

Wednesday, August 18th

Alberto Hurtado: Chile's tireless advocate for the poor

by Pastor Tim, for St. Laika's

Today we tell the story of Alberto Hurtado, a Jesuit priest and founder of Chile's "Home of Christ" movement to provide for the children of the poor. Alberto's father died when Alberto was only four years old. And he and his mother were forced to live with and be shuffled around to other members of his family. Thanks to a scholarship, he began to study with the Jesuits in Santiago. As he grew older he continued with them and was awarded a degree in law. Afterwards, he became a Jesuit. He earned further doctorates in pedagogy and psychology. He began his career as a college professor and priest in 1935. But his concern for the poorest of the poor was never far from him. He began to involve his college students in teaching catechism to the poor. By 1940 he had been appointed executive director of "Catholic Action Youth Movement."



Wealthy Catholic conservatives were angered by the progressive labour teachings of the Catholic Church, and Hurtado ran afoul of them by exposing the unequal pastoral care given to Chile's poor. They accused him of being a communist. He began to construct a series of shelters called "Hogar de Cristo" (Home of Christ), where children in need of food and shelter were taken in. It was said that he used to drive an old green pick-up truck through the streets of Santiago at night, looking for people in trouble and in need of help. He was a person of tremendous personal charisma, and because of that, he attracted many supporters and collaborators in his work. Soon Hogar de Cristo had spread throughout Chile. It is estimated that between 1945 and 1951 more than 850,000 children received some help from the movement.



In 1947 he began a new chapter in his work: that of the trade unions. He founded the "Chilean Trade Union Association." Following the teachings of the Catholic Church on work and workers rights, he trained people to install Christian values in the trade unions of Chile. He published numerous books, articles, and periodicals on labour issues. Always, at heart, a priest, he counselled many, heard confessions, and led many people to a deeper relationship with Christ. He died of pancreatic cancer on this day in 1952 and became a saint in the Roman Catholic Church in 2005.

QUOTE: "I hold that every poor man, every vagrant, every beggar is Christ carrying his cross. And as Christ, we must love and help him. We must treat him as a brother, a human being like ourselves."

SCRIPTURE: In the second chapter of "James" at the fifth verse we read: "Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?"

READING: From "The Foundation of our Love of Neighbour" by Alberto Hurtado: A Christian without an intense concern to love, is like a farmer unconcerned about the earth, a sailor uninterested in the sea, a musician who is careless about harmony. Yes, Christianity is the religion of love, as one poet put it, and as Christ had already told us: "The first commandment of the Law is to love the Lord thy God with your whole heart, with your whole mind, with all your strength;" and then added immediately, "And the second is like to this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself for the love of God." (cf. Mt 22, 37-39).

In this love for our brothers that the Master commands of us, he himself went before us. We were created out of love and when we had fallen into sin, the Son of God became man to make us sons of God (what some even now consider supreme foolishness). In the Incarnation the Word united himself mystically with all human nature.

It is necessary then to accept the Incarnation with all its consequences, by extending the gift of our love not only to Jesus Christ but also to his mystical body. And this is a basic point in Christianity: to forsake the least of our brothers is to forsake Christ himself; to alleviate any one of them is to alleviate Christ, in person. When you wound one of my members you wound me; in the same way, to touch a man is to touch Christ himself. For this reason Christ told us that all the good and all the evil we might do to the least of men, we do to him.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you stumble through our streets in the person of the poor, the hungry, and the sick. Thank you for raising up among us Alberto Hurtado, your servant, who taught us to see you and to come to your aid. Help us to persevere in this work until that day when we will see you in your glory. Amen. May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

New Jersey Gang Member Has Change of Heart, Now Uses His Talents to Serve Others

by Good News Network

A real-life Soprano went from New Jersey gang member to musical star after videos of him singing to patients at the hospital where he worked went viral. 28-year-old Enrique Rodriguez from Central Jersey, now works as a phlebotomist at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and is widely renowned for his musical talent. He began posting videos on his TikTok account, which now boasts over 80,000 followers, of him singing and playing the piano for critically ill patients in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

He left behind a history of violence and crime to help people who are suffering after turning to religion. He said of his turnaround: "I found God at an extremely troubling period in my life and he showed himself to me when I needed him most. I know that God wanted me to care for people just as he cared for me, and the hospital was the perfect place to do that."

It was 2009 when Rodriguez first got involved with gangs after his eldest brother went to prison. The loss of his brother to the jail system meant that Rodriguez felt disconnected from his loved ones, and he went out searching for what he called "the wrong kind of family." He became a 'blood member' of a local gang for three years after being misled by the idea of joining a strong brotherhood and making quick and easy money. He explained: "The gang lifestyle is pure manipulation. They make you feel like they care about you, that they've got your back that you're family; but all they do is use you so they don't have to get their hands dirty."

The turning point for Rodriguez came when he hurt the "wrong person" and a rival gang came after his mother. There were two attempts made on his mother's life before the aggressors were arrested, and Rodriguez believes it is down to God that his mother is still alive today. He added: "I have done a lot of bad things and mixed with a lot of bad people. "I'm just grateful God looked out for me and my family. He has given me the opportunity to start a new life, and music is a huge part of that."

Rodriguez began working in the hospital in 2012 as a housekeeper in order to get a job there as quickly as possible. A year later, he completed training to become a patient carer in the ICU, and now works as a phlebotomist ferrying COVID-19 and blood samples from different laboratories.

He has worked at the hospital for nine years now, and during his career, he discovered that he possessed a raw musical talent. Unable to read sheet music, Rodriguez taught himself to play both the piano and the guitar, and practiced by playing in front of several patients on the ward. Sadly, Barbara Freud, a cancer patient who was one of Rodriguez's first listeners, passed away whilst he was on holiday, but he will always remember the musical bond they shared. He now makes regular visits to patients' bedsides and uses TikTok to live stream his performances to tens of thousands of viewers. Rodriguez plans to grow his following by making more videos and spreading love and happiness through his music.

He said: "I love what I do and I believe my purpose in this world is to help other people. "When I'm singing to these patients I can feel the connection we have and it's wonderful. "There was a time where I was singing to a patient in a coma and he woke up for the first time in weeks. It was a true miracle."

Next week, Rodriguez will travel to Puerto Rico with his church group to give aid to disadvantaged children, and there's no doubt his guitar will be making the trip too.

You can enjoy his musical talent on his TikTok channel:

[Thesingingphlebotomist](#)

Or [here](#) at his YouTube channel..



File this one under, *it's good to laugh*. Speaking about the proposed COVID booster shots, Stephen Colbert said, "the first people to get boosters will likely be nursing home residents and health care workers, who could get the jab as early as mid-September. The options for these autumn shots will be Moderna, Pfizer or Pumpkin Spice."