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.

“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