



St. Roch is the patron saint of dogs because a dog would lick his sores and bring him bread when he was suffering from the plague.

Feast Day: August 16th

Dogs have been known as “man’s best friend” for centuries. For example, there is a popular story from the life of St. Roch (whose feast day is August 16th) that has since earned him the title of “patron saint of dogs.” As well as the patron saint of dog owners.

In the 14th century, St. Roch devoted himself to helping the sick who were suffering from the plague. He visited many Italian towns and eventually contracted the same disease that he was battling. Afraid that he would infect others, St. Roch isolated himself from others by going into a self-quarantine in the forest. There he was slowly dying, but God provided for him by sending him a dog.

This dog would lick his sores and bring him bread each day that he took from his master’s table. This is why St. Roch is often depicted in paintings with a dog. After a certain time had passed, St. Roch was healed of his ailments and then continued his ministry of curing the sick.



Once there he found the city at war. He refused to disclose his identity to the soldiers so that he could remain poor and unknown, having renounced his former life as the son of the governor. But his obfuscation aroused suspicion. He was accused of being a spy disguised as a pilgrim. St. Roch did not defend himself against these charges—wishing to conceal his true (and noble) identity—and instead entrusted himself completely to God’s will.

He was cast into prison by his own uncle, who failed to recognize his nephew’s altered appearance.

According to legend, St. Roch was forgotten and abandoned in prison—but God sent angels to minister to him while he was held in captivity. He died there five years later.

After his death, St. Roch's intercession was invoked when a plague struck Germany in the 15th century. In 1414, during the Council of Constance, the plague having broken out in that city, the Fathers of the Council ordered public prayers and processions in honor of the saint, and immediately the plague ceased.

Time and time again he was invoked during various medieval plagues and is why he is labeled a patron saint of surgeons, invalids, bachelors, diseased cattle, and against knee problems, cholera, plague, skin rashes and diseases, contagious diseases, pestilence, and epidemics.

For dog lovers, St. Roch is a worthy intercessor, who can watch over and protect your beloved pet.

<https://aleteia.org>