

The humble Curé of Ars is the patron of parish priests. Born in France May 8, 1786, he was the son of a shepherd. A poor student, he was eventually ordained because of his goodness. In 1818 he was assigned as the pastor of Ars and took reconciliation as his mission. Toward the end of his life, he spent 16 to 18 hours per day in the confessional, ministering and administering

the sacrament of penance to thousands. He died in 1859.

Father Vianney lived an ascetic lifestyle; often his only meal was a humble, thin potato soup. Our playful Mr. Potato is fun for children to make, and can remind adults of the humble and loving Curé of Ars.

MR. POTATO

Long before the clever plastic potato head toys were invented, we made little people out of potatoes and other vegetables. It was an inexpensive and easy craft for kids. We took that idea and combined it with the more modern Chia Pet idea — so today's kids can also have a fun afternoon making Mr. Potato, and then watch his hair grow. Buy a little rye seed from your garden supply store or a little chia seed from the health food store and keep it on hand for a rainy day.

You will need:

- rye grass seed or chia seed
- potato
- white out or white acrylic paint
- meat tray
- button
- small piece of red yarn
- straight pins
- 2 small colored beads or buttons
- soil
- knife
- spoon
- scissors
- white glue
- 2 nails with heads

Draw around our pattern and use scissors to cut the feet and ears from the bottom of a meat tray. Cut a head daily. Rye grass will sprout in 5 to 6 days. If his hair gets too unruly, the children will enjoy giving him a haircut with small scissors!

Ecology-minded children may like to stand Mr. Potato outside; wild birds might enjoy nibbling his



small bit of the top of the potato off, leaving a flat surface. With a spoon, hollow out a hole in the top of the potato about one inch deep, to within about $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the edge of the potato. Paint two round white circles with the white-out or acrylic paint for the eyes. Paint a white area for the inside of the mouth to simulate the teeth. Use pins to add two small beads or buttons for the inside part of the eyes. Pin on a button nose. Outline the outside of the teeth with white glue and glue on

red yarn to form lips. Cut a small slit on either side of the potato to add the ears. Using two nails about an inch or more in length, attach the feet to the base of Mr. Potato.

More adventuresome children can use other found objects to form the facial features. For example, they may want to pin on paper eyelashes or craft glasses from a paper clip. A scrap of red felt makes a great tongue. Their imagination will make their Mr. Potato unique.

When they have decorated their potato, carefully fill the hole in the top with soil. Sprinkle about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of rye grass seed or chia over the dirt, then dampen the dirt thoroughly. Stand Mr. Potato in a sunny windowsill while you wait for his hair to grow. The potato will help to keep the soil moist, but you may need to sprinkle a little water on the top of his hair. When Mr. Potato has begun to shrivel and looks bad, remove the pins and styrofoam and give him a decent burial in the compost heap. Who knows — next year, you may be surprised by a potato vine growing there!