

*Special Holy Hour – Laity with the Parish Team
prepared for the Archdiocese of Bombay by Fr. Reuben Tellis*

**HOLY HOUR
VIANNEY SUNDAY**

(Invite the priests to sit together. Please appoint a commentator to take on the role of the Leader, readers for the two readings, cantors to lead the singing)

HYMN *as the Blessed Sacrament is being exposed:*

Father we adore You; lay our lives before You; how we love You
Jesus... Spirit...

LEADER: When our Lord Jesus gathered his disciples around the Passover table at the Last Supper, he entrusted special responsibilities to them - to be leaders of the people whom he was entrusting to their care. After the death and the resurrection of Jesus, when the disciples became aware of their responsibilities after the outpouring of the Spirit on each one of them, they began to exercise their leadership in word and actions. From these disciples we have gradually received priests who have served us in different ways over the years and, on the occasion of Vianney Sunday we join our very own Fathers. *(name the priests serving in your parish)* in adoring you and worshipping you and seeking your blessings on all our work.

We begin our reflection and prayer with some thoughts of St. John Vianney on Priests.

READER: "What is a priest! A man who holds the place of God--a man who is invested with all the powers of God. If we had not the Sacrament of Orders, we should not have Our Lord. Who placed Him there, in that tabernacle? It was the priest. Who was it that received your soul, on its entrance into life? The priest. Who nourishes it, to give it strength to make its pilgrimage? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, by washing that soul, for the last time, in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest - always the priest. And if that soul comes to the point of death, who will raise it up, who will restore it to calmness and peace? Again the priest. You cannot recall one single blessing from God without finding, side by side with this recollection, the image of the priest.

The priest is not a priest for himself; he does not give himself absolution; he does not administer the Sacraments to himself. He is not for himself, he is for you. "When people wish to destroy religion, they begin by attacking the priest, because where there is no longer any priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no longer any sacrifice there is no religion.

When you see a priest, you should say, "There is he who made me a child of God, and opened Heaven to me by holy Baptism; he who purified me after I had sinned; who gives nourishment to my soul."

What joy did the Apostles feel after the Resurrection of Our Lord, at seeing the Master whom they had loved so much! The priest must feel the same joy, at seeing Our Lord whom he holds in his hands. The fingers of the priest, that have touched the adorable Flesh of Jesus Christ, that have been plunged into the chalice which contained His Blood, into the pyx where His Body has lain, are they not still more precious? The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus. When you see the priest, think of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

...The end of the reading

Pause for a short while

LEADER: This extract from the reflections of St John Vianney is a rich source of knowledge for each one of us about the identity of the priest in the Church. Let us now spend a few moments in silent reflection calling to mind the various priests we know – in our parish, those who have served in this parish before, those in our family, those who may have been our principals, those who may have catechised us, those whom we may have encountered in the sacraments or at formation programmes or camps...there may be even priests special to you who have passed away....we remember them with gratitude in our hearts....*(pause for 4 minutes)*

Our response is: ***We praise You and thank You, O Lord***

1. For the gift of the priesthood and all the graces that we receive from this gift...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
2. For Fathers (*name the priests of the parish*) and for all that they do to build our community...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
3. For the priest who baptised us and welcomed us into the community...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
4. For the priest who healed us in the Sacrament of Confession...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
5. For the priest who catechised us and helped us grow in the faith...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
6. For the priest who celebrated our nuptials and made us aware of our responsibilities....
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
7. For the priest who visited our home and blessed us...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
8. For the priest whose homilies touched our hearts and helped us reflect...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
9. For the priest who anointed us and brought Jesus to us when we were sick...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
10. For the priest who comforted us in our grief and moments of difficulty...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
11. For the priest who taught us how to pray...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
12. For the priest who encouraged our talents and strengths and guided our professional life...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord
13. For the priest who is a precious friend...
We praise You and thank You, O Lord

LEADER: Let us stand and sing Hymn No _____

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, I will sing, I will sing.
I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.

With my mouth will I make known
Thy faithfulness, thy faithfulness.
With my mouth will I make known.
Thy faithfulness to all generations.

I have found David, my servant
And with my oil anointed Him.
My arm shall make him strong
My hand shall be with Him for generations.

LEADER: Please be seated as we listen to a reading from the Gospel according to Matthew 26: 26-27

READER: “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”

...The end of the reading

Pause for a short while

LEADER: There are four important words in this text from the Last Supper which we have just heard which outline the message of the Eucharist – to take, to bless, to break and to give. And we see this beautifully reflected in the life of the priest.

To begin with a priest is ‘taken’ from a family like yours and mine, a human family where he has grown in, established relationships, enjoyed comfort. The taking is significant because it is God who takes while calling the priest to follow Him. God may not look at strengths, or good looks or qualifications or financial stability. God just takes and He qualifies the priest for His greater glory...

As we sit before the Blessed Sacrament, let us pray for the family of the priest from whom he is taken...let us pray for parents who sacrifice their son for the Lord’s service... let us pray for his siblings...let us pray for the struggles that the family experiences with the loss of a possible wage-earner... let us pray for those tender moments that the family will no longer enjoy completely without their beloved son. (*Pause for 4 minutes*)

LEADER: We use this opportunity to pray for the families of priests from where they are taken to work in God’s vineyard...

Our response is: *Hear our prayer, O Lord*

1. That the family of every priest who prepared him for service may be blessed by the Lord for their generosity, we ask this in faith....
2. That the mother of every priest who bore him in the womb and then nourished him to maturity may receive God’s graces at all times, we ask this in faith....
3. That the father of every priest who played a role in grooming him for the world may enjoy the Lord’s goodness and blessings, we ask this in faith....
4. That parents who are no longer alive may enjoy the comfort of God’s everlasting embrace, we ask this in faith....
5. That many more families and parents may inspire their sons to be taken for service in the Lord’s vineyard, we ask this in faith....

LEADER: Let us stand and take Hymn No: _____

All to Jesus, I surrender

LEADER: The priest who is taken is “blessed” by God and given the strength to serve in the Lord’s vineyard. Through the process of formation, the priest receives qualities that help him serve, that will help him understand God better, to develop his own spirituality, to be surrounded by people who appreciate and encourage as well as criticise constructively.

As we sit before the Blessed Sacrament, let us call to mind the many blessings we see in priests – their ability to articulate their speech, to animate communities, to bring about peace and reconciliation, to bring healing, to catechise, to encourage talents and strengths...Let us appreciate the Lord for these blessings...(pause for 4 minutes)

LEADER: Priests transmit blessings from God at all times. We pray that they may always be worthy transmitters of God’s love and grace in the world.

Our response is: *Gracious Lord, hear our prayer*

1. That the talents and strengths our priests possess may always be used to encourage the growth of the people and animate communities for God’s greater glory...we pray to the Lord...
2. That those who are involved in the process of formation of priests may help priests identify their strengths and work on their weaknesses for holistic development of personality...we pray to the Lord...
3. That priests may always use their abilities to reach out to the last, the lost and the least among the people entrusted to their care...we pray to the Lord...
4. That priests may always attribute their giftedness to the glory of God who has created us and who gives us our talents and abilities...we pray to the Lord...
5. That those who are blessed with talent may be inspired to glorify God by serving as priests so as to encourage many more talents in the people they serve...we pray to the Lord...

LEADER: Let us stand and sing Hymn No: _____

Lord make me like you, please make me like you.

You are a servant, make me one, too.

O Lord, won’t you give me your strength everyday

To build a community, to follow your way?

Whoever amongst you desires to be great

Must be the servant of all

For even the Son of Man came to serve

And give his life for the world.

You call me your Master and Lord, so I am!

Behold, your feet I have washed.

To set an example for all of you,

Of service and of love.

The Spirit anoints me and calls me by name

To bring good news to the poor

Release to the captives and sight to the blind,

To set the prisoner free.

LEADER: The priest who is taken and blessed is broken in order to be shared. The priest goes through his own process of brokenness, of opposition, of indifference and even of sin. In his brokenness, he experiences the strengthening hand of God lifting Him up, to have a better view of the brokenness.

Because he himself is broken, he has the ability to empathise with another's pain. Brokenness helps the priest to be more humble before the Lord and never to see himself as the saviour of all matters.

As we sit before the Blessed Sacrament, let us recall difficult moments that priests experience – the brokenness that they suffer because of ill health, difficult superiors and colleagues to deal with, indifferent and critical parishioners, the temptation to fall into sin, hopeless situations. Let us also beg forgiveness from God if we have placed unnecessary expectations on our priests, finding fault with their work and the way they behave... *(Pause for 4 minutes)*

LEADER: Priests experience as much brokenness as all of us. They need our prayers at all times, especially that they may be able to deal with their brokenness and seek ways of healing.

As we pray, our response is: *Merciful Lord, hear us*

1. That priests who experience brokenness in their lives and ministry may never feel abandoned by God in their times of struggle...we pray to the Lord...
2. That priests who suffer indifference, failure, betrayal, hopelessness and fatigue in their ministries may never become bitter individuals, but rather better ministers of the Lord..we pray to the Lord...
3. That priests who struggle in their ministries may be able to empathise with those who suffer in life...we pray to the Lord...
4. That priests may combat brokenness with prayer and deep reflection on the Word of God...we pray to the Lord...
5. That the selfless service rendered by priests who suffer may inspire many more men to offer their lives in service as priests...we pray to the Lord...

LEADER: Let us all stand and take hymn No: _____

Lay your hands gently upon us

Let their touch render your peace
Let them bring You forgiveness and healing
Lay your hands gently lay your hands.

You were sent to free the broken hearted
You were sent to give sight to the blind
You desire to heal all our illness
Lay your hands gently lay your hands.

Lord we come to You through one another
Lord we come to You in our need
Lord we come to You seeking wholeness
Lay your hands gently lay your hands

LEADER: The priest who is taken, blessed and broken is now given to the people. To be used for God's glory, to serve, to reflect God's love to others. To go out into the world and proclaim the Good News, to bring healing, to catechise, to reconcile, to build bridges and break barriers.

(Invite one of the priests, preferably the Parish Priest to say this prayer while the congregation raises their right hands over the team of priests)

LEADER: As Fr _____ now recites this prayer, let us all raise our right hands over our team of priests in prayer and blessing

PRIEST: God our Father, we are grateful that you have called us even with all our weaknesses to serve your people in different ways. We thank you for the talents and strengths You have blessed us with and

for helping us develop skills to animate the people. Bless all the efforts we make to bring the people closer to You and to Your Son Jesus. Bless the people You have entrusted to us. Bless our voices that we may proclaim Your Word. Bless our hands that we may reach out in service. Bless our feet that we may walk to make You known. Bless our intellect that we may understand Your will for us. Forgive us for our failings, our inadequacies, our attitudes that reflect our own weaknesses. May we always collaborate with Jesus, Your Son, the High Priest and the Holy Spirit, in building Your Kingdom on earth. Amen.

LEADER: Let us take Hymn No: _____

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring your love.

Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord

And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Chorus: Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
 So much to be consoled as to console
 To be understood as to understand
 To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light

And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Benediction Hymn

BENEDICTION

FINAL HYMN: (Hymn No. _____)

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return,
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
The people of darkness are needing a friend.