

The Rock of Montpellier or The Legend of a Lesser Known Saint

By Renee Shea

I have always been fascinated by the lives of the saints. I've even asked a few to intercede in prayer for me in order for me to be granted a few favors. Since several of those intercessions have resulted positively, I am a staunch believer.

One of the really cool things about saints is, there is one for most any occasion. Catholics ask saints to assist in everything from healing, to finding lost items, to selling houses.

Recently, I came across the story of St. Roch (pronounced "rock") who was unfamiliar to me. St. Roch intrigued me, mostly because he is the patron saint of dogs. I like dogs.

Born in Montpellier France, it is said that Roch was born with the image of a red cross on his chest which grew as he grew. He came from power and privilege but gave it all up, opting instead to nurse villagers inflicted with Bubonic Plague.

Eventually, he contracted the disease and retreated into the forest to suffer alone.

Miraculously, within a few days, along came a dog who became Roch's friend and refuge. The dog visited Roch every day, bringing him food from his master's table, and offering comfort.

Roch got better, returned home, was mistaken as a spy, thrown in prison with the dog, and died there. After that, anyone who wrote the letters "VSR (Viva St. Roch)" above their door was not infected with the plague, and the plague eventually went away.

The French considered this a miracle, declared Roch a saint, erected a church in his honor and sculpted statues of him which they erected throughout the land. Although I have found no record of his canonization, when I type "patron saint of dogs" in my search engine (usually *Dogpile*), I find Roch's story, told in assorted versions.

On Saturday, May 9th, Stray Rescue of St. Louis and St. Louis Senior Dog Project will bring several adoptable dogs (and cats) to The Villa. These are mostly furry guys who were found roaming, or starving in the streets during dangerous weather conditions. The two organizations find the animals foster homes, nurse them back to health, and keep them well fed and well loved. Their mission is to find permanent homes for these pets. Some senior dogs or cats (age 4 and up) can be adopted by senior citizens at no charge.

We've invited the public, but you too can invite a friend or relative to this event. Even if they aren't in the market for a new pet, they may decide to take up residence at The Villa.

If they do, it means an extra \$1,000.00 in your pocket for referring them.

That's got to be the best doggone news you've heard in a long time!