

Homily based on the readings from August 4, 2026 (Jeremiah 30.1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Matthew 15.1-2, 10-14)

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus confronting the scribes and the Pharisees – the religious authorities of his day – denouncing them as “blind guides of the blind.” Rather than serving as wise and loving shepherds, they were clearly more interested in catching someone in a technical violation of the law. They viewed a person's righteousness as a form of individual accomplishment, to be measured according to a rigid set of standards. From their perspective, holiness was not only tied to moral conduct, but to strength, intellect, and even personal hygiene. In other words, they were judging based on human achievements, rather than on the authentic law of the Lord.

One of the most important lessons we need to remember is that, from God's vantage point, anything we try to do on our own – for good or ill – is utterly inconsequential. Remember the words of Saint Paul:

Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God.

The saint we commemorate today, Jean-Marie Vianney, is a perfect example of this principle. When he was studying for the priesthood, he was not – by any stretch of the imagination – a model student. To quote the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

[H]e was so deficient in Latin as to be obliged to follow the philosophy course in French. He failed to pass the examinations for entrance to the seminary proper, but on re-examination three months later succeeded. ... His difficulties in making the preparatory studies seem to have been due to a lack of mental suppleness in dealing with theory as distinct from practice –

a lack accounted for by the meagreness of his early schooling, the advanced age at which he began to study, [and] the fact that he was not of more than average intelligence.

Nevertheless, this simple and saintly man is remembered as one of the greatest parish priests in the history of the Church. The power of his ministry did not come from any of his own abilities – except perhaps his humility – but only from Christ himself.

All human beings, including members of the clergy, possess a combination of positive and negative qualities – a mixture of worldly successes and failures. Our challenge as Christians is not to let these earthly concerns obstruct the message of the Gospel. If we judge based on human criteria, all of us will be “blind guides of the blind.” We need to step back and silence the blaring of our own voices – allowing Christ himself to speak *to* us and *through* us, instead of distracting ourselves with the *noise* of our own arrogance.