



# The Oratorio



December 2021 • Volume 13, Issue 4

## Saintly Saturday



A conference room in Youth Village was set up and decorated by caseworker José López to ensure that the youth received a holistic Saintly Saturday experience.

**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.

### Director's Corner



Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Advent! May the blessings of the season be with you and your families. As we anticipate and prepare for the coming of our Lord, Pope Francis has asked the Church to begin preparations for the Synod on Synodality. We, the people of God, have been invited to participate in the synod process and discover where the Spirit is working in our individual hearts, the ministry, and in the Church. At the beginning of the year, SYS will begin conducting Synod discussions and we would like to hear from you. Please stay tuned for future events and in the meantime, join us in prayer for all those participating, that the Spirit will guide all for the betterment of the Church and Her service to the world. For more information, visit <https://www.archgh.org/synod>.

Franchelle

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# A YOUTH'S PERSPECTIVE

## A Conversation between Deacon Fernando and a young brother in Christ, 17 Year-Old B.I.

**Deacon Fernando:** How long have you been in detention?

**B:** Almost 90 days.

**DF:** A few weeks ago we had Saintly Saturday. What do you remember most about that day?

**B:** The video of the kid. How everything piled up on him. First playing football and then the needle and then the gun and other things.

**DF:** Why that?

**B:** That really happens in real life and a lot of people change when they give themselves to God.

**DF:** And how do you see God in your life?

**B:** Sometimes I pray and I ask for forgiveness for what I have done. I don't really go to church and I have seen a lot of people who give themselves to Him and they repent. Personally, it means a lot. But I am not 100% with Him. I would like to leave here, go to church, and give myself to Him.

**DF:** What calls you to make that change?

**B:** You can see it in the faithful people, they don't worry about anything.

**DF:** Do you think that our visits have helped you?

**B:** Well, they help me to see things differently, from a point of view that we would see. At home, I didn't get along with my dad and I vented to him and now we talk. I see him with love because one day he won't be here anymore. I'm not the same person as before. Before I would be angry all the time with my mom and now I'm more respectful. Much better.

**DF:** And do you think you can get even better?

**B:** Yes. By working hard. Doing more productive things.

**DF:** Do you have a message for other young people who are getting in trouble?

**B:** Stop doing what you are doing. Just how you can be on top, everything can come falling down. You need to start at the bottom, not at the top. Work hard and be with God. Get your act together. Do things right. Just like God brought you here, He can take you back. Tomorrow isn't promised.

**DF:** What about a message for parents of kids who are acting out?

**B:** Enjoy your kids. You don't know what your kids feel. Be peaceful with each other. Just like a parent can go, your children can go too. You never know what can happen.



# A Volunteer's Perspective

Laura García-HCLA

I have been a volunteer with Special Youth Services for three years. I volunteer at Leadership Academy, which is located in Katy. I have volunteered at my church for many years, but when I was first asked about volunteering with SYS, I didn't think I had anything to offer the youth. What I realized was that the most important thing I had to offer was my presence week after week. The youth don't have any expectations about what we are supposed to look like, say, or do. They just want us to share our genuine self, listen, and accept them for who they are in this season of their life. They appreciate having volunteers visit them.

During the pandemic, it has been challenging because we have not been allowed to go into the facility for the safety of the youth and understandably so. Instead, we have been able to contribute to a weekly newsletter by writing a reflection on the Sunday readings and selecting song lyrics to share with the youth related to the readings. I really enjoyed sharing Christian songs with them because music is so powerful and it has been a go-to for me when faced with life's constant challenges.

As a volunteer, in addition to the weekly visits, we also get to participate in other events like Sainly Saturday, which is an annual event where the youth get to hear guest speakers share about the faith journey, hear musical guests perform, and do different activities. With the pandemic, the staff at SYS had to get creative and become very tech savvy to turn it into a virtual event. The virtual event was great. The volunteers got to wave at the youth.

Whether it's contributing to a newsletter or participating in the Sainly Saturday event, I always walk away having received so much more spiritually than what I can possibly give.

## SYS VOLUNTEER SOCIAL



SYS volunteers gathered virtually on December 4 for fellowship and reflection. They had the opportunity to get to know each other more through group discussions and had fun playing online games together. To close the day, Deacon Fernando walked the volunteers through the Nativity Story through prayer. The "Most Festive" prize was awarded to the undisputed champ, Delores Gibson. We thank everyone who was able to make it and we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Prayer Bags at Leadership Academy

The Global Week of Student Prayer was September 19-25, when students around the U.S. gathered around their school flagpole to pray together before the school day started. SYS, Youth SOULutions, reVision Houston, Youth for Christ, Teen Inc., and Freestyle Ministries provided an opportunity for our youth to also participate in this event. During that week, volunteers from each chaplaincy took Prayer Bags to the youth in the facilities filled with a snack, a word search book, and the official "See You at the Pole" prayer they could pray at their own time. The SYS bags were sponsored by the St. Laurence Social Concerns Ministry, who shared their generosity by purchasing the snacks and their artistic talents by decorating the bags.

It is always a blessing for us when we are able to collaborate with our fellow ministries to serve our youth.



Linda Love from Youth SOULutions with Leadership Academy staff

Virtual

# Saintly Saturday

From Sinner to Saint

November 6 was a wonderful day for Saintly Saturday. For the second year in a row, our event was virtual and was broadcast to both Harris County Leadership Academy and Harris County Youth Village (at BBRC).

Our volunteers kicked off the day by sending warm greetings to the kids and they accompanied us for the rest of the event. Daniel Cardinal DiNardo was not able to be physically present because of the pandemic, so he sent a beautiful message to the youth through a video and he also wrote them a letter, which they all received a copy of at the end of the event. Deacon Daniel Ruvalcaba then officially started the day with an opening prayer, asking for blessings on the youth and an open heart to receive God's message.

Our first guest speaker was a friend of the ministry, Nicanor Gonzales. He shared his life struggles and how he turned his life around when he became a Catholic and started focusing on making positive changes in his life. He is now married, is a father of five, and owns his own business. It was the first time he shared his story with a group of people and the kids were very attentive to what he shared with them.

Our second speaker was Big Cease, César Lozano, a Catholic rapper who is also a SYS volunteer. Big Cease has been performing and speaking to our kids at Saintly Saturday for a few years now. He shared his story of converting from a secular rapper to a Catholic rapper and how the people you choose to hang around with can affect your life. The youth were impressed by his story as well as his music videos that they were able to see.

During the second half of the day, the kids heard and watched inspirational videos and received Hope Bags that were made by Confirmation students from Christ the Redeemer. They expressed their gratitude for the yummy snacks and heartfelt letters they received in their bags.

As always, we are grateful for the facility staff's support for this event and they were wonderful that day. Thank you to our volunteers who participated, all who donated, and for all your prayers.



Volunteers saying hi to the kids.



Nicanor Gonzales



César "Big Cease" Lozano



Deacon Daniel



Youth Village



Daniel Cardinal DiNardo





# Clergy Corner

## HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT APPROVES RESOLUTION TO COMMEMORATE THE RETIREMENT OF DEACON DANIEL GILBERT OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

**HARRIS COUNTY – (December 2, 2021)** – Deacon Daniel Gilbert of the Archdiocese of Houston-Galveston was honored in Harris County Commissioners Court for his dedication and service to the young people of Harris County through a resolution submitted by Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis with the support of District 137 State Representative Gene Wu.

“Deacon Dan Gilbert’s impact cannot be understated. His mentorship and guidance have led many of our youth to a better place. Deacon Dan has lead by setting an impeccable example of service to others for over 25 years,” said **Commissioner Rodney Ellis**.

Deacon Dan retired in November of this year after decades of faithful service as Pastoral Minister of Special Youth Services, an At-Risk Youth and Juvenile Probation Ministry of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that has been in operation since the late 1950s. His tenure as Pastoral Minister of Special Youth Services began in 1996, but Deacon Dan’s commitment to helping young people in need began years before then in 1979.

“Before entering the ministry, beginning in 1979, Deacon Dan worked with youth in his hometown of San Antonio. He moved to Houston in 1982, continued to work with young people in a lay capacity through his ordination in 1994, and then joined our team in 1996 as Pastoral Minister. The impact he had on the young people of Harris County and on the Special Youth Services Ministry cannot be overstated,” said **Franchelle Lee, Director of Special Youth Services – Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**.

Though his calling was focused on the young people of Harris County who found themselves involved with the juvenile justice system, the impression Deacon Dan left on the people he worked with was substantial. Speaking of him as a friend and respected colleague, **Representative Gene Wu** said, “I have known Deacon Dan from the time I was in the District Attorney’s office, to my time a decade later as a defense attorney for kids, and beyond. He is someone who reached out to and believed in kids who others washed their hands of. I can’t tell you how many kids he helped, that he helped save, and that’s something that really matters in this world.”

Speaking in Commissioners Court about the decade’s long tenure of Deacon Dan in service to the young people of Harris County’s Juvenile Justice System, **Henry Gonzales, Executive Director of Harris County Juvenile Probation Department** expressed his and the department’s thanks to Deacon Dan for a lifelong commitment to young people. “We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Deacon Dan Gilbert for his decades of devoted service to the young people who unfortunately find themselves in our system. Through his compassionate service, Deacon Dan made a difference in the lives of so many young people by sharing his faith, providing comfort, offering guidance, and most importantly, by consistently being there to provide a sympathetic shoulder to cry on, lend an attentive ear, and simply being present to show that someone cares and that our young people are not alone. We wish Deacon Dan a happy retirement with our sincere appreciation, not just for his faithful service, but also for his friendship to so many in our department. As he begins this new chapter, he can rejoice in the accomplishment of a future filled with many blessings and the contentment of a job well done.”

Click [here](#) to read the resolution commemorating the retirement of Deacon Daniel Gilbert.



Deacon Dan also received a resolution from the Juvenile Justice Board. From left to right: Rep. Gene Wu, Honorable Leah Shapiro, Honorable Natalia Oakes, Deacon Dan, Honorable Julia Maldonado, Honorable Tanya Garrison, Honorable Lucia Bates, Chief Henry González, and Honorable Michelle Moore .



Deacon Dan receives his resolution from Harris County Commissioners Court. From left to right: County Commissioners Jack Cagle, Tom Ramsey, Judge Lina Hidalgo, County Commissioners Adrian García, and Rodney Ellis.





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: Laura García, Brooke González, Angela Sengenberger and her Confirmation students at Christ the Redeemer (CTR) as well as CTR parishioner Kathleen Kenny, Claudia and Tony Garza and Confirmation students from St. Edith Stein, Deacon Glen Pratt and his granddaughter Chloe, Janelle Dooley and Epiphany Ladies Club, St. Laurence Social Concerns Ministry, Deacon Mary Reddick, Linda Love, and Barrell Richardson.

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.

## Pumpkin Art



The Harris County Leadership Academy (HCLA) A-Team is always seeking ways to allow the youth to use their creative abilities and Special Youth Services is always willing to help. This year, SYS again helped sponsor pumpkins for use by the youth at HCLA as their personal canvas to showcase their artistic abilities. A total of 14 pumpkins were dropped off and with the assistance of the facilities' A-Team, that coordinates many in-house events and projects for the youth, the youth creatively decorated the pumpkins for Halloween while having lots of fun. Their masterpieces were displayed outside of HCLA entrance where staff could see them every day.



## MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is a diverse community of Catholics from all backgrounds. In order to serve as many people as possible, there are ministries dedicated to certain languages including American Sign Language (ASL). The St. Dominic Deaf Center (SDDC) serves approximately 6,000 deaf and hard of hearing persons annually in the Archdiocese. They have ministered to the Catholic Deaf Community for more than 50 years. Their mission is to serve all the Catholic deaf and hard of hearing and they offer all the services of a regular parish such as Mass in ASL every Sunday at 11:15 a.m. in Warren Chapel with a voice Interpreter for the hearing family members and deaf members serve during Mass. Services include classes for deaf couples for Marriage and Baptism preparation, hospital visitation and home visiting for the sick and shut-ins, and interpreters for baptisms, weddings, funerals, and church events at other parishes. The SDDC also provides religious education for Deaf children and has a Deaf Club that meets for social activities throughout the year. In a recent article about the ministry in "The Texas Catholic Herald", Father Len Broniak, chaplain and program director who speaks English, Spanish, and ASL, said, "Our ministry works to bridge the gap by providing services in sign language with voice interpreters, so children and adults can participate in the Mass and Sacraments in their own language. Through our ministry, deaf Catholic adults become role models for the children and their parents by serving as lectors, ushers, and extraordinary Eucharistic ministers...Deaf adults also share their experiences and frustrations of growing up in a hearing world with the hearing parents, so they can be more sensitive to the needs of their children".

Visit <https://www.archgh.org/offices-ministries/clergy-formation-chaplaincy-services/deaf-ministry/> for more information.



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Members of the Social Club



# Harris County Christmas Party

It was a blessing for us to host another virtual Christmas party for the youth at HCLA, HCYV, AND HCJDC. Although we miss being physically present at our yearly event, Zoom makes it possible to take the festivities to the three facilities live! As we do year after year, we collaborated with our ecumenical partners so that the youth receive more activities and goodies. We thank Houston reVision, Teen Inc., and Youth SOULutions for their constant partnership and support. For the third year in a row, Representative Gene Wu provided delicious Chinese food for all the youth and all the staff at each facility. His office coordinated donations of art materials, games, socks, and snacks for the three facilities. Our Archdiocesan co-workers and youth from St. Edith Stein decorated Christmas Hope Bags and wrote letters to be included in each bag. Bags also included word games, socks, and snacks that were donated by St. Edith Stein and Representative Gene Wu's office.

The event began with a welcome and opening prayer by Deacon Fernando García. The first activity was an animated telling of the Nativity story, explained in a way the youth could easily understand the true meaning of Christmas. The youth were then guided by the talented Deacon Mary Reddick from Houston reVision while making personal Christmas cards to send home, with materials provided by Houston reVision. The last activity of the day was a few rounds of BINGO called out by Brother Barrell Richardson from Teen Inc. We had many individual winners who won snacks provided by Teen Inc. and SYS. We also held raffles throughout the day that prized a winning unit with food donated by Houston reVision and Youth SOULutions. Deacon Fernando closed the event with a Christmas blessing, offering the youth comfort and hope in the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

We thank everyone who helped make this event possible and extra special. A very big thank you goes out to the Harris County staff who work to help the event go smoothly in order for the youth to have fun and feel joy at this Christmas celebration.



Deacon Fernando García was a wonderful host!



Deacon Mary Reddick doing a great job guiding the youth step by step in making Christmas cards.



Rep. Gene Wu dropping off food for youth and staff.



We had a great time playing BINGO and doing raffles for the youth!



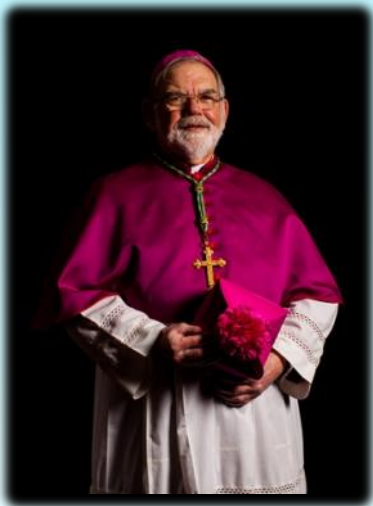
# Graduation



Special Youth Services was honored to be invited to another graduation at Harris County Leadership Academy. Deacon Daniel Ruvalcaba said the opening prayer for the ceremony and Deacon Fernando García was there to support the youth he had been working with. Along with their presence at this joyful event, SYS also helped provide a special gift to the graduating students: their very own graduation cap they could take home. Congratulations to all the youth for their well-earned achievement!



## Eternal Rest



We at Special Youth Services extend our deepest sympathies for the passing of retired Auxiliary Bishop George A. Sheltz. Bishop Sheltz was born on April 20, 1946 in Houston, TX. He attended St. Thomas High School, as had his father who was later ordained a deacon, uncle a monsignor, and late brother who was ordained a priest. He entered St. Mary's Seminary, graduated from the University of St. Thomas with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, and earned a Master's from the seminary in theology. He was ordained a priest in 1971. He served at six different parishes for nearly forty years. In 2000, Pope John Paul II named Bishop Sheltz a prelate of honor with the title of monsignor. In February 2012, he was appointed to auxiliary bishop of Galveston-Houston by Pope Benedict XVI. Bishop Sheltz was called home to our Father on December 21, 2012.

*In Your hands, O Lord,  
we humbly entrust our brothers and sisters.*

*In this life You embraced them with Your tender love;  
deliver them now from every evil  
and bid them eternal rest.*

*The old order has passed away;  
welcome them into paradise.*

*but fullness of peace and joy  
with Your Son and the Holy Spirit  
forever and ever. Amen.*



# LA PERSPECTIVA DE UN JOVEN

## Una conversación entre el diácono Fernando y un hermanito en Cristo, B.I. de 17 años

**DF:** ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en detención?

**B:** Casi 90 días.

**DF:** Hace unas semanas tuvimos el evento de Saintly Saturday. ¿Qué recuerdas mas de ese día?

**B:** El video del morillo. Cómo se le juntó todo. Primero jugando fútbol y luego la jeringa y luego la pistola y otras cosas.

**DF:** ¿Por qué eso?

**B:** Eso sí pasa en la vida real y mucha gente cambia cuando se entrega a Dios.

**DF:** ¿Y cómo vez a Dios en tu vida?

**B:** De vez en cuando rezo y pido perdón por lo que he hecho. Yo casi no voy a la iglesia y he visto mucha gente que se entrega a Él y se arrepiente. Personalmente significa mucho. Pero yo no estoy el 100% con Él. Me gustaría salir de aquí, ir a la iglesia y entregarme a Él.

**DF:** ¿Qué te llama a ser ese cambio?

**B:** Se mira en todas las personas fieles, preocupados de nada.

**DF:** ¿Crees que las visitas que tenemos te han ayudado?

**B:** Pues me ayuda a ver las cosas diferentes, de un punto de vista que mirábamos. En la casa no me llevaba con mi papá y me desahugué con él y ahora platicamos. Lo veo con amor porque un día se va ir. No soy el mismo de antes. Antes pasaba más enojado con la jefa y ahora más respetuoso. Más mejor.

**DF:** ¿Y crees que puedes mejorar más?

**B:** Sí. Echándole ganas. Hacer cosas más productivas.

**DF:** ¿Algún mensaje que le darías a otros jóvenes que se están metiendo en problemas?

**B:** Dejen lo que estén haciendo. Así como pueden estar arriba todos se pueden ir para abajo. Hay que empezar abajo y no arriba. Échenle las ganas y estar con Dios. Pónganse las pilas. Hagan las cosas bien. Así como Dios los trajo nos puede llevar. El día de mañana no está prometido.

**DF:** ¿Y un mensaje para los padres?

**B:** Disfruten de sus hijos. No saben lo que sienten sus hijos. Que se la lleven en paz. Así como un papá se puede ir, se pueden ir los hijos. Nunca saben lo que puede pasar.

# La perspectiva de un voluntario

Laura García-HCLA

Yo he sido una voluntaria con Special Youth Services por tres años. Soy voluntaria en Leadership Academy, que está ubicado en Katy. He sido voluntaria en mi iglesia por muchos años, pero cuando al principio me invitaron a ser voluntaria con SYS, no pensé que tenía nada que ofrecerles a los jóvenes. De lo que me di cuenta era que lo más importante que tenía que ofrecerles era mi presencia semana tras semana. Los jóvenes no tienen ninguna expectativa sobre cómo nos tenemos que ver, qué tenemos que decir o hacer. Solamente quieren que compartamos nuestro ser genuino, escucharlos y aceptarlos por quienes son en esta temporada de su vida. Aprecian tener visitas de voluntarios.

Durante la pandemia, ha sido un tiempo desafiante porque no hemos podido entrar al centro de detención por la seguridad de los jóvenes, comprensiblemente. En vez de visitarlos, hemos podido contribuir a un boletín semanal escribiendo una reflexión de las lecturas del domingo y letras de canciones que van con las lecturas para compartir con los jóvenes. Me gusta compartir canciones cristianas con ellos porque la música es tan poderosa y ha sido un recurso para mí cuando me enfrento a retos constantes de la vida.

Como voluntarios, además de la visitas semanales, también podemos participar en otros eventos como Saintly Saturday, que es un evento anual donde los jóvenes tienen la oportunidad de escuchar a oradores invitados que comparten sobre su jornada de fe, presentación de invitados musicales y hacer diferentes actividades. Con la pandemia, el personal de SYS tuvo que usar su creatividad y experiencia tecnológica para convertirlo en un evento virtual. El evento virtual fue maravilloso. Los voluntarios pudieron saludar a los jóvenes.

## ENFOQUE EN MINISTERIO

La Arquidiócesis de Galveston-Houston es una comunidad de diversos católicos. Para poder servir al mayor número posible de personas, hay ministerios dedicados a ciertos idiomas incluyendo lengua de signos americana (ASL). El Ministerio de los Sordos (SDDC) sirve aproximadamente 6.000 sordos y menos audición anualmente en la Arquidiócesis. Ha servido a la comunidad sorda por más de 50 años. Su misión es servir a todo sordo y menos audición y ofrecen todos los servicios de una parroquia regular como Misa en ASL cada domingo a las 11:15 a.m. en la Capilla Warren con un intérprete de voz para los familiares sin problemas auditivos y miembros sordos sirven en la Misa. Servicios incluyen clases para parejas sordas para preparación de bautismo y matrimonio, visita a los enfermos y reclusos sea del hospital o su hogares y intérpretes para bautismos, bodas, funerales y otros eventos de iglesia en otras parroquias. El SDDC también provee educación religiosa para niños sordos y tiene un Club de Sordos que se reúne para actividades sociales durante el año. En un artículo reciente de "The Texas Catholic Herald," el padre Len Broniak, capellán y director de programa quien habla inglés, español y ASL dijo, "Nuestro ministerio trabaja para tender un puente proveyendo servicios en lengua de signos con intérpretes de voz para que niños y adultos puedan participar en la Misa y los Sacramentos en su propio idioma. Por medio de nuestro ministerio, católicos adultos sordos se convierten en modelos para los niños y sus padres sirviendo como lectores, acomodadores, y ministros de Eucaristía... Adultos sordos también comparten sus experiencias y frustraciones sobre crecer en un mundo oyente con padres oyentes, para que puedan ser más sensibles a las necesidades de sus hijos."

Visita <https://www.archgh.org/offices-ministries/clergy-formation-chaplaincy-services/deaf-ministry/> para más información.



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*"All inquiries confidential"*



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*"Todas las consultas e inscripciones son estrictamente confidenciales"*





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Offered in collaboration with RV Houston, Inc.

*Café Catholica Lite 2022*


Do You Love Your Neighbor:  
Living Community



*with Chris Donatto  
from Adore Ministries*

Thursday, January 20, 2022  
7:00-8:45 pm  
IN PERSON at  
St. Joseph Church  
1505 Kane St, Houston

*Lite Snacks | Talk | Q&A | Prayer*

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

A retreat for parents following miscarriage & infant loss



**PIERCED BY SORROW,  
RELEASED INTO JOY**

February 5, 2022  
8:30am - 5pm

Contact the  
Office of Pro-Life Activities  
at 713.741.8728 or  
[jkfritsch@archgh.org](mailto:jkfritsch@archgh.org)  
for more information  
& to register

Suggested donation:  
\$35/person or  
\$60/couple




**Rabboni Institute**  
For Learning and Healing

## Parish Based COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

**FREE COVID-19 Vaccinations**  
**December 29 from 3 p.m.-8 p.m.**

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church  
11011 Hall Rd (Social Hall), Houston, TX 77089  
Please park in the rear parking lot (Hall Rd & Sagetrail Dr)  
**Walk-ins only.** No appointment required.

Bring your vaccination card if getting second or third dose (booster).

Administering first, second and third (booster) doses Pfizer/Moderna vaccinations for **ages 5 and up**. Vaccines will be administered by San José Clinic.

If you have any questions, please contact Jacqueline Ochoa at 832-425-1372 or email [jacquelineochoa@sanjoseclinic.org](mailto:jacquelineochoa@sanjoseclinic.org).



# Saint Francis and the Nativity

St. Francis of Assisi began his life as a wealthy, young noble who loved pleasure and material items. He began a slow conversion and gave away all of his possessions. He founded the Franciscan order and before his death, received the Stigmata. He is the patron saint of animals, merchants, and ecology.

Did you know that St. Francis created the Nativity scene?

"In 1221, St. Francis had a novel idea. To celebrate the birth of Jesus, Francis wanted to recreate the experience of the first Christmas. He did this not with statues inside a church, but with animals in a humble hilltop grove.

Francis' inspiration came after traveling to the Holy Land and seeing the exact site of Christ's birth. The poverty of it all deeply impacted Francis and was a particular element that he wanted to celebrate on Christmas.

Franciscan friar Thomas of Celano narrates the rest of the story:

*[A]bout 15 days before the Nativity of the Lord, [Francis] said to [a friend in Greccio], "... For I would make memorial of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes His infant hardships; how He lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by." There Simplicity was honored, Poverty exalted, Humility commended; and of Greccio there was made as it were a new Bethlehem. The night was lit up as the day, and was delightful to men and beasts ... [Francis] stood before the manger, full of sighs, overcome with tenderness and filled with wondrous joy. The solemnities of Mass were celebrated over the manger, and the priest enjoyed a new consolation.*

According to St. Bonaventure, a miracle also occurred on that night and someone noticed St. Francis holding the Christ Child:

*A certain valiant and veracious soldier ... affirmed that he beheld an Infant marvelously beautiful, sleeping in the manger, Whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep.*

The scene was powerful for all present and emphasized the poverty into which Christ was born. It was truly "Franciscan" in every sense of the word.

The idea caught on quickly and in 1291 the first Franciscan pope (Nicholas IV) commissioned statues to create the first permanent Nativity scene in the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major. Ever since, Nativity scenes in all shapes and sizes have been created throughout the world and they are one of the most popular Christmas traditions." <https://aleteia.org/2017/12/02/how-st-francis-invented-the-first-nativity-scene/#>



**Please pray for youth that will be with us over the holidays and for their families, as this is a difficult time to be separated, especially during the pandemic; the safety of all students during the holiday break; and all those participating in the Synod for the Church.**

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



SYS would like to thank you all for your continued support to this ministry. We welcome all to share this newsletter with anyone who might have an interest and to share with us if you would like to see something in the Oratorio. If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a volunteer with SYS, please contact our office at: [sys@archgh.org](mailto:sys@archgh.org) or (713) 741-8739.