

Gatehouse Blessing: Regina Caeli in Houston

by Fr. William Rock, FSSP.

There were tornado and hail warnings, and it had rained heavily. But that was all the day before. By 10:00 am on Saturday, April 24, 2021, the ground around the outdoor St. Michael's Shrine was dry enough so that Mass could be said there without the faithful having to worry about mud.



The occasion for this outdoor Mass was the blessing of the newly constructed Gate House of Regina Caeli (Queen of Heaven) Parish in Houston, Texas. Once completed and occupied, this Gate House will serve as the rectory and office for this growing Fraternity apostolate. It will also boast of general-purpose rooms and a kitchen.



Fr. Charles Van Vliet, the founding and current pastor of Regina Caeli Parish, celebrated this Mass in thanksgiving for the near completion of the Gate House. The text of the Mass was that of the Queenship of Mary (May 31) with the additional orations for a Mass of Thanksgiving and St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen whose feast it was. During his homily, Fr. Van Vliet explained that the Gate House was named after Blessed Solanus Casey († A.D. 1957) of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) Capuchin.

Because of the difficulties he had with his studies, when he was ordained to the Priesthood, Fr. Casey was designated as a *simplex* Priest. This meant that he was not given faculties to preach or hear Confessions. Because of these restrictions, Fr. Casey was assigned as the Porter of a monastery of his Order in Detroit, Michigan. In this role, he would greet those who were visiting the monastery. As time passed, he became renowned for the spiritual guidance he gave to those he interacted with during the fulfillment of his duties.



The choice of naming the Gate House after Blessed Solanus Casey is a fitting one. As Blessed Solanus Casey was the friar who would welcome those to the monastery, so will the Blessed Solanus Casey Gate House welcome the faithful into the campus of the Regina Caeli Parish; for once all of the constructions on the grounds are completed, the Gate House with its massive gate (not yet constructed or installed) will serve as the entrance to a complex with a church, a day chapel, St. Athanasius Hall (currently serving as a chapel), a school, and other possible buildings as well. The Gate House itself, and indeed the entire the complex, are inspired by the Spanish Missions in Texas.



At the conclusion of the Mass, Fr. Van Vliet changed into a cope and a procession made its way from the St. Michael's Shrine to the Gate House chanting the Litany of the Saints along with its versicles, responses, and prayers. Once those were completed, Fr. Van Vliet intoned the *Vidi Aquam* for the blessing of houses/buildings during Paschaltide.



The schola continued the chant and verses of Psalm 117 as Father and several of the servers went through the building sprinkling Holy Water and filling the space with incense.

Antiphon. I saw water coming forth the temple on the right side, alleluia; and all those to whom this water came were saved, and shall say, alleluia, alleluia. (*Ps. 117.*) *The Antiphon is repeated.* *Ÿ.* Show us, O Lord, Your mercy, alleluia.

Ŕ. And grant us Your salvation, alleluia.

Ÿ. O Lord, hear my prayer.

Ŕ. And let my cry come to You.

Ÿ. The Lord be with you.

Ŕ. And with your spirit.

Let us pray.

Hear us, Lord, holy Father, almighty everlasting God. As at the time of the exodus from Egypt, You protected the homes of the Hebrews from the punishing angel when their doors were marked with the blood of the lamb which prefigured our Pasch in which Christ was immolated, so send Your holy angel from heaven to guard, foster, protect, visit, and defend all who live in this dwelling place. Through the same Christ our Lord.

Ŕ. Amen.

Once he and the servers returned, Father completed the blessing and then added the following, the Capital Campaign Prayer:

Antiphon: Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Ÿ. Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates.

Ṛ. And the King of Glory shall enter in.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who bears the key of David, so that none may shut when you open and none open when you shut, hear the devout prayers of your people who undertake the building of the Blessed Solanus Casey Gatehouse, and grant that we may begin our work under your inspiration, develop it by your grace, and complete it for your glory, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, pray for us.

Saint Athanasius, pray for us.

Blessed Solanus Casey, pray for us.

The Pastor concluded the ceremony by giving a brief history of the progress of the Gate House, how it had been impacted by COVID, disruptions in the supply chains, and weather-related events (including a hurricane and the big freeze near the start of this year's Lent).

The [groundbreaking](#) was held on Sunday, January 26, 2020. Shortly thereafter, on April 20, 2020, the construction contract was signed and, following the preparation of the site, construction began in May 2020. Fr. Van Vliet also thanked the faithful for their generosity both financial – the ~\$2.5 million program has been fully funded by gifts and pledges through a Capital Campaign which was launched on June 10, 2018 – and for the hours spent by volunteers helping with work. Before departing to the Sacristy, Fr. Van Vliet bestowed his blessing on those gathered.

The festivities of the day closed with an indoor/outdoor buffet while members of the Parish's Knights of Columbus council served as minders for those touring the Gate House. The weather, thankfully, was practically perfect for the approximately 170 faithful who attended.



Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, pray for us!

Saint Athanasius, pray for us!

Blessed Solanus Casey, pray for us!

For more information about the parish and to see detailed plans of the anticipated buildings, please visit www.reginacaeliparish.org.

Fr. William Rock, FSSP was ordained in the fall of 2019 and is currently in residence at Regina Caeli Parish in Houston, TX. Photos were provided by volunteers of Regina Caeli Parish.

May 17, 2021

