



# The Oratorio



August 2021 • Volume 13, Issue 3

**Special Youth Services (SYS)** models the embrace of Christ through pastoral care, advocacy, and faith sharing in local juvenile justice centers, facilities, and programs including the promotion and coordination of restorative services to at-risk youth and their families. Our ministry encompasses all counties within our local Archdiocese, working with youth from ages 10-17.

**The Oratorio** is a quarterly newsletter published with the purpose of sharing the voices of our youth and volunteers, activities of SYS, and information that may be beneficial to the spiritual life of the reader.

**Special Youth Services (SYS)** modela el abrazo de Cristo por medio de cuidado pastoral, apoyo, y compartir la fe en centros locales de justicia juvenil, instalaciones, y programas incluyendo la promoción y coordinación de servicios restaurativos a jóvenes en situación de riesgo y sus familias. Nuestro ministerio abarca cada condado entre nuestra arquidiócesis local, trabajando con jóvenes de edades de 10 a 17.

**The Oratorio** es un boletín informativo trimestral publicado con el propósito de compartir las voces de nuestros jóvenes y voluntarios, actividades de SYS, e información que pueda ser útil para la vida espiritual del lector.



Visit the Archdiocese of New Orleans's [website](#) to see this image and read the prayer they wrote to Our Lady of Prompt Succor.

## Director's Corner

A few days ago, I met with someone for the first time. In the meeting, they mentioned, "So you're the one in charge." My response was, "Sometimes!" We laughed. Being another person serving in ministry, they understood I was referring to God's leadership. Ministering to people comes with challenges. As a human being you want to fix what you perceive the problems to be, but anyone in ministry will tell you that it is not so simple. We must consistently ask for the Holy Spirit's intercession. This is His ministry where we serve humbly in gratitude. Each day, SYS' prayer is that the Holy Spirit is in charge and we remain willing servants of His love.

In current times, our hope can be challenged. We may feel a sense of hopelessness when we consider world events that are often unpleasant and disheartening. We view the news and we see anger, accusations, judgment, hatred, and much sadness. As despairing as local news and world events may be, we can find hope, comfort, and purpose in a troubled world when we visit the children. As Chaplains and volunteers to our little brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what we do.

Though we are challenged by the lack of in-person visitation, the youth diligently read the weekly newsletters. From your words, they are still observing us, studying us, and hopefully imitating us. This is the gift you share. In reading the "Youth's Perspective" in each Oratorio issue, you can see we also have an opportunity to learn from them. They remind us to love God as a child loves Him, that our lives are a journey of building a relationship with Him, and not to forget to ask the important questions. Jesus' words "Let the little children come to me," (Mt. 19:14) have fulfilled and sustained us for over 2,000 years. If we live our lives in the fullness of Christianity and with the same hope as our youth, others will be compelled to love in the same manner.

*Franchella*



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117 days until Christmas!

# A YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVE

## A Conversation between Deacon Dan and a young brother in Christ, 16-Year-Old A.B.

### **How long have you been here?**

One month this time. I was locked up before for about a year and I was out for two years, so I see myself making a lot of progress.

### **Describe your relationship with God.**

It's okay. Needs to be better. I prayed some in the free, but not as much as I should. I talk to Him more in here. I know I need to work on that more when I get out.

### **What's different about you now and when you were here previously?**

I am much calmer. Better attitude. I used to get into a lot of fights before when I was here and that is not the case now.

### **How has SYS helped you with your relationship with God?**

Well, Deacon Dan, you encouraged me to pray more and to read my Bible. It helps when I see you guys as it reminds me to do so. They have also helped me to get closer to God.

### **What is your dream job?**

Manage an oil company.

### **That is the first I have heard of that. Do you know someone in the oil business?**

Yeah, my mom. She is a manager at an oil company. She is a good role model, if I would just listen to her all the time.

### **What message do you have to kids that are beginning to act out?**

Choose wisely. Think smarter and think before you act so you don't make bad decisions that get you into bad situations. Think about the consequences and go with your first mind.

### **What message do you have to parents of kids who get in trouble?**

They are seeking something that they are not getting at home. Never too late to change.

### **Anything else you would like to say to our readers?**

They can and have changed some kids in here. You can't change everyone, but there are some of us in here that really want to change so keep coming for those who want it. Thanks.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.  
Enlighten my eyes,  
so that I may find the way to You.  
Make my footsteps firm,  
so that I do not stray from the path.  
Open my mouth,  
so that I may speak of You.  
You wish me to serve my fellow men,  
let me so serve them  
that they find their salvation  
and attain to Your glory.  
Amen.

St. Alcuin of York



# A Volunteer's Perspective

David Jezierski

In July, I was contacted by Deacon Dan asking if I was ready to go on my first visit to the young men in the Harris County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) facility. I immediately responded "YES!" because I have spent the past 18 months anticipating when my first visit would come. Since I joined the SYS team through my formation in the Permanent Diaconate, I have met so many wonderful people and spent time prayerfully preparing for this ministry.

When I arrived at JDC I was greeted by the very friendly security team that helped me through the metal detectors. One of the ladies commented on my keychain which has 12 different saint medals and a Crucifix. She wanted me to bring her some medals on my next visit and I will be sure to do so. Deacon Dan brought me in for a tour and introduced me to some of the staff. Everyone I met was very friendly and seemed happy in their work. Then it was time to meet some of the young men in the facility.

We were able to speak with about five boys directly and several others through their locked doors who were in their rooms because of COVID quarantine procedure. Deacon Dan made sure I was comfortable, and I was blessed to observe him interacting with the boys. They all were so young, but very respectful and spoke mostly about their current situation with the courts and lawyers. I could tell that they were unhappy with their situations, and all expressed many times their desire to never return. As obvious as that would seem, I could sense a genuine desire that they wanted to make positive changes in their lives. I was able to add to a couple of the conversations, even though I did not feel that I could say anything that would relate to them. The most common request from the boys was for the prayer cards. I pray that each one of them will find some comfort in the images of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and wonderful Saints. I keep praying for these young men, the staff, and volunteers of SYS "Draw your strength from the LORD and from His mighty power" Eph. 6:10.

Paul Nguyen

My name is Paul Nguyen, a candidate of the Diaconate formation program. The program has assigned me to serve at the Leadership Academy at my request. I was so excited for the assignment, but everything was put on hold for more than a year because of the pandemic. I received a phone call from Deacon Dan Gilbert that I would be going to the Juvenile Justice Center with him on July 13, 2021, for the first time in person. This was the moment that I had been waiting for so long, and there were many things in my mind that made me excited, nervous, anxious, and afraid. All I knew about the inside of the facility was from either the media, social network, or TV. I was worried about if I could handle the ministry with what I had learned from TV and movies.

The day came, and I was so nervous when I walked through the security where Deacon Dan was waiting for me. After meeting with Deacon Dan, he walked me through the check-in and told me many things about the facility. I could not concentrate enough to listen to him fully because I was so nervous. Finally, I had a chance to see all the kids. When I saw them in person for the first time, all my worries disappeared. I believe that they are in real need of love and care. After listening to Deacon Dan talk to the kids in the private room, I felt that this is the perfect place to serve the children of God.

Serving the kids makes my ministry more exciting and fills me with joy. I believe that the Holy Spirit guided my conscience to make the right decision. I know that I am an instrument of God, and I pray that He will use me to help our brothers and sisters in the juvenile detention center. Time was limited so eventually I had to leave the facility. On the way home, I could not wait for the next time I could come to see the kids. For now, I am keeping them in my prayers and wish them the best in these difficult times.

*Send me, Lord, wherever You please, for when I am sent by You,*

*then I am quite sure that You will help me,*

*in whatever situation I find myself,*

*to fulfill what You ask. Amen.*

*Saint Francis de Sales*







# Clergy Corner

We are so happy to congratulate Deacon Dan Gilbert on his 25th year anniversary with Special Youth Services. As a pastoral minister, Deacon Dan has ministered to countless youth, facility staff and administration, and co-workers throughout the years. Two years after being ordained into the diaconate in 1994, Deacon Dan joined SYS and has been an integral part of the ministry throughout his career. Please pray in thanksgiving for the blessing that Deacon Dan is for SYS and pray for his many future years with the ministry. In reflecting on his 25 years, Deacon Dan says:

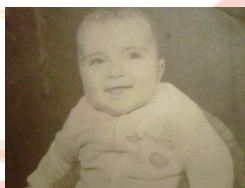
“What? 25 years! Seems like I just started yesterday. The time really passed quickly. A lot less hair and a lot more weight, but these past 25 years with SYS has been a lifetime of Blessings. Blessings because of the SYS staff that I have worked with through the years that are just like family. Blessings because of our faithful volunteers. Blessings because of the various probation staff I have encountered and most importantly, the Blessings I have received walking the walk with our young brothers and sisters in Christ that I have had the honor and Blessing to minister with. I thank God for the opportunity to have been a part of this awesome ministry for the last 25 years. God is good!”



Deacon Dan (3rd from the left) on his ordination day, 1994

## Guess Who

In honor of the 25 years that Deacon Dan has given SYS, we thought it would be fun to give you all a blast from the past. Can you guess which picture is which SYS staff member?



## MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT



The Office of Aging Ministry provides information, resources and services to parishes and older adults and their families on a variety of aging issues and concerns. Our role is to be a resource to Archdiocesan staff, pastors, parish leadership and older adults. We consult with pastors on issues and concerns on aging parishioners, link them to resources or assist with a referral to Adult Protective Services should that be necessary. We help facilitate days of reflection for seniors, workshops and trainings on aging issues. We serve as a resource to parish senior adult groups to facilitate their access to speakers, information and resources in aging issues—Alzheimer's disease, Medicare, Social Security, etc.

We design and distribute a quarterly newsletter that includes content from the senior groups as well as Archdiocesan information, community resources, and faith-based articles. We are often called on by long distance caregivers looking for resources or services within the Archdiocese; often these are adult children living out of state and trying to assist family members here. In an effort to reach a larger audience, we partner with a variety of community agencies and collaborate on educational programs: ex. Veteran's services information workshop, Medicare open enrollment services. Our office acts as an advocate on behalf of older adults through our participation on a number of community councils, boards focused on elder needs: financial exploitation, senior fraud, scams, etc. We look for opportunities to partner with other ministries in an effort to highlight the gifts and talents of the older adults we serve. Our Office number is 713-741-8712 or visit our web page at the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston at [www.archgh.org/aging](http://www.archgh.org/aging).



Special Mass for Seniors at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart



# Harris County Talent Show

Harris County Juvenile Probation Department annually provides opportunities for youth to display their gifts in facility-sponsored talent shows. We have been witness to some remarkable treasures. It is no surprise that our kids are talented, but did you know about the staff? We have always been privileged to witness the various talents of the HCJPD staff. Many times, these gifts go unnoticed and we wanted to provide an opportunity to showcase their gifts, county-wide. This meant facility versus facility and the facility with the first place winner would receive a trophy for best in show.

The first ever HCJPD staff talent show was held virtually on July 20. Staff members submitted short videos of their talent which were shown at all three facilities. The youth enjoyed snacks and drinks while observing the staff sing, dance, roller skate, and recite original works. The youth had a wonderful time and we look forward to seeing even more talent next year. SYS hopes that through seeing the talents of the staff, our youth are inspired to nourish and use their talents for the glory of God's kingdom. Amazingly, all our winners were from the same facility...Congratulations to Youth Village! Thank you Ms. Carter and Ms. Edwards for recruiting and displaying the talents of your gifted team. We hope you will display your facility trophy with pride.

1st place: Ms. Randolph from Youth Village sang "How Come You don't Call Me" by Alicia Keys

2nd place: Mr. McDuffie from Youth Village recited an original spoken word entitled "A Child's Plea"

3rd place: Mr. Payne from Youth Village sang "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke



Ms. Randolph



Mr. McDuffie



Mr. Payne



Mr. Brite, Shift Supervisor  
Accepting on behalf of Youth Village

## Volunteer In-Service

Volunteers gathered virtually on July 27 for the SYS In-Service with guest presenter, Randy Adams, Associate Director of the Office of Adolescent Evangelization and Catechesis and Executive Director of Camp Kappe Retreat Facility. Randy shared information and tips on how to conduct an effective youth Bible study and guided volunteers to sharpen communication skills such as listening to teens. Toward the end of the in-service, Deacons Fernando and Dan answered frequently asked questions from youth that the volunteers shared. These questions covered topics such as life after death, the realness of God, and the Christianity of Catholics. Thank you to Randy for taking the time to lead our in-service and to all the volunteers who were able to participate.



## Day of Reflection

On August 20, Sean Fitzpatrick, PhD, LPC, Executive Director of the Jung Center, led juvenile ministries in a virtual day of reflection. Present were Youth SOULutions, Youth for Christ, Freestyle Ministries, Houston reVision, Every Youth Every Facility, and SYS. Our ministries regularly work together to ensure the spiritual, physical, and mental well-being of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and their families. This event gave everyone an opportunity to take a few hours to be ministered to and to share their own spiritual experiences with the ministry. We are thankful to Dr. Fitzpatrick and to those who participated in this day of spirituality.



Participants sharing their experiences in juvenile justice ministry





Special Youth Services would like to thank a group of angels that have blessed us these past few months. We thank them for strengthening the ministry and for extending their kindness to the youth we serve: Deacon Alberto Yáñez and Irene Torres from Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Rosenberg for lending us a snow cone machine for the Fort Bend Juvenile Probation Department's 4th of July celebration for the youth.

Would your group like to reach out to SYS youth? Please contact us at [sys@archgh.org](mailto:sys@archgh.org) or (713) 741-8739.

# Thank You, St. Laurence

The Social Concerns Ministry at St. Laurence Catholic Church has been a great friend of SYS. They have partnered with us on several occasions to send special gifts and prayers to our youth. This summer, they organized a book drive for the Galveston County Juvenile Probation Department and parishioners donated more than 800 books! Volunteers in their Summer Of Service (SOS) program also wrote letters, decorated bags, and donated snacks to make Hope Bags for the youth. We are very grateful for the prayers and treasures this ministry shares with our young brothers and sisters.



Social Concerns Ministry with donated books: Sylvia Gutiérrez (Workroom Coordinator), Pennie DeGroot (Director), and Nikki Agner (Outreach Coordinator)



SOS volunteers writing letters and decorating bags



SOS volunteers making Hope Bags

## Ready to Return

During the pandemic, all juvenile facilities were closed to volunteers. Recently, two facilities were able to open their doors once again. Volunteers from the Gulf Coast Trades Center (GCTC) have returned to make their weekly visits. At Harris County Leadership Academy (HCLA), volunteers were able to make two visits before the facility was closed down again due to a rise in COVID cases. Although they are patiently waiting to return, they were able to reflect on the first visit back, along with the Gulf Coast volunteers:

"We had good participation and good discussion." Deacon Daniel Ruvalcaba (HCLA)

"Being away for so long makes me appreciate not only the time I spend helping these kids during this difficult time, but also the appreciation that God and our archdiocese has allowed me to partake in SYS, as it enriches my life as well." Jeff Bowers (HCLA)

"A great evening spent sharing the Word with the kids and really glad to be back!" Greg Osten (HCLA)

"It was really nice to be back, it felt so familiar like we picked up where we left off a year ago." Laura García (HCLA)

"Amazing! Every boy in the unit came out and gave their full attention." Grady Dyke (HCLA)

"Fortunately the buildings, the hall, the tables were all the same, it was as if I had visited this place last week. Deacon Alejandro Padilla (GCTC)

"Our first interactions with the staff were surreal. It felt like I hadn't seen them in forever, but it was also so routine that it felt like we never stopped. The staff was so kind, and they seemed thrilled to see us...our joy in returning was met with the joy of our participants and the facility staff." Deacon Mike Krall (GCTC)



# LA PERSPECTIVA DE UN JOVEN

## Una conversación entre el diácono Dan y un hermanito en Cristo, A.B. de 16 años

### **¿Cuánto tiempo tienes aquí?**

Esta vez, un mes. Estuve encerrado anteriormente por casi un año y estuve libre por dos años, entonces veo que estoy progresando mucho.

### **Describe tu relación con Dios.**

Está bien. Necesita ser mejor. Rezaba algo cuando estaba libre, pero no tanto como debería. Hablo más con Él aquí. Yo sé que necesito trabajar más en eso cuando salga.

### **¿Qué diferencia hay en ti ahora y cuando estuviste aquí previamente?**

Soy más calmado. Mejor actitud. Antes me peleaba mucho cuando estaba aquí pero ya no es el caso.

### **¿Cómo te ha ayudado SYS con tu relación con Dios?**

Pues, diácono Dan, tú me animaste a rezar más y a leer mi Biblia. Me ayuda cuando los veo a ustedes porque me recuerda a hacerlo. Me han ayudado a acercarme a Dios.

### **¿Cuál es tu trabajo ideal?**

Administrar una compañía petrolera.

### **Es la primera vez que oigo eso. ¿Conoces a alguien que trabaja en la industria petrolera?**

Sí, mi mamá. Ella es administradora en una compañía petrolera. Ella es un buen modelo, si solo le hiciera caso todo el tiempo.

### **¿Qué mensaje le tienes a los jóvenes que empiezan a portarse mal?**

Elijan sabiamente. Piensen con más inteligencia y piensen antes de actuar para que no hagan malas decisiones que te puedan meter en malas situaciones. Piensen en las consecuencias y vayan con su primer instinto.

### **¿Qué mensaje le tienes a los padres de jóvenes que se meten en problemas?**

Están buscando algo que no están recibiendo en el hogar. Nunca es muy tarde para cambiar.

### **¿Algo más que les quisieras decir a nuestros lectores?**

Pueden y han cambiado a algunos muchachos aquí. No pueden cambiar a todos, pero hay algunos de nosotros aquí que realmente queremos cambiar entonces sigan viniendo para los que lo quieren. Gracias.

Jesús, Hijo de David, ten piedad de mí.  
Ilumina mis ojos,  
para que encuentre el camino que lleva a Ti.  
Da firmeza a mis pasos,  
para que no me aleje del camino.  
Abre mis labios,  
para que hable de Ti.  
Tú que quieres que ame a mi prójimo,  
haz que lo sirva  
de modo que encuentre su salvación  
y llegue a Tu gloria.  
Amén.

San Alcuino de York



# La perspectiva de un voluntario

**David Jezierski, HCLA**

En julio, el diácono Dan me contactó y me preguntó si estaba listo para ir por primera vez a visitar a los jóvenes en el Centro de Detención Juvenil del Condado de Harris (JDC). Inmediatamente respondí “¡Sí!” porque he pasado los últimos 18 meses en anticipación de la llegada de mi primera visita. Desde que me uní al equipo de SYS por medio de mi formación del Diaconado Permanente, he conocido a tanta gente maravillosa y he pasado tiempo preparándome con oración para este ministerio.

Cuando llegué a JDC, me saludó el amable equipo de seguridad que me ayudó a pasar por los detectores de metal. Una de las señoras comentó sobre mi llavero que tiene 12 diferentes medallas de santos y un crucifijo. Quería que le trajera unas medallas en mi próxima visita y me aseguraré de hacerlo. El diácono Dan me hizo un recorrido del edificio y me presentó a algunos del personal. Todos que conocí eran muy amables y parecían estar contentos con su trabajo. Luego era momento de conocer algunos jóvenes de la instalación.

Pudimos hablar con casi cinco muchachos directamente y varios otros, por medio de las puertas cerradas, que estaban en sus cuartos por el procedimiento de cuarentena del COVID. El diácono Dan se aseguró que yo estuviera cómodo y me sentí bendecido al observarlo interactuando con los muchachos. Eran todos tan jóvenes, pero muy respetuosos y más que nada hablaban de su situación actual con las cortes y los abogados. Me di cuenta que estaban descontentos con sus situaciones y todos expresaron varias veces su deseo de nunca volver. Tan obvio como pareciera, pude sentir un deseo genuino que querían hacer cambios positivos en su vida. Pude contribuir a algunas conversaciones, aunque no sentía que podía decir algo a que se pudieran relacionar. La petición más común de los muchachos era para tarjetas de oración. Yo oro que cada uno de ellos encuentre algún consuelo con las imágenes de Jesucristo, la Santa Virgen María y los maravillosos santos. Sigo orando por estos jóvenes, el personal y los voluntarios de SYS, “Fortalézcanse en el Señor con la fuerza de Su poder.” Efesios 10,6.

**Paul Nguyen, HCLA**

Mi nombre es Paul Nguyen, un candidato del programa de formación del diaconado. El programa me ha asignado a servir en Leadership Academy. Estaba muy emocionado por la asignación, pero todo se suspendió por más de un año por la pandemia. Recibí una llamada del diácono Dan Gilbert que estaría visitando el Centro de justicia juvenil con él el 13 de julio de 2021, por primera vez en persona. Este era el momento que estaba esperando por tanto tiempo y había muchas cosas en mi mente que me hicieron sentir nervios, ansiedad, y miedo. Lo único que sabía del interior de la instalación venía de los medios de comunicación, las redes sociales o la televisión. Me preocupaba si podía con el ministerio con lo que había aprendido de la televisión y las películas.

Vino el día y estaba tan nervioso cuando pasé por la seguridad donde me esperaba el diácono Dan. Después de encontrarme con el Diácono, él me guió por la recepción y me contó sobre la instalación. No me podía concentrar lo suficiente para escucharlo por completo porque estaba tan nervioso. Por fin, tuve la oportunidad de ver a los jóvenes. Cuando los vi en persona por primera vez, se desaparecieron todas mis preocupaciones. Creo que ellos están en verdadera necesidad de amor y cuidado. Después de escuchar al Diácono hablar con los jóvenes en el cuarto privado, sentí que éste era el lugar perfecto para servir a los hijos de Dios.

Servir a los jóvenes hace mi ministerio más emocionante y me llena de alegría. Creo que el Espíritu Santo guió mi conciencia a hacer la decisión correcta. Yo sé que soy un instrumento de Dios y Le pido que me use para ayudar a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en la instalación de detención juvenil. El tiempo estaba limitado entonces eventualmente me tuve que ir. En camino a casa, no podía esperar la próxima vez que podía ver a los jóvenes. Por mientras, los mantengo en mis oraciones y les deseo lo mejor en estos tiempos difíciles.

*Envíame, Señor, dónde Tú quieras, porque si Tú me envías,  
estoy seguro,  
sea cual sea la situación en que me encuentre,  
que Tú me ayudarás a cumplir Tu misión. Amén.*  
**San Francisco de Sales**





Have you  
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us at

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specialyouthservicesarchgh](https://www.facebook.com/specialyouthservicesarchgh)

or click the  
icon above!

**GREATER HOUSTON AREA**

## LAW ENFORCEMENT BLUE MASS

Civilian and Classified

**Saturday, September 25, 2021  
5:00 PM**

Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Church  
1111 St. Joseph Pkwy at Fannin St.  
Houston, Texas 77002

**Color Guard Lineup at 4:30 PM**

For more details, contact Deacon John Carrara at  
713-659-1561 or email at [bluemass@archgh.org](mailto:bluemass@archgh.org)

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God"  
-Matthew 5:9-



## Catholic Charities

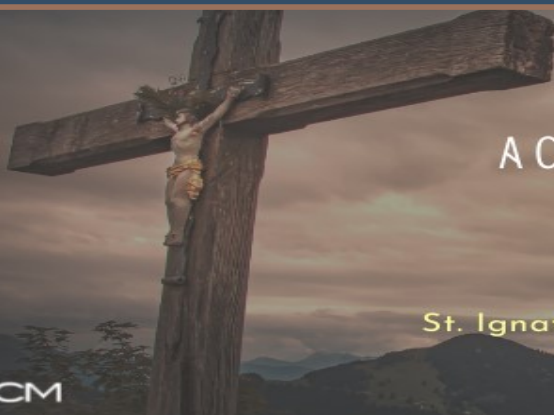
ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston continues to serve people in need during the COVID-19 pandemic through all of its programs. Food pantries are open for drive-through food distribution with hours each week at our three locations: Guadalupe Center in Houston; Mamie George Community Center in Richmond; Beacon of Hope Center in Galveston. For hours or other information, click here or call the COVID Assistance Line at (713) 874-6521. Catholic Charities' St. Frances Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Services advises that renters facing eviction during the pandemic can get free information in English and Spanish from Stop Texas Eviction, a website set up by established nonprofit legal aid providers. Visit [StopTxEviction.org](https://www.stoptexas eviction.org) to learn more about tenant rights and available rental assistance.



## Red Mass

The Archdiocesan Red Mass for members of the Bench and Bar will be held on October 19, 2021. More information will be posted on the Archdiocesan website. Visit <https://www.stmshouston.org/red-mass-history> to read the history of the Red Mass.



*Cafe Catholica Lite 2021 presents...*

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?  
A CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF THE ATONEMENT

with Catholic Podcaster

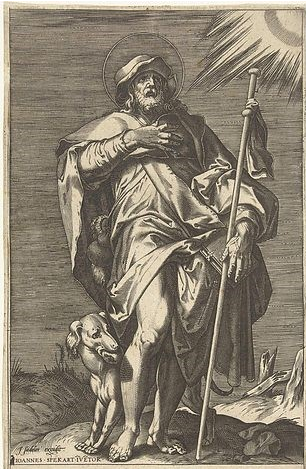
*Michael Gormley*

St. Ignatius of Loyola, 7810 Cypresswood Dr., Spring, TX  
September 23rd from 7:00-8:45 pm

[www.archgh.org/cafecatholica](http://www.archgh.org/cafecatholica)







# Patron Saint Against Pandemics

“St. Roch (c. 1295-1327), also known as St. Rocco, was a nobleman from Montpellier, France, the only son of the wealthy governor of the city. He was born with an unusual and deep red mark on his chest in the shape of a cross, a sign that the Blessed Virgin Mary had heard and answered his mother's prayers for her barrenness to be healed. As a child, St. Roch was deeply religious, fasting twice a week after the example of his pious mother. His parents died when he was twenty years of age, after which he gave his inheritance to the poor, handed the government of the city over to his uncle, and began a new life as a poor mendicant pilgrim.

Free from all earthly cares, St. Roch joined the Third Order Franciscans, donned the familiar pilgrim's garb (a common practice of popular piety at the time) and set out on a pilgrimage to visit and pray at the holy places in Rome. When he came upon the town of Acquapendente near Viterbo, he saw that it was badly struck by the black plague which was wreaking havoc across Europe. He sojourned there for a time to care for the sick both in private homes and in the hospitals—at great risk to himself.

Instead of contracting the highly contagious disease, St. Roch cured many people simply by making the Sign of the Cross over them. He continued his charitable work until the disease was halted from spreading further in the village, after which he continued on his pilgrimage. His miraculous healing power evidenced itself in the same manner in every plague-infested town that he passed through on his way to Rome, and in Rome itself.

When his travels brought him to the town of Piacenza, he discovered that he was no longer spared from the deadly disease, having finally contracted it in the leg. Instead of burdening anyone with his sickness, he commended himself to God and awaited his death in a remote and abandoned forest hut. Providentially, a local nobleman's hunting dog found and befriended him, bringing him food daily and licking his wounds. A spring arose nearby to provide St. Roch with fresh water. The nobleman followed his dog into the woods one day, which led him to discover and aid the holy pilgrim. Slowly St. Roch's health was restored, after which he received divine inspiration that he should return to his native Montpellier.

Once there he found the city at war. He refused to disclose his identity to the soldiers so that he could remain poor and unknown, having renounced his former life as the son of the governor. But his obfuscation aroused suspicion. He was accused of being a spy disguised as a pilgrim. St. Roch did not defend himself against these charges—wishing to conceal his true (and noble) identity—and instead entrusted himself completely to God's will.

He was cast into prison by his own uncle, who failed to recognize his nephew's altered appearance. According to legend, St. Roch was forgotten and abandoned in prison—but God sent angels to minister to him while he was held in captivity. He died there five years later.

Later, during the Council of Constance in 1414, the plague broke out again in Rome. The Council Fathers turned to St. Roch, the patron against the plague, and arranged that prayers and public processions be held in his honor, after which the plague ceased.

Because of his patronage against infectious disease, St. Roch was a highly-regarded saint in the late Middle Ages, especially in those Italian towns in which he exercised his healing powers. Many of these town have chosen him as their patron.

He is the patron saint of dogs, dog owners, knee problems, surgeons, invalids, bachelors, diseased cattle, and against cholera, plague, skin rashes and diseases, contagious diseases, pestilence, and epidemics. His feast day is August 16th.”

<https://www.catholiccompany.com/magazine/st-roch-patron-of-dogs-6114>



**Please pray for those who are suffering because of COVID-19 and for peace and love in the world.**

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**“The harvest is plentiful, laborers are few” Luke 10:2**



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