

FATHER MYCHAL JUDGE

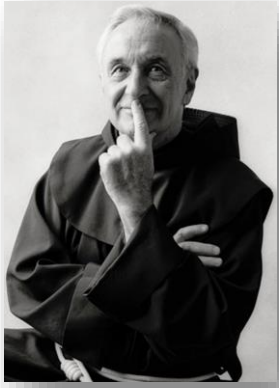
Gay Roman Catholic Priest

(1933-2001)



*"Lord, take me where you want me to go. Let me meet who you want me to meet.
Tell me what you want me to say. And keep me out of your way."*

— Fr. Mychal Judge



Fr. Mychal was a beloved priest who made his way through the streets of New York in his Franciscan robes and sandals at all hours of the day and night. Gregarious and mischievous, he had a knack for telling great stories and bursting into old Irish standards at the drop of a hat. As well-known to the city's mayor as he was to the homeless and the hungry, Fr. Mychal was a streetwise pastor, counselor, and peacemaker very much in touch with human vulnerability. Families wanted their babies baptized by him; firefighters arranged their marriages according to his schedule; and many prayed that he would officiate their funerals – especially gay men dying from AIDS. He left a deep impression on all who encountered him. Fr. Mychal was a regular at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and often spoke about the gift of sobriety. He was also open about being gay with the friars whom he felt he could trust and his friends from the gay Catholic group Dignity/New York, though he lamented in his diary *"I thought of my gay self and how the people I meet never get to know me fully."* He served as Chaplain to the New York Fire Department, and was particularly close to the firefighters of Engine 1-Ladder 24, whose firehouse was across the street from the friary where he lived. They loved him for his encyclopedic memory of their family members' names, birthdays, and interests. On September 11, 2001 he was among the first responders to the site of the World Trade Center terrorist bombing. After declining an invitation to join city officials in a place of safety, Fr. Mychal entered the North Tower saying that he needed to be with his men. He was killed by falling debris after administering the Last Rites to a dying firefighter. For his heroism and dedication to the FDNY Fr. Mychal Judge was given the solemn honor of being designated Victim 0001 – the first recorded casualty of 9/11. Nicknamed "Saint Mychal," he remains an inspiration to many, especially New York firefighters and LGBT Roman Catholics worldwide.

Lesson Plan

LEVEL 1: CONTRIBUTIONS APPROACH

1. Activate Prior Experience: Before today what did you know about the Roman Catholic priest, Father Mychal Judge and his association with the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center terrorist bombing?
2. Read the biographical information on the plaque text (above) and review this link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mychal_Judge.
3. Group Discussion: Being from a poor Irish immigrant New York family, Fr. Judge realized his vocation to priesthood early. Most of his schooling and experiences were in the New York City. Discuss how these factors played a crucial part in his dedication as a chaplain to the New York City Fire Department.
4. Extend Knowledge: After reviewing this link: <http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/Dec2001/Feature2.asp> explain how being a recovering alcoholic and a gay man (within the clergy) influenced Fr. Judge's work with the homeless, recovering alcoholics, people with AIDS, the sick, injured and grieving, as well as gays and lesbians?

LEVEL 2: ADDITIVE APPROACH

1. Explore the many qualities of Fr. Judge that were described in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEeQeROXkml>
2. In the many headlines in newspapers, blogs, and firefighter journals, Fr. Judge is referred to as "The Gay Saint of 9/11" or "Saint of 9/11: Remembering NY Fire Chaplain Mychal Judge, A Gay Catholic Priest at WTC," review the following: http://www.democracynow.org/2011/9/6/saint_of_9_11_remembering_ny and <http://www.believeoutloud.com/latest/mychal-judge-gay-saint-911-chaplain-new-york-firefighters>
What do you think is the significance of using the word, "Gay," in these reports to the society in general, and for the Catholic Church in particular?

LEVEL 3: TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH

1. Review the following links:
<http://manhattan.about.com/od/glbtsce/a/father-mychal-judge-hero-september-11.htm> and
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/25/gay-catholic_n_937205.html. Describe the challenges that Fr. Judge experienced in his lifetime.
2. Here is another resource:
<http://www.npr.org/2011/09/05/140154885/memories-of-sept-11s-first-casualty-burn-bright>. How was Fr. Judge transformed into an exceptional man, who will be remembered in his lifetime?
3. From what you have examined, can you identify any strong influences in Fr. Judge's life that would have led him to the priesthood? To become a Fire Fighter's Chaplain? To entering Ground Zero when all was coming apart around him? What qualities made him the man he was?

LEVEL 4: SOCIAL ACTION APPROACH

1. Fr. Judge is quoted as saying: *"God gave me the vocation considering my person, to be a follower of St. Francis, where I truly believe I fit in perfectly. I've never wanted to be anything else."* What role model today exhibits a passion and makes that difference in the world today?
2. Pope Francis, the leader of the Catholic Church world-wide has said: *"If someone is gay and he searches for God and has good will, who am I to judge them? They shouldn't be marginalized. The (gay) tendency is not the problem...they're our brothers."* Fr. Mychal Judge said: *"It's wonderful. Look at who we are as gay people at this moment in history, as being a gift for the church, to be agents of change both in church and society."* How can you be an agent of change for your own passion in your school?