Director’s Corner

Holiday greetings and Advent blessings to you all! The New Year is always an opportunity for growth and trying new things. Do you know someone who would make a great volunteer? Do you know someone who wants to give back? Do you know someone who’s recently retired and would like to get involved in service? People join this ministry for a vast amount of reasons but one of the best is when you all, the volunteers, are the recruiter. You know the kids, their needs, and most of all you know people who would truly make a remarkable impact. Thank you. Most people not serving a ministry are those who have simply not been asked. So this year, ask a friend, parishioner, neighbor, co-worker, a sibling, or a spouse. The more volunteers we have, the more opportunities the youth have to encounter Christ. Let’s give them a Christmas gift that lasts a lifetime, God’s never ending love. See page 7 for more information on how to become a volunteer.

Franchelle
A Conversation with 17 year old I. Hommel at BBRC

Alejandra: Why did you say “yes” when you were invited to participate in Saintly Saturday and what was your role?

I: Because I wanted to be closer to Christ. Show other people that I’m trying to change a lot. If they can see me do it, they can think they can too. That anything’s possible. I was the crozier bearer.

A: How did you feel before the event?

I: I felt confident in myself. I guess I’ve seen other people do it. I guess nervous. But I wasn’t nervous because I used to act in other places, plays at the orphanage. Like for Christmas, they would always pick me. Me and another girl would always participate. One time I was dressed as a devil and she tried to chase me. It was for Christmas. I was little. I enjoyed it. I wasn’t nervous at all.

A: How did you feel during the event?

I: I felt good because I showed the other people that I’m better than who I am. What happened before doesn’t define me. Anyone can change. It all starts with Christ, if you’re willing to change.

A: How did you feel after the event?

I: I felt accomplished. Like I hope I touched somebody hard. That someone would change. Even if it was one person out of all the crowd. I felt happy that I did. I felt happy around others because they help me communicate. When I messed up, they helped put me back into place.

A: How was it like serving with Cardinal DiNardo?

I: I felt like I was someone who belongs in this world. I’ve never been with him before. It kind of opened up a perspective for me. It was nice what he does for others. It was nice he took his time to come and pray for us and give us blessings.

A: What did you think about the day and what was your favorite part?

I: I liked it. I liked taking the picture and the gifts y’all gave me. They’ll show my mom that I’m changing. Even if she wasn’t there, I felt her presence in the crowd. My favorite part was when we ate afterwards.

A: What advice do you have for kids that are acting out?

I: Don’t be thinking about yourself. When I started my behavior, I was only paying attention to myself. I ain’t think about people around and that they won’t be there for you. One day you’re not gonna know how much they care about you until they’re not there anymore for you because you mess up. You can’t go back to change the past, but you can prepare for the future. Pray to Christ asking for forgiveness for your sins and ask to help Him guide you in the future.

A: Advice for parents?

I: For me, when I was home I felt like my parents weren’t showing me love. I felt that but it wasn’t true. I created that fake image of thinking that my parents don’t love me. But I didn’t stop and think what the truth really is. And I didn’t appreciate what they did for me. But right now, in my position, sitting and thinking about it, I feel so selfish and it kind of helps with my mom to build a better relationship. When I was in the free she always asked, “What’s wrong?” and I would tell her it’s my business. But while I’m in here, I’ve learned how to open up to my mom and tell her how I feel. Be there for your kids. Spend time with them. Be around them as much as you can.

A: Anything else you would like to say to those reading this?

I: I appreciate the Saintly Saturday y’all did. It changed my life around. Ever since that day, I’ve been trying to call my mom and tell her how much I love and appreciate her and I wish we would have gone to church more and I hope we start going to church more. And I appreciate y’all for spending time with us and giving us love. Thank you very much.
Si en algo tiene que ser identificado un diácono es en el llamado al servicio del pueblo de Dios. Yo como candidato al diaconado, cuando fui elegido como voluntario de este hermoso ministerio social con los jóvenes, nunca pasó por mi mente que al interactuar y escuchar a un adolescente, pudiese cambiar mi forma de pensar y de actuar. En cómo en unos cortos minutos de conversación pueden abrir tantas ventanas de la vida. Y esto es precisamente lo que sucedió para mi esposa Rosa, y mi persona en el último Saintly Saturday, como se le llama en inglés.

Haciendo un corto recuento de lo vivido y experimentado, para mi esposa fue experimentar como madre y mujer de fe, ver cómo la iglesia por medio del cardenal Daniel DiNardo, los sacerdotes, diáconos y voluntarios, se hacen presente con su esfuerzo y alegría para llevar la semilla del Evangelio a estos jóvenes. El sentimiento particular de nosotros como matrimonio es que esta semilla germine en el corazón de cada joven y dé fruto a su debido tiempo. Nuestro más sincero anhelo es poder acompañar nuevamente a estos muchachos y poder compartir con ellos unas palabras de esperanza y orar con ellos, para que sientan que no están solos y la Iglesia está orando por un mejor porvenir en sus vidas. Que Dios de amor y misericordia les bendiga siempre.
FROM SINNER TO SAINT

Keeping with Saintly Saturday tradition, the boys at BBRC participated in a poster-making contest. Volunteers assisted the youth in brainstorming how they could present the day’s theme of “From Sinner to Saint” with their drawings and torn out pictures from magazines. The process involved creativity as well as teamwork and the results reflected their hard work. An SYS volunteer from each unit processed the masterpiece with the gifts during Mass. At the end of the day, SYS staff took on the nail-biting task of choosing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. The winning units received snacks, with 1st place receiving pizza. Congratulations to all participants and a thank you to all the volunteers that helped. Take a look at all the posters and tell us which one is your favorite!

NEW JUVENILE JUDGES

Special Youth Services congratulates and extends a warm welcome to the three new Harris County Juvenile Judges, and their associate judges, who won the 2018 midterm elections in November: Natalia Oakes, Michelle Moore, and Leah Shapiro. Oakes and Shapiro were juvenile defense attorneys and Moore was a county attorney for Child Protective Services (CPS). We look forward to sharing our ministry and working with these judges when they begin in January. Please pray for them and their staff as they transition into their new roles.

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord.” Isaiah 11:2
Frito Pies, Sno Cones, BINGO! These were just a few of the treats and activities that the youth at the Harris County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) received and participated in at the second annual Fall Festival. Three separate areas on the 7th floor gym provided the space for eating Frito Pies and playing bean bag toss, having a snack walk (similar to a cake walk) while eating sno cones, and eating popcorn and playing BINGO for prizes. The youth enjoyed the festivities while also giving back to others. They watched a short video about young children going through cancer treatment and every youth wrote an inspirational message on a banner to be given to a children’s hospital. Thank you to all of the staff at JJC and the SYS volunteers that came out to make sure the youth were able to have some fall fun.

Christmas events are being held at the facility you are volunteering at! Make sure to check your email and get with your volunteer coordinator for dates and details.

“I ask you to build the future. Make the world a better place. Please don't see life from afar. Live it. Jesus didn't stay out in a balcony. Instead, He got involved. Follow Jesus's example.”

Pope Francis

SYS needs volunteers! We love the ones we have now, but we want our family to grow! The more volunteers we have, the more boys and girls we can minister to. You must be at least 21 years old, pass a criminal background check, attend county and ministry trainings, and have a heart for ministering to marginalized youth. Already a volunteer? Invite a friend. Thinking about volunteering? Contact us at sys@archgh.org or at (713) 741-8739.
SYS Angels

Special Youth Services would like to recognize another 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: This year’s Saintly Saturday Hope Bags were made by the 6th-8th graders from St. Bernadette’s Catholic Church in Clear Lake. Deacon Dan and Fernando spoke to their group and the children wanted to reach out to the BBRC youth by decorating bags and writing letters of encouragement and prayers for them. The bags were filled with snacks and distributed at the end of Saintly Saturday. The youth did not know they were receiving these treats and were very pleased and grateful for them. Thank you to the kids at St. Bernadettes’ as well as Marianne Bartos who reached out to us for this project.

We also give a BIG thank you to Alex Gallardo and Steve Szymczak and the Knights of Columbus from All Saints Catholic Church and from St. Ignatius Catholic Church who provided breakfast and lunch, respectively, for the volunteers at Saintly Saturday. They provided delicious breakfast burritos and savory, K.O.C.-famous BBQ.

The last, but most certainly not least, angel we would like to thank is the former security guard at St. Dominic Chancery, Von Moore. She not only took care of our campus, but she took care of SYS. She was a friend to each and every one of us on staff and always greeted us with a beautiful smile. We could count on her to help organize guests at our events and keep everything orderly. Although we are blessed to not lose contact with her, we will miss her tremendously as our gate keeper.

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

Lord Jesus, in journeying towards the Synod, Your Church turns Her attention to all the young people in the world. We pray that they might boldly take charge of their lives, aim for the most beautiful and profound things of life and always keep their hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and generous guides, help them respond to the call You make to each of them, to realize a proper plan of life and achieve happiness. Keep their hearts open to dreaming great dreams and make them concerned for the good of others. Like the Beloved Disciple, may they stand at the foot of the Cross, to receive Your Mother as a gift from You.

May they be witnesses to Your Resurrection and be aware that You are at their side as they joyously proclaim You as Lord. Amen.

Mother Mary

December is a month for Mary! On the 8th, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (a Holy Day of Obligation). She is the patroness of the United States. On the 12th, we celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared to St. Juan Diego (December 9th). She is the patroness of Mexico and the rest of the Americas, as well as of the unborn. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us! St. Juan Diego, pray for us! ¡Qué viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!

Prayer for Young People

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invita a toda la comunidad

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Saint Michael the Archangel isn’t a saint, but rather he is an angel, and the leader of all angels and of the army of God. This is what the title “Archangel” means, that he is above all the others in rank. St. Michael has four main responsibilities, or offices, as we know from scripture and Christian tradition: The first is to combat Satan; the second is to escort the faithful to Heaven at their hour of death; the third is to be a champion of all Christians, and the Church itself; and the fourth is to call men from life on Earth to their heavenly judgment.

Very little is known about St. Michael other than what we know from scriptures, which themselves are sparse. In Daniel, St. Michael is mentioned twice. The first time as one who helped Daniel, and the second time he is mentioned with regard to the end times of the world when he will stand for the “children of Thy people.” His next mention comes in the Epistle of St. Jude, where St. Michael is said to guard the tombs of Moses and Eve and has contended with Satan over the body of Moses. The final mention is in Revelation, where St. Michael and his angels do battle with the dragon. There are other scriptures where St. Michael is implied, but not mentioned by name, such as the angel who defends the gate to Paradise, who defends against Balaam, and “who routed the army of Sennacherib.” Today, St. Michael is invoked for protection, especially from lethal enemies. He is also the patron of soldiers, police, and doctors.

For the greater part of the twentieth century, the faithful recited the prayer to St. Michael at the end of the Mass. Pope Leo XIII (d. 1903) had a prophetic vision of the coming century of sorrow and war. After celebrating Mass, the Holy Father was conferring with his cardinals. Suddenly, he fell to the floor. The cardinals immediately called for a doctor. No pulse was detected, and the Holy Father was feared dead. Just as suddenly, Pope Leo awoke and said, “What a horrible picture I was permitted to see!” In this vision, God gave Satan the choice of one century in which to do his worst work against the Church. The devil chose the twentieth century. So moved was the Holy Father from this vision that he composed the prayer to ST. Michael the Archangel: “St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle! Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into Hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who roam about the world seeking the ruin of souls.” Pope Leo ordered this prayer said at the conclusion of Mass in 1886. (When Pope Paul VI issued the Novus Ordo of the Mass, in 1968, the prayer to St. Michael and the reading of the “last gospel” at the end of the Mass were suppressed.)