Director’s Corner

As I know your Lenten season will be filled with prayer, please join me in praying for the newly ordained servants of Special Youth Services:

Deacon Alex Gallardo
Deacon Eric Suárez
Deacon Mike Krall
Deacon Luis Turcios
Deacon Rey Croson
Deacon Glen Pratt
Deacon Harry Pham
Deacon Ed Gallagher
Deacon Martín Peña
Deacon Charles Pitman
Deacon Thad Kudela
Deacon William Castro
Deacon Joseluis Martínez
Deacon Rubén Manosalva
Deacon Fernando García

God bless your Lenten journeys this year. May you experience all it has to offer.

Franchelle
Alejandra: How long have you been in detention?
J: 6 months

A: How old were you when you first met Deacon Dan and what did you first think about him when you saw him?
J: I was 15 and when I saw him, I thought he would preach about God.

A: What is your relationship like with God?
J: Good. I pray every day and I read the Bible. I see God as a spirit that has a Son named Jesus. I pray at night and when I’m about to eat.

A: What’s different from who you are now and who you were when you first got detained?
J: Before, I knew who God was, but didn’t know any background. I learned that He can make miracles. At first, I didn’t care about nothing else, but now I learned if you don’t change, you’re not going to be where you want to be.

A: How has Special Youth Services helped you with your relationship with God?
J: When there were programs [such as Saintly Saturday], that brought me closer to God. It helped me communicate better with other residents about God.

A: What do you want to be when you grow up?
J: I want to go to college and get into the medical field.

A: Today at the Black History Month program, you were on the step team. What made you volunteer and how did you feel performing?
J: I volunteered because I heard it was going to be fun. I had never stepped before. I wasn’t nervous, I was calm. I was nervous during practice, but then went with the flow. I felt happy when everyone was clapping.

A: What message do you have for kids beginning to act out?
J: Think about your choices, the outcomes. Do good in school and stay out of trouble. Keep yourself busy. I would play basketball to keep busy. I would also say there’s still a chance. Don’t give up.

A: What about for parents?
J: Be strict. Talk more with your kids.

For our volunteers, being involved in our ministry means forming special relationships with young people who need God’s love in their life. It also means that the relationships they have formed ends once the youth is released. Although these limits exist for our volunteers, the SYS office is sometimes contacted by the kids themselves to let us know how they are doing. We have recently received good news about two young men:

Aaron R. was a young man that Deacon Dan ministered to for over a year and who stayed in contact with him on and off after he finished his programs. He moved to San Antonio and three years later contacted Deacon Dan to let him know he is now enrolled in a pre-med program in a Dallas university.

Damon M. (see August 2015 Oratorio: A Youth’s Perspective), who we have known since he was 12 and is now 19, is working and living on his own in Omaha, Nebraska.

Please pray for these young men as well as other youth who have been released and are trying to live a new life in Christ.

“**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**” Phil. 4:13
A Volunteer’s Perspective

Danielle Duplechain

Another successful SYS Volunteer Retreat took place on December 15th. The spiritual portion of the day was led by Sr. Barbara Regan, Rcn who spoke about Advent: the Season of Waiting. We were reminded that Advent is a time of transformation of the human heart and that it is a time to begin right where you are to remember the promise of God’s peace. We were invited to become an advent of peace with all those we meet.

We continued the day with a spirit of joy: playing games and getting to know each other. As these pictures show, the volunteers participated in a number of games, such as Advent Bingo and Reindeer Ring Toss, competing for the pride of victory. We thank all those who participated and Sr. Barbara for providing spiritual guidance.

There are so many ways to describe the ministry of SYS – humbling, gratifying, important – but what comes to the forefront of my mind is ‘being present’. Serving detained youth is a ministry of presence, of just being available to the youth to listen, to share experiences, to laugh and tell funny stories, and to pray with them and lift them up. In short, it’s looking into the eyes of the youth sitting across the table from me and seeing Jesus in the flesh. Seeing Jesus laugh, seeing Jesus on a sugar high from candy and a bottle of soda, seeing Jesus weep, seeing Jesus experience anxiety – I got to witness Jesus living in Stella and be present with him through being present to her. There is no greater gift.

*named changed for privacy

Volunteer Retreat

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Volunteer In-Service

The effects of trauma has become a trending topic among service providers in Houston. Trainings for parents and the Juvenile Justice Probation Department have been held in Harris County as well as Fort Bend County. Recognizing the importance of these types of trainings, Special Youth Services invited Dr. Megan Mooney, a child and family psychologist, to speak to our volunteers about how trauma affects the youth we minister to. Her presentation gave insight as to why many of our kids make the decisions they do. We had a wonderful turnout and our volunteers left with a better understanding of the lives of our youth.
The Special Youth Services family came together with the Church family on February 22 and 23 to witness and celebrate the permanent diaconate ordination of 42 men by Bishop Sheltz at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Sixteen of these new deacons are SYS volunteers! These men, and their wives, were in formation for 5 years and have worked hard to reach the day of their Sacramental Ordination. “Permanent deacons are ordained to the Catholic Church and have no intentions of becoming a priest. Deacons aid priests in their parish duties by visiting the sick, providing spiritual guidance in the community, and acting as a servant of God. In addition, deacons can witness marriages, perform baptisms, preside over funeral and burial services outside of Mass, distribute the Holy Communion, and preach the homily. Deacons hold secular jobs to provide for themselves and their families.”

Among the 16 SYS candidates was our very own Deacon Fernando García. Deacon Fernando has been with SYS for 2 years as one of two pastoral ministers. He has maintained the same enthusiasm for the ministry as he showed the first day when filling out his volunteer application. His joyful, selfless way of being has helped him form strong, lasting relationships with his co-workers as well as provide a holy role model and spiritual friend to all the youth he serves. While presenting the Book of Gospels to each newly ordained deacon, Bishop Sheltz also spoke the words, “Believe what you read; teach what you believe; practice what you teach” and Fernando has modeled that since day one.

Another special day was January 12 when two of our Vietnamese Redemptorist seminarians, Loc Nguyen (BBRC) and Viet Nguyen (JJC), were ordained transitional deacons. In about one year, they will be ordained priests.

SYS is grateful for Deacon Fernando and for all our new deacons. We are proud of their hard work and love they have put into the ministry not only fulfilling their duties, but serving the youth with a Jesus-centered approach of love and understanding.

*https://online.brescia.edu/theology-news/how-to-become-a-catholic-deacon/

**Are You a Priest?**

Would you like to be an on-call volunteer? We have Catholic youth who sometimes ask for their Sacraments such as Reconciliation or Holy Communion. We receive requests usually three to four times a year. There is a facility near you! There is no weekly commitment involved, just a commitment to “go out and make disciples of all nations”. Know of a priest who might be interested? Invite him to join our ministry! For more information, call (713) 741-8739 or email sys@archgh.org.

**The Way of the Cross**

An Archdiocesan-wide event, “The Way of the Cross: An Evening of Prayer for Healing and Purification in the Church” is planned for March 15 at 7:00 pm, when Daniel Cardinal DiNardo will lead the Stations of the Cross at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1111 St. Joseph Parkway. All Catholics are invited to pray with the Cardinal or with their pastor, as every parish in the Archdiocese is requested to pray the Stations together with hope for healing and purification in our Church. For more information, please visit www.archgh.org.
The Fort Bend Juvenile Detention Center in Richmond received a special visit from three “royal” visitors. Following the tradition begun just last year, the facility welcomed the Three Kings on January 11th in celebration of the Epiphany. Volunteer Ray Albrecht and diaconate candidates Harry Pham and William Castro donned the magi costumes and visited each unit. The youth were also treated to a slice of Rosca de Reyes, or Kings Cake, while Deacon Gilbert Rodriguez narrated the story of the magi. This year we also welcomed a new addition to the celebration as Deacon Benny led the group in singing “We Three Kings.” What a wonderful gift this was to the youth as they learned the significance of the visit and the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh of Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar to baby Jesus.

JJC hosted a spectacular Black History Month performance on February 27. Staff and youth put together an event showcasing their talent that included stepping, spotlights, poetry, praise dancing, spoken word, singing, and dancing. They also decorated the 7th floor gym with posters of important African Americans throughout history, such as this one about Rosa Parks. SYS was happy to accept the facility’s invitation to be spectators of a beautiful, entertaining program.

Three years ago, we began hosting Saintly Saturday at Fort Bend Juvenile Probation Department and we are still going strong! This year’s day of praise and worship will take place on March 16th. We are excited to once again be working with a group of young adults from a variety of parishes as well as our Fort Bend volunteers. Please pray for the Fort Bend youth, so that they may receive all the gifts and blessings of the day, all those involved, and good weather!

You may know that “Mardi Gras” means “Fat Tuesday” in French, but did you know that “Carnival” comes from the Latin words “carne” (meat) and “levare” (to remove)? Laissez les bons temps rouler!
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: Maryanne Bartos at St. Bernadette’s for reaching out to our youth on a number of occasions; Fr. Aloysius Nzekwe; Office of Worship for their constant assistance; the Communications Department for spreading awareness of our ministry; and the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

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

The Diocesan Services Fund (DSF) helps all of us fulfill Christ’s mission here on earth by supporting those programs and services that cannot be accomplished by one parish alone. More than 60 programs receive all or part of their funding from DSF and all funds are spent within Archdiocesan boundaries. The broad areas of ministry that receive DSF support include: Catholic education of children and adults; pastoral ministries for the sick, the poor and the incarcerated; the formation and education of church leadership; social service programs such as San José Clinic, St. Dominic Village and Catholic Charities. With your gift to DSF you will receive a free subscription to the Texas Catholic Herald to help keep up with the activities and ministries of the Archdiocese and the Church worldwide.

Special Youth Services is one of the many ministries that is fully funded by DSF and we count on your contribution to be able to provide services to our marginalized youth.

PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED VIRTUS TRAINING
If you have completed VIRTUS training in the past 5 years, do not create a new account in CMGConnect. You will log-in with your previous personal user id from VIRTUS and enter the password 1234. Once you log into your CMGConnect account, you will be able to change your password.

If you do not remember your VIRTUS user id or are unable to log-in, please contact your local Safe Environment Coordinator or Daphne Woods for log-in assistance at 800.228.6108 ext. 2375 or dwoods@catholicmutual.org.

NEW USERS (NEVER ATTENDED A TRAINING BEFORE)
If you have never attended VIRTUS training in the past or never taken the Safe Haven online training, please register to create a new account via CMGConnect at https://GalvestonHouston.CMGConnect.org.

The CMGConnect online training replaces the former Safe Environment Program (VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children”) that was previously offered through our Archdiocese. Individuals are now required to complete all Safe Environment Training online.

Visit https://galvestonhouston.cmgconnect.org/ to register for an online training.

IMPORTANT NOTES
You will be required to complete a criminal background check as part of the registration process. Failure to complete the criminal background check in its entirety will delay the approval process for volunteer service.

Please make sure you enter your legal name as it appears on your Government Issued Id (Driver’s License, State-issued Identification card, Passport, Matricula Consular).
ATTENTION FANS: SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019
STRAKE JESUIT GYM | TIP-OFF @ 11:00 A.M.

PRIESTS vs. SEMINARIANS
Basketball Game
“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:19

COME AND JOIN HUNDREDS OF YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18-39!

TEAMS WILL SERVE THOSE IN NEED,
the sick, the poor, the hungry, homeless, prisoners and immigrants

LET’S BE THE HANDS & FEET OF CHRIST
APRIL 13

AMERICAN FEDERATION PUEII CANTORES
A special announcement and invitation for Catholic choir conductors

Inspire your students!

AMERICAN FEDERATION PUEII CANTORES

This is the year to advocate for the finest music and music education in our Church and schools

2019 Houston Choral Festival & Mass
for Mixed Voice Choirs (grades 4-12)
Saturday, March 30, 2019
Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
1111 St Joseph Pkwy., Houston, TX 77002

Offer your students the most enriching experience available in Catholic music education.

8 Professional Development Credits available for participating school conductors

Visit pcahoirs.org where Festival repertoire, downloadable music and registration information will be posted as it becomes available.
“Julia Greeley, Denver’s Angel of Charity, was born into slavery, at Hannibal, Missouri, sometime between 1833 and 1848. While she was still a young child, a cruel slave master, in the course of beating her mother, caught Julia’s right eye with his whip and destroyed it.

Freed by Missouri’s Emancipation Act in 1865, Julia subsequently earned her keep by serving white families in Missouri, Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico—though mostly in the Denver area. Whatever she did not need for herself, Julia spent assisting poor families in her neighborhood. Her charity was so great that only God knows its extent. She was constantly visiting the poor and giving them assistance from her own slender means. When she found their needs so great that she could not help them with her own goods, she begged for them. Her charity was as delicate as it was great. She realized that white people, no matter how poor, might feel a little sensitive in receiving assistance from an old colored woman, so she went at night to their homes to deliver the goods she had begged, in order to keep the neighbors from seeing her. She had even been seen going thru the streets at night with a mattress on her back. Many and many a time she was seen carrying coal and groceries. Yet she was so poor herself that the city charity department had been furnishing her with fuel and groceries.

On one occasion, a priest of the Sacred Heart parish found her pushing a baby carriage along at night. She had found a poor family that needed it. So she had gone out and begged for it. On another occasion one of the Jesuits met her carrying a broken doll. In answer to his questions, she told him that she was taking it home to fix it up and intended to give it to some child.

Julia entered the Catholic Church at Sacred Heart Parish in Denver in 1880, and was an outstanding supporter of all that the parish had to offer. The Jesuits who ran the parish considered her the most enthusiastic promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus they had ever seen. Every month she visited on foot every fire station in Denver and delivered literature of the Sacred Heart League to the firemen, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

A daily communicant, Julia had a rich devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin and continued her prayers while working and moving about. She joined the Secular Franciscan Order in 1901 and was active in it till her death in 1918.

As she lived in a boarding house, Julia’s body was laid out in church, and immediately many hundreds of people began filing past her coffin to pay their grateful respect. She was buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery (sect. 8, Block 7), and to the present day many people have been asking that her cause be considered for canonization, a request which was finally granted in the Fall of 2016.

As part of the Cause for Canonization, Julia’s mortal remain were transferred to Denver’s Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on June 7, 2017.”

Please pray for the newly ordained deacons and their families; victims of natural disasters; people oppressed by their government; and for a fruitful Lenten Season.

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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:

(713) 741-8739 or sys@archgh.org.