

HOMILY HINTS

AUGUST 10: VIANNEY SUNDAY

- As priests we are human. We come from human families. We go through the same experiences of joy and pain, praise and betrayal, victories and struggles like any other human person. There are times when we are battling different types of weather, like Peter and the disciples of the Gospel.
- The priesthood gives us privileges and responsibilities. We experience a sense of power but at the same time we have to channelize the same productively. We may sacrifice a few pleasures but it gives us a life of comfort. We have years of training to back up our work. We get an opportunity to encounter different types of people, undertake different types of ministry.
- There are ways in which we are challenged to stand out – through our lives of prayer for example. People recognise that in us and they seek to learn from us. That’s how the disciples learnt to pray from Jesus. And prayer surely helps us deal with the storms of our ministry like the disciples in the Gospel experienced. We are called to stand out in our style of leadership, always the servant model of Jesus, where we should serve and not seek to be served. We are called to stand out in our constant search and discovery of God through the various experiences we go through as well as the people entrusted to our care. Elijah in the first reading grappled with that.
- The Eucharist we celebrate should reflect the paradox of the brokenness and the wholeness of our lives. We experience brokenness in our ministry, in our relationships just like the people entrusted to our care. We also experience wholeness in the knowledge of the presence of a God who never abandons us. When we celebrate this paradox, people are drawn to Jesus through us. They see us as those who suffer like them and those who have faith to suffer in the name of Jesus. They see us as “shepherds who smell like their sheep.”
- Shepherds should smell like their sheep and vice versa. Parishioners should support and encourage their priests, constructively criticise their work, empathise with them in their struggles, recognise priests as human and not super-human. A good word for priests in homes may even plant the seeds for good vocations! And that’s where priests come from. From homes and families. Not from another planet or alien species.
- St John Vianney loved his people, he spent long hours in the confessional helping them reconcile with God, he celebrated the Eucharist and made the people aware of God’s love. Even today the priests in different ways reflect the zeal and enthusiasm of St John Vianney, through the Eucharist, the sacraments, through the small communities, through empowerment programmes, the list is endless.

Do pray for your priests in your personal prayer, the family prayer and when you gather as a community.