



About Day of Confession

In 2009, then-Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated a Year for Priests, intended to coincide with the one 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests. When considering how to mark this special year, the Council of Priests drew from the life of the famous Curé of Ars for its inspiration, namely his dedication to hearing the confessions of his parishioners. It is reputed that he spent up to eighteen hours a day in the confessional. Inevitably St. John Vianney became a well-known and much sought-after confessor, with people coming from all parts of France to celebrate the sacrament with the humble and holy priest of Ars.

It was with the inspiration of the figure at the heart of the Year for Priests that the Council of Priests settled on the idea of imitating St. John Vianney in his devotion to hearing confession as the centerpiece of the year-long celebration in the diocese. Like the Curé of Ars, all the priests of the diocese would set aside an entire day for the hearing of confessions in every church in the diocese. No other pastoral work would occupy the priests on the designated day. Thus the Diocesan Day of Confessions began.

In launching this initiative, no one was quite sure what the response would be. Notices of the designated Day were placed in the two large daily newspapers published in Windsor and London, in parish bulletins and on the diocesan website. A special edition of the *Diocese of London Newsletter* was printed to coincide with the Day of Confessions, offering information, guidance and various forms of the examination of conscience for different persons and age groups. With the prayerful support of the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the community at St. Peter's Seminary, every priest, active or retired, made himself available in every church and chapel of the diocese to hear the confessions of the faithful.

To the astonishment of many priests, penitents came in large numbers—in some parishes, in the hundreds. Priests were kept constantly busy in a number of parishes hearing confessions well beyond the set time and late into the night of the designated day. More significantly, many priests reported people returning to the sacrament after an absence of ten, twenty, even forty years! The Day of Confessions was clearly a moment of grace in the lives of the thousands for the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of penance. For the priests involved it was an affirmation of this vital element of their ministry, and a humbling reminder of their sacramental role in God's great work of forgiveness.

The Day of Confession has been held every year in the season of Lent since 2009, with the same incredible results in each subsequent year. In 2018, the eighth Diocesan Day of Confessions will be held on Wednesday, March 21, and once again priests across the Diocese of London will be available in every church and chapel to celebrate the sign of God's limitless mercy and unconditional love for any and all who seek it.