



## From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

In announcing the suspension of Masses, Bishop Timothy Doherty writes "*Offering special prayers of intercession for the healing of those infected, for the protection of the elderly and infirm who are at greatest risk, for the prevention of the disease's spread, and for the courage and strength of care providers who minister to the sick, their families and those most in need, should become part of our daily prayer offerings.*" One avenue we can follow in our prayers is appealing to the special guardians of people, places, and professions -- patron saints. They are protectors against specific diseases and disasters. Here are some patron saints you might choose to include your prayers:

**St. Corona:** one of the patron saints of pandemics. Ironically, her relics reside in the basilica in Anzu, Italy – located in the middle of the current virus outbreak in that country.

**The Four Holy Marshals:** veneration of these four men [Quirin, Hubert, Cornelius, and Antonius] began in Germany's Rhineland region in the mid-1400s. In the Middle Ages, a marshal was a trusted member of the King's court. As God's marshals, they stood near His throne. They enjoyed near-unlimited access, so were among the most powerful intercessors. They were invoked specifically against disease and epidemics.

**The Fourteen Holy Helpers:** a group of saints venerated together because they were especially effective against various diseases. Devotion to these *Nothelfer* [helpers-in-need] began in Germany's Rhineland region in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in response to the bubonic plague.

**St. Rosalia:** died about 1100 in Palermo, Italy. Five hundred years later, she appeared to a city resident and told him to carry her relics in a procession through the city, and that when the procession ended, the plague would disappear. And it did!

**St. Francis Xavier:** helped St. Ignatius of Loyola found the Jesuits and was their first missionary. He worked in India, Japan, and the East Indies [now known as Indonesia]. He died in 1552 after contracting a fever that was sweeping the region.

**St. Roch** [Roque in Spain; Rocco in Italy]: born in France to a noble family and orphaned at an early age, he made a pilgrimage to Rome in 1315 to care for plague victims. He contacted the disease himself, and with nowhere to go, crawled into the forest to die. He was saved by a mysterious dog who brought

him food from his master's table. Once recovered, he performed many miracles to cure others suffering from the same disease.

**St. Joseph:** during the many years the plague terrorized Europe, individuals, even whole communities, made personal consecrations to St. Joseph. After vowing to honor his feast day, the city of Avenson, France, was spared the plague. Likewise, Lyons, France consecrated themselves to Saint Joseph, and anyone with the plague was healed, and no new cases occurred.

**Blessed Virgin Mary:** to combat our current pandemic, Pope Francis has placed the entire world under the protection of the Mother of God, as a sign of salvation and hope. He's composed this prayer to the Blessed Virgin:

*O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.*

*At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain with steadfast faith.*

*You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.*

*We are certain that you will provide, so that as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.*

*Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the Father's will and to do what Jesus tells us:*

*He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*

*We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

As we pray, we do so with the confidence that God will always respond to a contrite heart and if it is in his will, has the power to cure and protect individuals from diseases.