Napoleon’s army.
- John was late when the draftees departed and although he tried to ‘catch up’ with the group, he was declared a deserter. He remained in hiding until the government declared amnesty for deserters and he returned to his studies at Ecully.
- Although John failed the seminary’s examination the Bishop gave an exemption to ordain ‘the most unlearned but the most devout seminarian’ at age twenty-nine.
- He became well-known as a great confessor.
- John was assigned as pastor in the village of Ars which had become indifferent to God.
- Through his sanctity, humility, kindness, gentleness, simplicity, patience and cheerfulness, John converted the village of Ars.
- John experienced attacks from Satan that were witnessed by others. On these occasions objects were thrown at him, he was dragged across the room, and other violent incidents occurred.
- John opened a school for poor girls which expanded to care for orphaned and abandoned children.
- John’s principal ministry was reconciling thousands of people to God primarily through his long hours in the confessional.
- For 15 hours each day, John listened to penitents. Toward the end of his life, eighty thousand came to see him each year. He stated, "I impose only a small penance on those who confess their sins properly; the rest I perform in their place."

How is St. John Vianney a model of Christian hope?

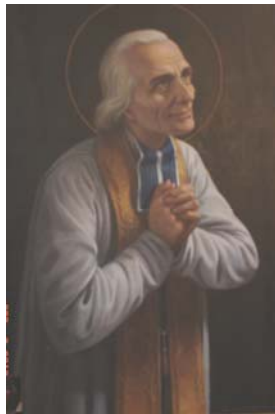
- He continued to pursue ordination to the priesthood, even after failing the examination. St. John Vianney persevered in hope even though he often trembled from a conviction of his personal inadequacy.
- St. John wept for the sins of the penitents in confession and had the constant hope of seeing sinners turn back to God.
- With great kindness he devoted himself to restoring hope to the souls of repentant sinners "for God is quicker to forgive than a mother to snatch her child from the fire."

Practices to foster the growth of the supernatural virtue of hope

- Pray the *Act of Hope* each morning:
Act of Hope
O my God, relying on Thy infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.
- Think of someone who is ‘hope-filled.’ What does this person say or do that indicates that he/she is full of hope? Begin by making a list of the words that describe hope from page one.
- Make acts of hope. Example: When things are difficult, put your trust in God and have confidence in Him. Ask the Lord what act of hope He would like you to make.
- Name some people from the Bible who lived by hope and read their story. Queen Esther, Job, St. Paul
- Read a book about a saint and report to the class how this person lived in hope. Examples: St. Peregrine, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Josephine Bakita, St. Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein), St. Padre Pio. St. Padre Pio’s famous words are: “Pray, Hope, and Don’t Worry.”
As a class, read about a saint and together discuss how this person lived in hope.
- Why does Christian hope have its origin in the hope of Abraham? (See CCC 1819; *Genesis* 17:4-8; *Genesis* 22:1-18; *Romans* 4:18)
- Using the “Praying with Scripture” (*Lectio Divina*) prayer worksheet, pray ten minutes with a Scripture passage.
Psalm 139:1-18 God knitted me together in my mother’s womb.
Exodus 14:10-18, 21-31 God allows Moses to part the Red Sea to escape the Egyptians.
- Read *Matthew* 4:7 How does this Scripture reading connect to the virtue of hope?
- The Psalms teach us to fix our hope in God. Read one of the following Psalms. Re-read the passage and choose a word or phrase that stood out for you. Discuss how the Psalm directs us to hope. Give citations to verify this statement.
Psalm 11 *Psalm* 16 *Psalm* 33 *Psalm* 42
Psalm 62 *Psalm* 71 *Psalm* 78 *Psalm* 119
Psalm 130 *Psalm* 131 *Psalm* 146 *Psalm* 147
- How would someone know you are a person of hope?
- How does inner joy and peace help identify a person of hope? Peace and joy are a fruit of trusting (hoping) in God, Who is faithful in keeping His promises.
- Discuss how the virtue of hope helps us to live a Christian life. (CCC 1817-1818)
- What are the sins against hope? (See CCC 2091-2092).
- What does it mean to have hope in the future? Example: You have a vision for the future based upon the fact that God has a plan for your life and that things will be better than what you are experiencing now.
- How is the Eucharist a pledge of hope of everlasting life? (See CCC 1405)

- Memorize a Scripture passage that speaks of hope in God.
Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope”
Psalm 40:2 “I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me and heard my cry.”
Psalm 146:5 “For You O Lord are my Hope...my trust is in You.”
Hebrews 6:19 “Hope is the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.”
Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”
Romans 5:5 “Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.”
- What are the effects of hope? Confidence, peace of heart, interior joy, optimism, vision, a change from a negative attitude to a positive attitude. See Index in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* under the listing Hope.
- How does the theological virtue of hope adapt us for our participation in God’s nature? (See CCC 1812)
- How is hope expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the *Our Father*, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire. (See CCC 1820)
- Why is the First Commandment a source of hope? (See CCC 2086)
- The nature of hope is that we know that Christ has already won the victory and that we can participate in this victory of eternal life. How can we grow in the practice of living hope on a day to day basis?
- What supports us in hope? (See CCC 274, 1717, 1820, 2657)

St. John Vianney, a model of Hope in Christ



Painting: Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, ILL.

“Christ, by rising to new life, has taught us ‘that evil never has the last word, that love is stronger than death, and that our future, and the future of all humanity, lies in the hands of a faithful and provident God.’ In every time and place the Church is called to proclaim this message of hope and to confirm its truth by her practical witness of holiness and charity.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Resources on the supernatural virtue of hope

Pre-School through Third Grade

- *Book of Saints, Super Heroes of God*, Part 4, Lovasik, Father Lawrence, S.V.D., Catholic Book Publishing Corp., Catholic Books and Gifts, (800) 228-4542.
- *St. John Vianney*, My Catholic Family DVD, 30 minutes, EWTN Global Catholic Network

Fourth Grade through Eighth Grade

- *The Curé of Ars – The Story of St. John Vianney, Patron Saint of Parish Priests*, Tan Books and Publishers, (800) 437-5876. (211 pages)
- *Saint John Vianney, A Priest for All People*, DeDomenico, Elizabeth Marie, FSP, Pauline Books and Media
- *Modern Saints, Their Lives and Faces*, Book Two, (12 pages) Ball, Ann, Tan Books and Publishers.
- *Saints for Young Readers for Every Day*, Volume II, July – December, Wallace, Sister Susan FSP, Pauline Books and Media
- *Saint of the Day, Lives, Lessons, Feasts*, Foley, Leonard, O.F.M., McCloskey, Pat, O.F.M., St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Ninth Grade through Twelfth Grade

- *Modern Saints, Their Lives and Faces*, Book Two, (12 pages) Ball, Ann, Tan Books and Publishers,
- *The Curé of Ars – The Story of St. John Vianney, Patron Saint of Parish Priests* Tan Books and Publishers, (800) 437-5876. (211 pages)
- *The Curé of Ars – The Priest Who Out-Talked the Devil*, Vision Books, Lomask, Milton, Ignatius Press, (800) 651-1531. (148 pages)
- *Saints of the Church, A Teacher's Guide to the Vision Books* (includes *The Curé of Ars – The Priest Who Out-Talked the Devil* by Milton Lomask), Allen, Michael G., Ignatius Press, (8 pages on St. John Vianney)
- *The Curé D'Ars Today*, Rutler, Father George, Ignatius Press (800) 437-5876.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
Definition of Hope, paragraphs 1817, 2090
Eternal Life as Christian Hope, paragraphs 1843
Reasons for Christian Hope, paragraphs 1681, 2785
Theological Virtue of Hope, paragraphs 1813, 1817-1821
- *The Virtue Driven Life*, Groeschel, Father Benedict J, C.F.R.
- *The Heart of Virtue*, DeMarco, Donald, 1996
- *Back to Virtue*, Kreeft, Peter, 1986

The rekindling of Hope...

When disgusted with our sins we can go into a confessional, become our own accuser, and hear the words of absolution that Our Lord gave, make amends and start life all over again, for none of us want our sins explained away; we want them forgiven. That is the miracle of the Sacrament of Penance and the rekindling of Hope.

(*The Seven Virtues*, Most Rev. Fulton J. Sheen, pages 30, 41-42)