

INSPIRED TO SERVE

From the Director's Desk—Romani Perera

2023 was a remarkable year. As we transitioned from the unpredictability of the pandemic, we continued to find opportunities for greater growth in the ministry. This is a collective effort in which we are blessed and incredibly grateful to have so many of you working alongside us. Pastoral Visitors are an integral part of the Catholic Chaplain Corps, allowing us to accomplish our mission while working together to leverage opportunities and address challenges.

In 2023, the CCC was blessed with more than 150 active volunteers who gave their time and talents to assist our patients, families, and health care professionals in TMC, Conroe, Woodlands, and Kingwood. To exemplify their impact, Pastoral Visitors at Houston Methodist hospital at TMC, logged 3,918.55 hours (January 2023 – October 2023) which is the equivalent of 2 full time employees. Our gratitude for your prayerful support is ongoing.

May God's peace and joy be with you as we spend these holy days together in prayer journeying through Advent season.



Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent marks the special time of year that allows us to prepare for Christmas. The word "advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*. Literally, *adventus* means "coming" or "arrival." In the days of antiquity, the *adventus* was more than just a word. The *adventus* was an event. And it wasn't just some regular, mundane event. The *adventus* was a special event that celebrated the arrival of the Roman emperor into a city. In order to mark the special occasion, the people would decorate the city with flowers and banners, they would be great parties and festivals, and there would be special games. There would even mint special coins, and some of these ancient coins exist today! Of course, because it was such a big event, the *adventus* would require much planning and preparation before the celebration began. The early Christians

adopted the notion of the *adventus* in order to mark the special time of preparation for the great arrival of Jesus Christ on Christmas. It's easy to lose focus on the true meaning of Christmas because there is so much activity during the holiday season, and Advent calls us to center our attention on Christ during this chaotic time of year. So, what can we do in order to prepare for the *adventus* of Christ?

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the great 12th Century saint and doctor of the Church, wrote about the three comings of the Lord. The first coming has already happened: Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. The second coming has yet to happen: Jesus Christ will come in glory at the end of the world, and he will judge the living and the dead according to their works. Right now, we live in between the first and second coming, so when is the third coming? The third coming happens right now. At every moment of our lives, Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts. Jesus is present to us in prayer. Jesus is present to us in the scriptures. Jesus is present to us in our neighbor. Most especially, Jesus is present to us in the sacraments. In order to prepare for the *adventus* of Christ, I recommend that you spend time in prayer, read the scriptures, and help your neighbor in need. In these next several weeks, I also highly recommend that you go to confession and strive to prepare for and go to Sunday Mass. If you do these things, you will be prepared for the *adventus* of the Lord and you will enter more deeply into the true meaning of Christmas.

God bless,

Very Rev. Clark Sample

Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Secretariat Director
for Clergy Formation and Chaplaincy



THE CHAT ROOM

Chat with the Priest By: Fr. Enrique Salen



My name is Fr. Enrique Vega Salen, Jr. My passion was to be in military services as a chaplain, but God had a different plan. God has granted what I've planned but in a different way. I am now a chaplain priest in Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital for 17 years. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways, my ways." Isaiah 55:8

The ministry is not limited to inside the facility of the hospital, it goes beyond the corners of the hospital, letting and helping them experience the presence of God through the church in their difficult and saddest moment. For an example, I visited and conversed with an older male patient who had been away from the church for 40 years. As I prepared to leave the room, the patient, with tears in his eyes, expressed his gratitude for my pastoral presence.

I am blessed with 11 trained CCC Pastoral Visitors. They provide the emotional and spiritual support to our patients, families, and staff. The ministry in the hospital is a source of joy despite of the challenges. There's a feeling of fulfillment in taking good care of the spiritual needs of the staff, the sick and their families bringing hope and support, providing empathic listening, and serving as God's instrument in His salvific mission.

A PV Encounter By: Shirley Moss



I have been a Pastoral Visitor at Memorial Hermann Hospital located in the Texas Medical Center since 2003. My greatest experience is seeing how the patient's faith help them recover from their illness. It is so encouraging to witness the faithful support provided to organ transplant patients by their family members. This gives me strength and courage to deal with my own life situations.

Mrs. Shirley belongs to St. Philip Neri Catholic church and serves as an Eucharistic Minister.

A Big Welcome to our newest Lay Coordinator

Amanda Quiorz



Amanda joined the CCC Ministry as a Lay Coordinator on July 24, 2023 and serves the Woodlands and Conroe area hospitals. As a member of Christ the Good Shepard Catholic Community, in Spring Texas, she serves as an Assistant Catechist volunteering with the high school youth, and as a volunteer for "Bridges to Life", as a prison ministry facilitator.

Prior to joining the CCC Team Amanda was a Pastoral Visitor with Memorial Hermann in the Medical Center. She is also a graduate student at the University of St. Thomas in Houston and plans to graduate next May 2024. Her goal is to become a board-certified chaplain.

Amanda enjoys swing dancing, singing in the choir, and eating delicious cuisine.

Commission/Recommissioning
Mass followed by Reception @ St. Dominic Village
October 14, 2023



2023 Commissioning Mass



Kingwood Pastoral Visitor group gathered for a photo during the commissioning reception.

Education Corner

Foundation Course Fall 2024

. Instructor: Rev. Theodore M. Smith, D.Min.

Woodlands—St. Anthony of Padua

Aug 20, Sept 10, Oct 1, & 22

TIME: 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Tuesday Mornings

St. Dominic's Center TMC

Aug 22, Sept 12, Oct 3, & 24

TIME: 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Thursday Mornings

To know more about the
Catholic Chaplain Corps or to attend
the Pastoral Visitors classes for 2024 ,
please scan this QR Code.



Enrichment Seminar

Ethical and Religious Directives (ERD)

When: Wednesday, January 24th, 2024

Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Where: St. Dominic Center

Presenter: Dcn. David Garvis, PhD, BCC,
HEC-C Regional VP of Theology and Ethic
Common Spirit Health



Scan the QR code or use the
link to attend the ERD
Enrichment Class

[https://forms.office.com/r/vni9uCMuKK?
origin=lprLink](https://forms.office.com/r/vni9uCMuKK?origin=lprLink)

Resting in His Presence

A day of Retreat for our Pastoral Visitors

When: March 1, 2024

Time: 9:30 am -3:00 pm

Where: The Ruah Spirituality Center

Villa De Matel Convent

6510 Lawndale Dt. Houston, TX 77023

Presenter: Denice Foose, BCC, MBA

If you wish to attend the Retreat, please
send an email to CCC@archgh.org with
the Subject line : **RUAH 2024**