

St. John Vianney and the Eucharist

- Introduction
 - Today is the feast of St. John Mary Vianney and it's a great day for us to ponder the holy life and learn from the very practical wisdom of the patron saint of parish priests. There would be lots of things we could pray about tonight:
 - His thoughts on the great gift of the Sacrament of Penance, where he used to hear confessions 12-18 hours a day for the last 31 years of his life.
 - His insights on the priority of prayer
 - His legendary battles against the devil.
 - His famous charity
 - His capacity to deal with and overcome lots of pastoral opposition
 - His support of Catholic education for boys and girls
 - His thoughts on perseverance in vocation
 - But insofar as we're now in the midst of Christ's triennial five-week Catechesis on the root and center of the Christian life, I'd like to spend our time pondering his thoughts on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
 - Vatican II: Eucharist needs to be the source and the summit of the Christian life, the beginning and the end, the starting point and goal. Not really understood and lived. For a life to be truly Christian, the fathers of the Council are saying, it must be lived in union with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
 - That's what characterized SJV's life; that's what he tried to bring about in his people.
 - We'll begin by focusing on what SJV taught by his life and then we'll look at what he communicated by his words.
- St. John Vianney's Life
 - Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical letter on the 100th Anniversary of the death of the Cure, wrote, "The devotion to prayer of St. John M. Vianney, who was to spend almost the whole of the last thirty years of his life in Church caring for the crowds of penitents who flocked to him, had one special characteristic: it was specially directed toward the Eucharist."
 - It is almost unbelievable how ardent his devotion to Christ hidden beneath the veils of the Eucharist really was. "He is the one"-he said-"Who has loved us so much; why shouldn't we love Him in return?" Blessed John XXIII tells us, "He was devoted to the adorable Sacrament of the altar with a burning charity and his soul was drawn to the sacred Tabernacle by a heavenly force that could not be resisted."
 - If you look at his catecheses, he spent far more time preaching about the Eucharist than about almost all other subjects put together.
 - His hours spent in the confessional were not just so that he could reconcile the people to God, but to prepare them to lead a Catholic life, which entails full participation in the Holy Mass by receiving Holy Communion worthily.
 - He went to daily Mass prior to the revolution upon hearing the bells.
 - He in fact risked his life to go to Mass.
 - French Revolution. Civil Constitution on the Clergy. Clandestine priests. He'd leave with his family in the middle of the night to attend a celebration in some isolated barn with barely a candle. If they were caught, the priest, and some of the communicants, could be brought to the guillotine. They also housed these secret priests, which likewise could have gotten their family executed if caught. So important was the Mass. They made the effort to go. No price was too much to pay. He made his first communion with a whole bunch of decoys outside to pretend like nothing was going on.

- He served Mass like an angel as a seminarian.
- He celebrated the Mass with great devotion.
 - Eyewitnesses say that after the consecrated, he was shining with happiness, especially after communion. He would pause with the sacred host in his hands and, looking at the host, have a profound sweet smile that one would conclude that he was seeing the Lord with the eyes of the body.”
 - “Until the consecration, I go rather quickly, but after the Consecration, I forget myself in holding Our Lord in my hands.”
 - “After the consecration, when I hold in my hands the holy body of Our Lord, and when I am in my hours in discouragement, seeing myself only worthy of hell, I say to myself: ‘If at least I can take him with me! Hell would be sweet with him. It would not cost me to remain all eternity suffering if we were together.... It would no longer be hell. The flames of love would extinguish those of justice.’”
 - After the Domine non sum dignus, he remained a moment in adoration.
 - “When I am at Mass, I hold the good God: what can he refuse me?”
 - “Tomorrow after the Mass, maybe I will be able to respond to you...”
- Adoration of the Lord in the Tabernacle.
 - He would remain transfixed, looking at the Lord inwardly and having the Lord look at him.
 - His parishioners always remembered the great serene smiles he would show.
- Corpus Christi processions
- Pastoral Strategy about the Eucharist, which is the pastoral strategy for the holiness of his parishioners.
 - He took over a parish in which very few people attended Mass on a regular basis, indeed most would work on Sunday and frequent the bars and dancing halls. But within the first decade that had all changed.
 - We could say that there were four steps in his pastoral plan:
 - To make his people understand the importance of sanctifying the Lord’s Day
 - To teach them what the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass what it really is
 - To teach them about the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
 - To understand the importance of frequent Communion.
- Teaching on the Eucharist
 - Importance of Sunday Mass
 - History
 - The most important part of St. John Vianney’s efforts to convert his parish in Ars was to help his people to recover a sense of the sacred importance of the Lord’s Day.
 - SJV saw that if someone chooses — other than because of a serious illness or physical impossibility — not to come to Mass on Sunday, opting to put some other person or some activity above God, then, they imply, the person is not really a Christian except in name.
 - Sunday is a “little Easter” and if people don’t recognize the significance of celebrating Easter then they really do not grasp the basics of the Christian faith. Moreover, at a practical level, if someone thinks that work, or games, or catching up on sleep is a higher priority than coming to encounter God and worthily receiving his very life inside, then God is not really God in that person’s life and the person has forsaken the worship of God for an idol.
 - St. John Vianney knew this. He was convinced that he would never succeed in helping his people strive for and attain heaven unless he first got them coming to Mass.
 - The first Sunday after his arrival in Ars the Church of St. Sixtus was packed. The villagers hadn’t heard the bells of the Church ring since the premature death of their former pastor and most of the 230 residents of the village assembled in Church to learn the identity of their new pastor. Few presented themselves for Holy Communion, which showed Vianney that there was not much fervor among his new flock. He nevertheless hoped that, if they would come each Sunday, he could start to increase their spiritual temperature.

- The next week, however, he saw a much smaller assembly. Many were absent on Easter. As the warmer months came, the Church was almost empty, as the sound of the Church bells lost a competition with the clamor of the anvils, carts, and workers in the fields. This profanation of the Lord's Day wounded Vianney to the core. To him, it was first one of the most serious offenses against the love of God; second, he thought it was one of the worst sins a person could commit against himself, intentionally serving mammon instead of the Lord.
- One Sunday he rose to the pulpit with tears already in his eyes. He preached with a holy fire and clarity that people could still remember fifty years later. His whole body shook as he spoke. Even though he was addressing the "choir," he spoke in a way so that these "choir members" could sing the same melody at home and throughout the village to those who were not present.
- The Curé of Ars was brutal and specific, like a surgeon going after the various forms of cancer that were killing his community:
 - "You keep on working, but what you earn ruins your soul and your body," he said. "If we ask those who work on Sunday, 'What have you been doing?,' they might answer: 'I have been selling my soul to the devil, crucifying our Lord, and renouncing my baptism. I am doomed to hell. I shall have to weep for all eternity for nothing.'
 - "When I behold people driving carts on Sunday, I think they are carting their souls to hell. Oh! How mistaken in his calculations is the man who toils on Sunday to earn more money or accomplish more work! Can two or three francs compensate for the wrong he has done himself by violating the law of God?"
- The Curé of Ars, out of love for God and for those entrusted to him, didn't mince words. His message may strike some today, as it did some in Ars in 1818, as too severe. He was reminding his people, however, of three essential truths that pastors in every age have the duty to make sure their parishioners never forget: first, there is a hell; second, there are mortal sins that, unabsolved, will lead us to hell; and third, voluntarily missing Mass on a Sunday and unnecessarily profaning the Lord's Day are mortal sins
- Many then and now prefer not to think of hell or the mortal sins that can lead us there. They bristle when priests or concerned family members bring these subjects up and often react with scandalized outrage that someone would try to "scare" them into coming to Mass. They pronounce with an absolute moral authority — which they refuse to accord the Church as a whole! — "God would never send someone to Hell for merely missing Mass." They do not want to face, however, the significance of their betrayal. Judas accounted Jesus less valuable than thirty pieces of silver. Many work on Sunday for far less than that.
- We have the same problem today: People work, spend the day shopping at the Mall, taking their kids to sports meetings, and many other senseless activities instead of keeping the Lord's day.
- His first job was to get his people back to Mass, only then could God's Grace get to work.
- The importance of the Lord's day
 - SJV stressed the importance of Sunday in the Lord's plans as a gift of God to help us to become who we're supposed to be. "The sabbath was made for man," Jesus said, precisely for this purpose.
 - For Vianney, Sunday was the time in which people recovered who they really are: "Man is not only a work horse, he is also a spirit created in the image of God! He has not only material needs and coarse appetites; he has needs of the soul and appetites of the heart. He lives not only by bread, but by prayer, faith, adoration and love."
 - Vianney was not principally striving to scare his people into their religious duties as to remind them that missing Sunday Mass is not a small matter without eternal consequences. He principally wanted them to know that Sunday is a day of and for the Lord. "Sunday is the

property of the good God,” he preached. “It is his own day, the Lord’s day. He made all the days of the week; he might have kept them all; he has given you six and has reserved only the seventh for himself. What right have you to meddle with what does not belong to you?”

- This is still a present problem. It will be hard for us to appreciate the importance of Sunday Mass if we don’t appreciate what Sunday is supposed to be. If we look at our Sunday obligation as just an hour or two, we’ll miss the point. Sunday as a whole is a gift of God to us and when we live that, then Sunday Mass is able to become what it’s supposed to be.
 - Liturgies in Africa always last several hours. There’s generally a parish celebration afterward that lasts several more hours.
 - This is really so incredibly beautiful. Sunday is not just a part of the weekend but a real day of joy when the whole community celebrates it like a little Easter.
- Pope John Paul II wrote a letter in 1998 called *Dies Domini* to help the whole Church focus on the importance of Sunday as a means to renew us in God’s image, a real day of the Church, and a means to emancipate us from the slavery to materialism in modern life shown in putting material things about the good of the soul.
- In *Novo Millennio Ineunte* he focused on the pillars for Holiness and mentioned at the top of the list Sunday Mass.
- Pope Benedict wrote *Sacramentum Caritatis* in 2007 to help us again focus on the importance of the Day of the Lord as a whole centered on the Sunday Liturgy.
- All are saying the same thing, about the crucial importance of returning Sunday to its proper place in Christian life and then in culture.
- In addition to preaching, he would go out in search of his lost sheep. In his home visits, he politely invited and encouraged everyone to return to the sacraments, but most ignored him. So early on Sunday mornings, he would go out to the fields to reiterate his appeal. One day he encountered a man taking in his crop. Ashamed at being caught, the man tried to hide behind his cart. “O my friend,” Vianney said with palpable grief in his voice, “you seem very much surprised to find me here... but the good God sees you at all times. He it is whom you must fear.”
- The cumulative result of all of these efforts was that, a few years after his arrival, almost everyone in the village was coming to Mass. That allowed the real work of forming them to be saints to begin.
- We live in a time when, on any given Sunday, only one out of four Catholics is coming to Mass. This Year for Priests is an opportunity for all practicing Catholics to imitate the love of St. John Vianney in going out to call the other three back, first by invitation and encouragement and next, if necessary, by not hesitating to remind them of the significance and the eternal stakes.
- The conversion of our culture, like the conversion of Ars in the 1800s, cannot happen without it.
- Once Sunday was understood, SJV was able to stress the importance of the Mass
 - “Attending Mass is the greatest action we can do.” He would help his people to ponder this. The greatest action we can do. The most important thing of all. If we do everything else but fail to do this, we’re really missing the most important part of life; If we do this but fail to do so many other things, we’re really going to be fulfilled.
 - “Holy Communion and the holy sacrifice of the Mass are the two most efficacious actions to obtain the conversion of hearts.”
- How to pray the Mass well
 - “It’s not enough to be bodily present at the Mass; it’s necessary to attend with the intention of listening and listening with attention.”

- “The best way to attend Mass is to unite oneself to the priest in everything that he says, to follow each of his actions as much as one can; to be quiet in order to penetrate the most living sentiments of love and recognition; it’s necessary to guard this method.”
 - “All the prayers of the Mass are a preparation for Communion.”
 - “If I attend Holy Mass, I unite my spirit and my heart to the holy intentions of Jesus.”
 - “One should consecrate at least 15 minutes to prepare well to attend Mass.”
 - “At that moment when I hold our Lord in my hands, say to him like the blind man in Jericho, ‘Lord, that I may see!’”
 - “The whole life of a Christian has to be a preparation for this great action.”
 - Spiritual communion
 - “When one is obliged by necessity to “guard” [something or someone], and there’s only one Mass, one should say the prayers of the Mass in order to be united to those who are in Church.”
 - What the Mass is
 - Transubstantiation
 - “See the power of the priest! The tongue of the priest, and a piece of bread, makes God! That’s more than creating the world!”
 - “What’s there? The body of Our Lord. Why is he there? Because the priest has passed there and said Holy Mass.”
 - The value of the Mass
 - “*All the good works taken together do not equal the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men and the holy Mass is the work of God.* The martyr is nothing in comparison, because martyrdom is the sacrifice that man makes to God of his life; the Mass is the sacrifice that God makes for man of his body and blood.”
 - “You could give 2,000, 3,000 or 100,000 francs, but you would not be able to pay for one Mass: the price is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - The miracle of the Mass
 - “If on were to say, ‘At such a time, one is going to raise a dead man,’ we would all quickly run to see it. But the consecration, isn’t it a greater miracle than raising a dead man?”
 - The power of the Mass
 - “The priest must have the same joy as the apostles in seeing the Lord whom he holds in his hands.”
 - “Holy and Eternal Father, let us make an exchange. You have the soul of my friend in Purgatory, and I have the body of your Son in my hands; well, delivery my friend and I will offer you your Son with all the merits of his death and passion!”
- The real presence of Christ
 - Once his people began to grasp how important the Mass was, he passed on to a third stage: to help them to grow in appreciation — not just intellectually but existentially — of the Lord’s real presence in the Eucharist. He preached about Christ’s real presence first by his example. The Holy Cure spent as much time as he could kneeling at the foot of the altar in his little church just gazing at the tabernacle. His reverence for the Blessed Sacrament was legendary by the way he comported himself around the sanctuary could leave no doubt in the faithful about his believe in the real Presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Often his actions at the altar were far more powerful than his preaching
 - He would become emotional speaking of the Eucharist
 - When he would speak on the holy Eucharist, he often could not achieve words and would speak only in tears
 - He spoke often of the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist and he did it with so much conviction that the words went straight to the soul. Sometimes he couldn’t breath and he remained as if he was in suspense.

- Often he made pauses while saying his office and looked at the tabernacle with eyes that were filled with a joy so alive that we believed that he was seeing Our Lord
- He eyes would tear up when he spoke about this gift of Jesus. He would often only be able to point to the tabernacle and repeat, "He is there!"
- He recommended that his parishioners do like him and knock often on the door of the tabernacle
- Simple phrases to focus on the real presence
 - "We are obliged to say like St. John, 'It's the Lord!'"
 - "Our Lord is in heaven. He is also in his tabernacle. What happiness!"
 - "Nothing is precious enough to contain the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- The greatness of God's love in the Eucharist
 - "How beautiful it is. After the consecration, the good God is there, like he is in heaven. If man knew this mystery, he would die of love."
 - "There is nothing so great as the Eucharist!"
- God's love for Jesus in the Eucharist
 - "God fixes his eyes on the altar: "This is my beloved Son in whom I place all my delight!"
 - "If we had the eyes of angels in seeing our Lord Jesus Christ who is here on the altar and who is looking at us, how we would love him!"
- God's greatest gift
 - "If God had something more precious, he would have given it to us!"
 - "If we had had one favor to ask of Our Lord, we would never have thought to ask him that!"
 - "He couldn't resolve to leave us alone on earth!"
- He humbled himself
 - "Because our Lord did not make himself seen in all his majesty in the Blessed Sacrament, you treat him without respect; but it's him! He's in the midst of us.
- God awaits us
 - "He comes down on our altars where he awaits us night and day."
 - "What is our Lord doing in the tabernacle? He is awaiting us!"
 - "He is there with his good heart, waiting for us to go to him to say our needs and to receive him."
 - "Our Lord is hidden there waiting that we come to visit him and give him our petitions. See how good he is! He accommodates himself to our weakness. If he appeared in glory before us, we would never have dared approach."
 - "Not to have a devotion to the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ is a mark of reprobation."
- He wants to hear our prayers
 - "He wants that we have the happiness of finding him every time we want to look for him."
 - "If you are really convinced of the real presence of Our Lord in the most blessed Sacrament and if you pray to him with fervor, you will certainly obtain your conversion."
 - "Instead of making noise in the newspapers, make noise at the door of the tabernacle!"
- Our response
 - "He who loves us so much is there! Why should we not love him?"
 - "My children, if you really love the good God, you will think often about Our Lord on the altars."
 - "Because our Lord did not make himself seen in all his majesty in the Blessed Sacrament, you treat him without respect; but it's him! He's in the midst of us.
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament
 - "If you are passing before a Church, enter to greet our Lord. Could you pass the door of a friend without saying hello?"

- Spiritual communions
 - “If you love our Lord, you will always have before the eyes of your Spirit that golden tabernacle, this house of God.”
 - “When you wake up in the middle of the night, transport yourself quickly in spirit to the tabernacle.”
- Corpus Christi processions
 - “What happiness! Today our Lord has walked in your parish to bless you. When you pass in the streets where he passed, you can say, ‘Our Lord passed there.’”
- Allow God to penetrate us by his holy presence
 - “O God, what a shame that we are not penetrated by your holy presence!”
- Holy Communion.
 - Once he had them contemplating how they could and should respond to the Lord’s abiding presence in the tabernacle, he could pass to the fourth and final stage of the curriculum of a truly Eucharistic life: to help them desire and come to receive him worthily in Holy Communion as frequently as possible, even every day.
 - He helped them to see Jesus in the Eucharist as their daily manna, as the response of God the Father to our prayers to give us each day our super-substantial “bread.”
 - He described the power of the Eucharist to make them saints. He used an unforgettable image: “Next to this sacrament, we are like someone who dies of hunger next to a river, just needing to bent the head down to drink; or like a poor man next to a treasure chest, when all that is needed is to stretch out the hand.” All we needed, he said, to advance on the path to holiness and heaven was to come thirsty to Mass to receive the Living Water and poor to receive the world’s greatest treasure. He tried to get them to “upgrade” their faith from weekly communicants to daily. He lamented how many good people remained merely good: “What a shame! If they communicated more often, they would be saints.”
 - This was occurring at a time when many nuns were receiving the Lord only a few times a year, he was promoting daily Mass. He did so by talking about the value, power and joy of Holy Communion.
 - He would stress the value of Holy Communion
 - “If only one understood the price of holy communion!”
 - “Communion... What honor God gives his creature!”
 - “O man, how happy you are, but you comprehend so little your happiness! If you were to understand it, you would not be able to live... You would die of love! God gives himself to you. You can carry him if you want, wherever you want. He makes himself one with you!”
 - “The good God wanted to give himself to us in the sacrament of his love, and gave us a great and vast desire that only he can fill.”
 - The Eucharist surpasses our desires
 - “‘Everything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.’ We would never have thought of asking God for his own Son. But what man couldn’t say or conceive, what he never would have dared desire, God in his love has said, conceived and executed. We would never have dared to say to God to have his son die for us, to give us his body to eat, his blood to drink. Since all this is true, man cannot imagine the things that God will do. He went further in his designs of love than we could have dreamed.”
 - The power of Holy Communion
 - “One holy Communion, one alone, is enough to turn man from the earth and give him a foretaste of heavenly delights.”
 - The reality of Holy Communion
 - Trinitarian indwelling
 - The three divine persons live in the soul; it’s a little heaven.”
 - “Are we not happier than Simeon? We can hold him always if we want. He doesn’t come only into our arms but into our heart.”

- Our celestial nourishment
 - “The nourishment of the soul is the body and blood of God. This is something that, if we thought about it, we would lose ourselves for eternity in this abyss of love!”
 - “Our soul is so precious in the eyes of God that, in his wisdom, he didn’t find nourishment worthy enough for it except his adorable body, which he made our daily bread.”
 - “O man, how great you are! Nourished and watered by the body and blood of God.”
 - “The soul can be nourished only by God. Only God is enough. Only God can fill it... Only God can fill up its hunger! The soul absolutely needs God!”
 - When God wanted to give a nourishment to our soul to sustain it in the pilgrimage of life, he looked down upon creation and found nothing worthy of it. So he answered himself and decided to give himself.”
 - “Earth is too small to furnish our soul with what will satiate it: it hungers for God, who alone can fill it.”
- To live off of Jesus
 - “Come to communion, come to Jesus, come to live of him, in order to live for him.”
 - “He rested with us not only to console us, but to give himself to us, so that he would no longer only be with us.”
- Holy Communion brings about communion with God
 - “The one who communicates loses himself in God like a drop of water in the ocean. One can no longer separate them.”
 - Our soul, in receiving communion, is united to God, to a God of love, to a God who is delighted to be with the children of men.”
- The Happiness of Holy Communion
 - “Without the divine Eucharist, there would be no happiness in the world. Life wouldn’t be supportable. When we receive holy Communion, we receive our joy, our happiness.”
 - “When one makes a holy Communion, one feels something extraordinary, a well-being which penetrates the whole body to the extremities. What is this well-being? It’s our Lord who communicates himself to all the parts of are body and makes the tremble.”
 - “What I love is the devotion to Our Lord in the blessed sacrament of the altar. We are so happy when we receive him in communion. We hide him in our heart and we bring him with us.”
- Religious and holy Communion: a sacred exchange of love
 - “I think that between our Lord and those good religious women who are his spouses an exchange of generosity, to the one go gives more, the Lord always carries her. The religious give their heart; He gives his body and blood. While the sisters say, ‘I renew my vows of poverty, chastity and obedience,’ I say to them in presenting the host, ‘May the body of Our Lord preserve your soul to eternal life.’”
- The effects of Holy Communion
 - “One holy Communion, well-done, suffices to embrace a soul in the love of God.”
- The glory of Holy Communion
 - “By one communion, we give God more glory than if you were to give 100,000 francs to the poor.”
- “Praying and Holy Communion
 - When we want to obtain something from the good God, after communion, we offer him his beloved Son with all the merits of his death and passion. If will not be able to refuse us anything.”
- Jesus in the Eucharist is the response to our deepest desires:
 - “If one could understand all the goods contained in holy Communion, there would be nothing left for man’s heart to be happy. The greedy person would not run after treasure, the ambitious after glory; each one would leave the earth as dust and would fly toward heaven.”

- “Next to this sacrament, we are like someone who dies of hunger next to a river, just needing to bent the head down to drink; we’re like a person who remains poor next to a treasure; all that is needed is to stretch out the hand.”
 - “The great misfortune is that we neglect to have recourse to this divine nourishment given to help us traverse the desert of life. We’re like a person who dies of hunger next to a well-stocked table.”
- Encouraged people toward Holy Communion
 - He encouraged his people toward daily communion
 - “In the early Church, they communicated every day.”
 - “What a shame! If they communicated more often, they would be saints.”
 - “We should always have the burning desire to receive the good God.”
 - The Eucharist is a true foretaste of heaven
 - “What we have communicated, if someone asks us what we’re bringing home, we should respond, ‘we’re bringing heaven.’”
 - The Lord makes us worthy of holy communion. He says that word of absolution in confession and makes it possible for us to receive.
 - “Don’t say that you’re not worthy. It’s true: you’re not worthy, but you have need of Holy Communion.”
 - “If our Lord had in view our dignity, he would never have instituted his beautiful sacrament of love, because no one in the world is worthy of it. But he had in mind our needs and we have need of it.”
 - Giving Holy Communion was his great joy
 - “Oh if I could distribute every day his holy body to a great number of faithful, how happy I’d be!”
 - SJME: “I’m giving happiness to people.”
- An examination of conscience for us
 - SJV’s people responded to the loving appeals of their saintly pastor. They learned from him that “attending Mass is the greatest action they can do.” Eventually St. John Vianney rejoiced that every morning the 7 am Mass was packed with Catholics who were receiving the Lord as the source and the summit of their life. Visitors to Ars soon began to be amazed not just with the holy Curé of Ars but with the holy Catholics of Ars.
 - For us, we need to examine ourselves. St. John Vianney’s pastoral plan to help his parishioners become saints is the Church’s pastoral plan in every age.
 - The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught that Jesus in the Eucharist is meant to be the “source and the summit of the Christian life.” In other words, for a life to be truly Christian, Jesus in the Eucharist is meant to be not merely a part of a person’s existence but the reality from whom everything in his life flows and the goal toward whom everything in his life goes.
 - Following the same line of thought, Pope John Paul II in his 2003 encyclical on the Holy Eucharist said that the Church as a whole, and faithful Christians in particular, must live off the Eucharist.
 - If we seek to be a good, faithful Catholic, then, we need to determine whether we are really living off Jesus in the Eucharist, whether Jesus is really the alpha and the omega of our life. But that begs the question: What does it mean to live a truly Eucharistic life? Is it enough for us to be coming to Mass on Sunday and worthily receiving him?
 - I think the easiest way to determine whether we are genuinely living off Jesus in the Eucharist is to determine what our reaction is when we do not receive him. If we’re truly living off of Jesus then it would follow that we would feel spiritually dead if we were not, for whatever reason, able to receive Jesus.
 - One illustration of those who lived a Eucharistic life is often cited by Pope Benedict: the martyrs of Abitene. In 304, the local Roman governor warned Christians in what is modern day Tunisia that the emperor Diocletian had ordered that if Christians came together for the Eucharist, they were to be arrested and executed. Defying the orders, 49 Christians convened early Sunday morning to

celebrate Mass. They were arrested and sentenced to death. When the governor asked why they had defied the emperor's orders and his admonition, one of them, Octavius Felix, responded, "*Sine Dominico non possumus*," which translated means, "Without the Lord on Sunday, we can't make it." They couldn't live without Jesus in the Eucharist, and chose to die physically rather than suffer spiritually.

- Can we live without the Eucharist? Can we survive without Jesus on Sunday? How about on Monday and Tuesday and the other days of the week?
- Helping Catholics learn to live a truly Eucharistic life is the aim of the Church and the goal of parish priests. It was SJV's goal. It's his goal for us now on this retreat.
- Let us ask the Lord, wondrously present before us on the altar, through the intercession of the patron saint of priests, to help us adopt that type of Eucharistic life that brought St. John Vianney and so many of his parishioners to the eternal wedding banquet.