



TASTE Reflection Questions
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St. John Vianney Speaks to Our Hearts

Kevin Wells

Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry ~ Padre Pio



1. What did you find most interesting about this talk?

2. Kevin Wells said that the least addressed and most important topic in the Catholic world today, which is not being addressed by bishops nor Pope Leo nor Pope Francis, is our lost Catholic youth that are being pulled into the moral decay and modern ideologies of the world with no protectors.

- How can I prevent being influenced by the moral decay and modern ideologies of the world?
- What is one way I can inspire my children & grandchildren to see that sainthood is possible for them?
- What is one significant step I can take to become more saintlike for them?

3. St. John Vianney said: "On the Way of the Cross, you see, my children, only the first step is painful. Our greatest cross is the fear of crosses."

- What are crosses in my life that I fail to embrace?
- What challenges do I often shy from that are really just the rungs of a ladder to overcome and embrace?
- How might they become steps to take me to Heaven & help my children & grandchildren along the way?

4. Kevin offered three additional reflection challenges.

- How can I listen on a deeper level with more attentiveness to a loved one with whom I lack patience?
- How can I reveal the tender/maternal love of Mary to overcome my flare-up of hardness of heart in my family?
- When do I tend to give in and quit too easily when Satan seems to have gained a foothold?
- How can I remember to ask God to alert me to these places and to strengthen and convert me there?

Reflection: Listening Like St. John Vianney

St. John Vianney became the model of priestly listening through sacrifice and love in his confessional. For years, he sat for 14 hours a day in the confessional and spent nearly 2/3 of his life there to listen closely and offer a word that would bring troubled souls closer to God. In doing so, he was able to read and know the secrets of penitents' souls. He was always a listener:

- Since childhood, his heart remained simple and pure.
- As a boy, he listened to his parents pray which helped him to become a contemplative in Ars, France
- As he grew older, he listened when God whispered His call for him to become a priest (and later a saint)
- He listened to his conscience when weary & overwhelmed, he fled Ars 3x, but also listened to God & returned.
- He listened to the sinners when they explained their reasons for leaving the sacraments. He didn't lecture them, but rather wept for them, fasted, prayed, and unconditionally loved them. After 20 years, they converted.
- He even listened closely to the devil to know his cunning ways so he could outlast and beat him. After decades of attacks, Satan appeared to him & said, "If there were 3 like you on earth, my kingdom would be destroyed."
- Throughout the entirety of his life, he listened with the open heart to God the Father—in a pure, childlike way.

Heavenly Father, help me to listen to my children and grandchildren and to love them unconditionally as John Vianney loved the poor and unruly children he catechized each day. Help me to remember that true listening is an active form of dying. True love means patiently hearing the noiseless cries - and then listening to God to help me begin to see and love and help them. St. John Vianney, Help me to have a quiet heart that listens and loves.

Reflection: Imitating the Lives of the Saints

As he journeyed with the people in Ars, he walked into places covered over with spiritual landmines. At the close of each day, he reached for his most faithful companion—*The Lives of the Saints*, a book he read from each night until his death. That book became a lantern to his soul. The story of Ars' conversion has become one of the most celebrated in the life of the Church: a priest who searched out the lost, exposed the roots of sin, endured attacks—and still saved hundreds of thousands of souls. But what is often overlooked in Vianney's life was his imitation of the saints. Even in seminary, he lived out this saintly virtue - when one day, a young Latin tutor struck him across the face out of frustration because he kept stammering over his Latin conjugations. But instead of anger, he knelt before the boy and asked for mercy for his forgetfulness. He saw Christ in that boy, another cross to pick up and embrace. The precocious tutor was just another chance to nail himself to Christ's Cross. While St. John Vianney loved every saint, he was drawn to the martyrdom of St. Philomena & St. John the Baptist, yet equally to the poverty of St. Francis of Assisi & St. Vincent de Paul. He lived a white martyr's life, but lesser known was his Assisi-like love for the forgotten and bullied. The saints became indelible icons in his soul who walked beside him each day of his life.

St. John Vianney, help remind me that saints make saints, and if I do not strive to be virtuous in my home, that my children and grandchildren won't be led to virtue either. Help me to make those in my life into saints - despite every obstacle - by my own witness of sanctity.

Reflection: The Teacher Who Fights for Their Students (From speaker notes, but not addressed in speaker's talk)

From his first day in Ars, Satan tried to cripple Vianney's zeal by showing him the sin, neglect, and dulled hearts of his village. Bereft of faith, morality, and love for God, many initially did not take to him. Only a few hardy souls attended his first Sunday Mass. Indifference turned into hatred and hostility when he dared to go out into the fields—to warn them of the eternal danger they faced. Backlash was swift. Some villagers, joined by influential priests from neighboring towns, penned a petition demanding his removal. They accused him of spiritual fanaticism, poor theology, grave sinfulness, and of having a wild-eyed and dangerous manner of speaking about the potential damnation of their souls.

A friend of his placed that letter in his hands. He read it, his eyes filled with tears—and he signed his name at the bottom. That gesture—agreeing to be humiliated for the sake of his people—began to soften the hardened hearts of Ars. Some who had opposed him sought his forgiveness. Was it humbleness that allowed him to survive? Or on a deeper level, was this when Ars began to regard him as their spiritual father—willing to be slandered, hated, and even risk his own vocation for their salvation? It was after his witness of unconditional fatherly love that a slow trickle of new Mass-goers came to St. Sixtus. Aware Satan was losing his souls, he became emboldened with his attacks, relentlessly pummeling him physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But even in a fever pitch, he seldom could slow Vianney down. Because he knew who he was: a spiritual father fighting for his children. In the years that followed, the more Satan attacked him, the more relentlessly he loved his children. This is what strong lovers of Christ do – they fight oppressions. In the end, Satan lost because he is the father of lies while Vianney was a father of souls.

Dear John Vianney, help me to not become discouraged by Satan's spiritual attacks. When I become tired, distracted, and tempted to frustrations, help me to remember what all good mothers do: they die to themselves for the children in their care.