In Giving, We Receive

Celebrating 30 Years of Ministry to the People of God by Father Roy Gómez

Edited by
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Extraordinary Catholics Press
Austin, Texas

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Extraordinary Catholics Press
P.O. Box 2386
Austin, Texas 78768

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 979-8-77-625654-7

Raúl "Roy" Gómez was born on December 3, 1945 in Austin, Texas.

Raúl's mother, María Alvina Álvarez (1905-2008), was born in the historic district of Agustín de Iturbide, one mile southeast of the city center of San Luis Potosí, Mexico. In 1913, at the height of the Mexican revolution, Alvina immigrated with her family to Mendoza, Texas, in Caldwell County, where she lived with her parents, Pedro and María Salome Álvarez, her older sister, Epifanía, and her younger brother, Prajedes.



Ormides & Alvina (Álvarez) Gómez on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary, November 1973.

Raúl's father, Ormides Gómez (1903-1992), was born in El Caracol, Tamaulipas, Mexico, 22 miles south of Brownsville, Texas. He met Alvina, and the couple was married in Caldwell County on November 24, 1923. 17 years later, Ormides' 1940 World War II draft registration card stated that he was 5'3", weighed 125 pounds, and had brown eyes, a dark brown complexion and black hair. Employed as a "transient cotton picker" by L.A. Harless, Ormides registered for the draft in the town of Baileyboro, in Bailey County, in the panhandle of Texas.

Ormides and Alvina gave birth to four children in Mendoza, Texas:

- Sanjuana "Janie" Gómez (1925-1970),
- Vicenta (Gómez) Niño (1932-2019),
- José Víctor Gómez (1933-2010), and
- Feliz (Gómez) Martínez (1936-2018).

In 1935, Ormides and Alvina lived in rural Caldwell County with their three oldest children. By the 1940 U.S. Census, they had moved to East Austin, where they and their children lived in the home of Alvina's brother, Prajedes, and his family at 2616 East Fourth Street in East Austin.

Ormides and Alvina then purchased a home at 2511 East Third Street, in the "Flats" of East Austin. The home was located in the neighborhood of Buena Vista, largely settled by Spanish-speaking families moving from Bastrop and Lockhart. United States Congressman Lyndon Baines Johnson spoke of the neighborhood in his famous 1938 "Tarnish on the Violet Crown" radio address, before bringing the nation's first public housing project to the neighborhood of Buena Vista in 1939.

At their new home in East Austin, Ormides and Alvina gave birth to two more children:

- Isabel (Gómez) Gonzales (1944-), and
- Raúl "Roy" Gómez (1945-).

After 32 years in Texas, Alvina principally spoke Spanish at the time of Raúl's birth. Her difficulty in communicating with government officials is expressed in Raúl's birth record, which spells her name as Alfina Alfares, and her husband's name as Armides Gomes. The names of Spanish-speaking children were often changed in U.S. public schools, and, outside his home, Raúl became known as "Roy."

Janie lived with her parents, so Ormides and Alvina helped raise Janie's children, Jesse Gómez and Margaret (Gómez) Arriaga, who, because of their proximity in age to Isabel and Roy, were always considered siblings in the Gómez household.

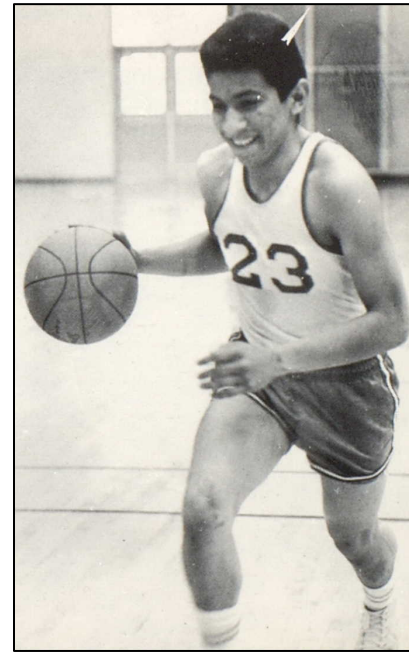


Alvina (Álvarez) Gómez (bottom center) with her children: Vicenta & Victor (seated), Isabel, Feliz, Jesse, Margaret & Roy (standing).

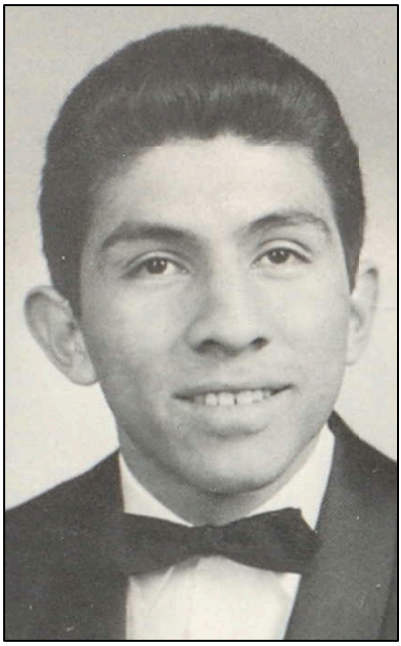
Three years before Roy's birth, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who had come to Texas from Spain, had planted a mission in the family's neighborhood, 1.5 miles southeast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. The *Capilla de Cristo Rey* (Chapel of Christ the King) began as a large home altar in the living room of Cipriana (Sifuentes) Pérez, a midwife and widow from San Luis Potosí. Cipriana remembered the cry of the *Cristero* revolutionaries: "*¡Viva Cristo Rey!*" (Long live Christ the

King), and she dedicated the home chapel to their patron. A large image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, framed with light bulbs, crowned the space. The community that gathered around the image in Cipriana's home quickly grew, and the priests from Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church helped to secure an old barrack from Bastrop, Texas, which they placed on the 2200 block of East Second Street. Roy was baptized in the barrack-turned-church, which framed his childhood religious experience. He celebrated the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion in that barrack, while watching the construction of the large, stone church that was completed just prior to his fourteenth birthday, in 1959. The community joked that the new church was "built of tamales": Under the leadership of the young Father Victor Goertz, the women of the community sold the traditional *masa* delicacies that they made in a "lean-to" that the men fixed to the back of the mission church for their tamale-making operation. Roy's parents were lifelong members of Cristo Rey, and his mother belonged to the Legion of Mary and to the Altar and Rosary Society.

Roy began his public education in the first grade at Lorenzo de Zavala Elementary School in East Austin. After a year at Hamilton Metz Elementary School, two blocks away, he studied at Florence Brooke Elementary School from the third through the sixth grades. Roy's childhood friend, Andrés "Andy" Cantú, remembers, "When Roy and I were in the fourth grade at Brooke Elementary School, neither of us knew the alphabet! My brother, Gilbert, took us to school, and told them 'My brother doesn't even know the alphabet,' so they enrolled us in a program, and they picked us up in a canary yellow bus and took us to Austin High, where a teacher specialized in teaching us to read. She gave us a legal sheet of one-letter words, two-letter words, and three-letter words, and Roy and I had a contest to see who could learn more words. When we got back to Brooke Elementary, they put us in reading groups, and we said, 'Look, we know how to read now!'" Andy also shares:



Roy Gómez on the Johnston Rams basketball team, 1964.



Roy Gómez as a senior at Johnston High School, 1964.

"We grew up a block apart, so we learned to read together, and we learned to pray together. As kids, Roy and I studied catechism classes together with a *cursillista* [one who participated in the charismatic *Cursillo* retreat movement] who didn't know how to read, so we had to read for him! Roy has been a lifelong friend, and he eventually talked me into teaching Confirmation classes for four years at Cristo Rey!"

Roy completed his junior high studies at Allan Junior High, and he graduated from Johnston High School in East Austin in 1964. Louis Cuevas remembers how his older sister, Teresa (Cuevas) Estrada, brought home copies of the *Shiloh* newspaper from Johnston High School, with photos of Roy as a point guard. Louis recalls, "Roy was a pretty good basketball player!"

In January 1966, Roy married Mary Helen Amaro, and they gave birth to two children: Michael Amaro Gómez in 1966, and Michelle Gómez in 1969.



Roy & Mary Helen, with their children Michael & Michelle, on the occasion of Michael's graduation from Sidney Lanier High School in 1985.

After high school, Roy worked at the Paramount Theater for two years before beginning his career in the food service industry at 2-J's Restaurant, an eatery that specialized in small, inexpensive hamburgers at 3914 North Lamar Boulevard. The restaurant's outdoor carousel was popular with children, and the restaurant was a prominent sponsor of "The Uncle Jay Show," a children's program that aired on local television from 1953 to 1977. After Roy had completed a few years at 2-J's, the Ledbetter Management Company, which ran the restaurant, named him a manager at a local Kentucky Fried Chicken. It was the height of the Austin Chicano *Huelga* and the Economy Furniture Strike, which lasted over two years. Strike organizer Tony Quiroz would later remember how the young Roy Gómez often went down to the picket line to support the community members and their families, giving Tony a part-time job cutting chicken, and sharing large boxes of "overcooked" chicken from time to time.

After some ten years at KFC, Roy returned to 2-J's for a time, before being named a multi-unit restaurant supervisor for the Shortstop and Sandy's franchises owned by Ledbetter Management. Roy worked in this capacity until his retirement in 2015.

Possessing an entrepreneurial spirit, Roy dreamed of opening a club with *Tejano* music. He leased a space beside the Holiday House on the 2600 block of Guadalupe Street—the "Drag" at The University of Texas at Austin—and he opened Raúl's, which, though it didn't attract enough support for Tejano music, became a prominent stage in Austin's punk rock scene from 1978 to 1980. Roy shares, "The kids played their music—punk rock music—and they were grateful to have an outlet for their music. Forty years later, they tell me they don't know what they would have done without Raúl's."

While raising and supporting his family, Roy focused less on the church, until the death of his father in 1992. He then began taking his mother, Alvina, to the weekly 5:30 p.m. Mass at Cristo Rey Catholic Church. The Conventual Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Consolation came to the parish in 1991, and one of the friars, Brother Kerry Guillory, had just created the Saint Francis of Assisi Joy Group, a ministry to accompany the elderly, homebound and bereaved. Bishop John McCarthy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin had suggested the need for such a ministry to senior adults, and Brother Kerry embraced the idea with enthusiasm. Brother Kerry remembers, "Roy's parents were among the first people that we visited as part of our Joy Group. He saw the interest that we took in his mom and dad, and I invited him to be part of the Joy Group. He said, 'Absolutely!' It seemed



Roy in the background (third to right) during a 1994 photo to promote the ministry of the St. Francis of Assisi Joy Group, with Bishop John McCarthy greeting Roy's mother, Alvina, surrounded by Rey & Mary Vasquez, Tillie Andrade & Brother Kerry Guillory.

a sort of conversion experience for him, he decided to work with aging people, and he started bringing joy and consolation to other families, just as we had to his."

Roy recalls, "My mother was real active in the church, and, after Dad passed, I knew that she wouldn't remain active unless I took her. Brother Kerry invited me to help Nick Medrano with the hamburger stand of the Men's Club, then he invited me to help the Joy Group."

When Roy attended mass, Father Michael Latrello invited him to serve as a eucharistic minister and to proclaim the Word. He says, "They never had enough lectors, so Father Michael invited me to read during mass."

Dottie Chapa recalls Roy's leadership of the Joy Group: "He always lined us up before funerals, to go into the church together, and he and Brother Kerry always made sure that families had a dinner after the funeral. Roy would tell us what to bring: rice, beans, vegetables or bread—and the family brough the meat, and we served the food at the parish hall. Roy was always there, telling us what to bring, without putting a lot of pressure on us. It was never a burden. In fact, it was a pleasure. It was fun!"

Joy Group members divided up a list of some 80 senior adults who desired weekly visits and communion, and, beginning in 1994, Roy found the necessary time to visit and pray with those on his list, which

often ranged from six to eleven households each week. The ministry snowballed: The Joy Group prayed the rosary at local funeral homes and attended all funerals. It collected fans for senior adults in the summer, and electric heaters for them in the winter. It hosted a Thanksgiving lunch and a Valentine breakfast for senior adults. Brother Kerry remembers, "Roy cooked a Valentine breakfast for the elderly. Bishop McCarthy came twice, and all sorts of elected officials came, like Gonzalo Barrientos and Gus García. Roy knew them, and he helped us get them there. Then, for our Thanksgiving lunch, Roy said that we needed to reach out to those who couldn't come to the parish hall—so we started delivering Thanksgiving meals around the neighborhood!"



Roy, with his mother, Alvina, and sister, Vicenta, during the Joy Group's 2001 Thanksgiving lunch at Cristo Rey Catholic Church.

Daniel Mireles, who recalls attending religious education at Cristo Rey with Roy's daughter, Michelle, speaks with fondness of Roy's weekly visits to his parents, Lupe and Anita Mireles, for several years. Daniel says, "We have many fond memories of Roy's support for our family. He has known my family for over 50 years, and he took communion to my parents for years." Daniel's wife, Susie, adds, "When they couldn't go to church, Roy made them feel like they were still part of the church—and Lupe loved talking with him!"

Dottie Chapa similarly recalls Roy's visits to her father and mother. She says, "He'd always come, to give them a blessing—and he would give us a blessing, too. When Dad was sick, he talked to Dad and blessed Dad, and then he blessed Mom and me, since we took care of him. He later visited mom, too: He'd talk and pray with her, and then he would give us a special blessing, to take care of her."

Louis Cuevas remembers Roy's visits to his mother, Frances Cuevas, his uncle, Andrew Cuevas, and his brother, John Cuevas. "When he brought them communion, he gathered us for prayer. He was a caring, generous soul, a wonderful person!" Louis' niece, Terry Ann Caballero,

adds, “I will always be grateful to Father Roy for his dedication. My grandmother had become bed-ridden, and she knew which days he would be coming over to bring her communion. He never disappointed her!”

Rafaela Leal remembers the affection that her parents, Genaro and Filomena Leal, had for Roy. She says, “They always enjoyed working with Roy, and they thought of him as a dear friend. Dad really cared a lot about Father Roy and respected him very much. When Roy needed someone to help with a funeral rosary, Dad would do it, saying, ‘Roy needs me to do this for him.’ They depended a lot on each other.” Rafaela recalls how the Joy Group gathered on the 15th of each month to pray the 20 decades of the rosary.



Roy Gómez (right) serving as the padrino de anillos *(the godfather of the rings) at the 50th wedding anniversary of Genaro & Filomena Leal, with Fr. Jayme Mathias, 2001.*

With Roy’s support, the Joy Group hosted the largest weekly Sunday breakfast at Cristo Rey for several years, which was a tremendous source of income for the church. The Joy Group hosted trips and pilgrimages for senior adults: With his family responsibilities, Roy was hardly able to escape with them, but the Joy Group traveled to San Juan del Valle and as far away as Georgia, New Mexico and Jerusalem. Brother Kerry shares that Roy was a secret sponsor, helping ensure that senior adults could take advantage of such opportunities.

Tragedy struck Roy's family on March 24, 1994, when his daughter Michelle was killed as a victim of domestic violence. Brother Kerry recalls, "Roy's faith got him through those difficult times. He and his mother were so strong: They even went to the funeral home, to see the body of their son-in-law, who committed suicide after the murder. Most people wouldn't have had anything to do with him, but they visited his family with love and compassion." Roy and Mary Helen assumed the raising of their granddaughters, Elisiana and Alexis, whom they raised as their daughters. Roy became an ardent crusader in Austin against domestic violence, providing counseling and referral information to victims of abuse, and serving as an advocate for SafePlace, a shelter for battered and abused women, for more than ten years. Roy remembers, "I worked with the victims of domestic violence so much that the Travis County Attorney's Office offered me a counselor position. I turned it down, but I've always supported causes that bring awareness to the evil of domestic abuse." Roy recalls with fondness taking in local marches for the victims of domestic violence—and of taking his advocacy to the federal level, where he shared his testimony on the U.S. Capitol steps.

Dottie Chapa recalls the difference that Roy made in her life after the murder of her own son, Adam, in 1998. She says, "Roy knew what I was going through, because he had gone through it. He had the words to help me through it, and he went with us to the Tree of Angels [an annual commemoration of the victims of violence at a local church]. Roy has always been there for all of us."

When Brother Kerry Guillory left Cristo Rey Catholic Church in 2001, he invited Roy to assume leadership of the Saint Francis of Assisi Joy Group. He recalls, "Roy led the Joy Group, with the assistance of Mary Ann Serrano and Pete and Tonie Velásquez. Roy coordinated the Joy Group for over ten years.

Roy also stepped up to lead parish breakfasts, coordinating breakfast groups and ordering supplies, while Tillie Andrade, Rosa Gil and Nellie Reyna did the shopping. Rosa Gil, who helped her family's breakfast group for 19 years, recalls, "Roy made sure everything worked out—and he was always willing to take communion to Nellie and to Ms. Gonzales and to the elderly of the community." Brother Kerry says that Roy was "like Saint Francis: He was always a servant, always working 'behind the scenes'!"

Father Larry Mattingly invited Roy to join the parish's Pastoral Council and Finance Council. He also asked Roy to chair the *Jamaica* Committee, led the planning for the church's annual fundraising festival.

Under Roy's leadership, the parish added a second event, a "*jamaiquita*"—a small festival—at Plaza Saltillo each spring.

In 2001, Roy became part of the initial Board of Directors of La FUENTE Learning Center, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that operated in the two-story school building constructed in front of the old barrack. Within a year, La FUENTE was receiving $200,000 in federal funding each year to provide English as a Second Language classes to community members.



Roy Gómez, 2000.

Roy helped the community in many ways. Antonio Carbajal, a longtime parishioner at Cristo Rey, shares, "I remember Roy with much fondness and respect. He was my boss, when I did a few concrete jobs and sidewalk segments for him. He was always upright in his dealings with others, and I remember his kindness in giving my daughter, Cristal, a job when she was young. He did that to help us out. He is a human being without fault!"

When the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who began serving at Cristo Rey around 1980, formed a support organization for their ministry, Roy was among the first to join the new Salesian Cooperators. He remembers, "Sister Guadalupe Medina told me that she was going to start a new group of Salesian Cooperators, and she asked me to be part of it. We helped the Sisters and supported their ministry."



Roy (center) during a visit to Cristo Rey by Salesian Mother General Yvonne Reungoat, with Celia Velasquez.

Mary Helen "Nena" Quintero, who first started closely working with Roy during their time in the Salesian Cooperators, recalls how Roy involved the women of Cristo Rey in the time-honored tradition of making tamales. "Roy got us everything we needed, and he got us making tamales for an annual sale. For about five years, we made a

bunch of tamales! Those ladies really knew how to make good tamales, and we always sold out!" Dottie Chapa similarly recalls, "We would make 125 dozen tamales at a time. We made the tamales, and Roy cooked a lunch of chicken breast sandwiches in the parish center kitchen."

In 2004, Roy was the first parishioner of Cristo Rey Catholic Church to receive the *Lumen Gentium* Award, an award shared by Bishop Gregory Aymond of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin with outstanding lay leaders of the diocese.

After 15 years of service to Cristo Rey Catholic Church, the Conventual Franciscan Friars left the parish in 2006. They were replaced by Father Jesse Euresti, who was raised in the house beside Roy's uncle, Prajedes Álvarez, on East Fourth Street. The new priest's tone was a marked change from the wholehearted acceptance of the immigrant community previously expressed by Father Larry Mattingly. Father Jesse had no need for La FUENTE Learning Center, which provided income to the parish and much-needed services to the community. Heated exchanged and unfortunate choices of words in reference to the immigrant community led to strikes and cries for justice by Cristo Rey parishioners in front of the diocesan chancery. For nearly three years, the Diocese of Austin attempted to assuage concerns, as Father Jesse planned to retire from active ministry on June 1, 2009. In the end, Bishop Aymond appointed Father Jayme Mathias, President of San Juan Diego Catholic High School, as financial administrator of the parish in January 2009. Roy continued to serve on the parish's Finance Council, which was now struggling to get answers for thousands of dollars of seemingly-personal expenses on the pastor's debit card, for which there were no receipts. The Finance Council demanded Father Jesse's resignation by March 31, 2009. As fate would have it, by 1:00 a.m. on April 1, Father Jayme was fielding calls regarding the pastor's disappearance and suspected murder in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Six days later, Father Jesse's body was discovered, and Roy immediately stepped up to help the parish as it entered a time of grieving and transition to its next pastor, Father Jayme.

Roy played a key leadership role at Cristo Rey during the next two years, while Cristo Rey rebranded itself as "*la Comunidad de las Tradiciones y la Majestuosidad de Misas con Mariachi*" —"the Community of Traditions and the Majesty of *Mariachi* Masses." Cristo Rey grew from 2,300 people attending its seven Sunday masses, to over 4,000 people attending nine Sunday masses, five of which featured the music of a professional ensemble, *Mariachi Cristo Rey*. Roy chaired the Finance Council, served on the Pastoral Council, oversaw parish breakfasts, and led the Joy Group and the *Jamaica* Committee. The activity of the parish during that

time was chronicled in a weekly, 16-page, full-color newspaper that the parish published with the support of its longtime neighbor, *El Mundo Newspaper*. The parish also made plans to build a new office building on the northwest corner of East Second Street and Robert Martinez, Jr. Street, expanding the parking lot on the northeast corner of the intersection, where Father Jesse had moved a temporary portable building for the parish office—plans that were soon scuttled by a disgruntled former employee who was accused of having an inappropriate relationship with Father Jesse, and who summoned Mexican American neighborhood associations to oppose the plan. Ten years later, the lots still sit empty as a symbol of their ill will to subvert the will of the community.

Cristo Rey continued to have its share of conflicts with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin, which now welcomed a new bishop. In April 2011, the parish invited U.S. Congressman Luis Gutiérrez of Chicago to speak on comprehensive immigration reform, an act forbidden by the Diocese due to the Congressman's stance on women's reproductive health. The following month, Father Jayme announced that he would take a sabbatical from Cristo Rey, and that the Conventual Franciscan Friars of Mexico would arrive at the parish in June 2011.

In February 2012, after Father Jayme had learned from Alberto García and Blanca Zamora García of the American Catholic Church in the United States, an Independent Catholic jurisdiction, Father Jayme approached Roy with the idea of bringing the American Catholic Church to Austin. Roy supported the idea and helped planned the first Sunday masses at Father Jayme's home at 1614 Willow Street in Austin, just behind Mission Funeral Home on East César Chávez Street. Coincidentally, the decreasing weekly Sunday collections at Cristo Rey had dropped during previous months, such that the last Sunday for *Mariachi Cristo Rey* at the church was March 6, 2012, allowing for a smooth transition of the *mariachi* to Father Jayme's home masses on March 13, 2012. Roy recruited Mary Lou Piña and Inez Mendoza of the Cristo Rey Joy Group, to prepare tacos, and 19 people appeared for mass on that first Sunday.

The Mexican priests at Cristo Rey immediately saw the nascent community as a threat. Dottie Chapa explains, "Roy just wanted to pray and help others. Our priest got angry that people like Roy were helping Father Jayme. He told a big group of people, 'If you're serving Father Jayme, you can't serve here [at Cristo Rey]. If you're serving there, we don't need your help: Go over there!' And lots of people did, including Roy. He followed his heart and went to Holy Family, where he was more

at peace than if he were part of all the arguing and disagreement at Cristo Rey." Roy remembers: "The priest at Cristo Rey said that if I befriended Father Jayme, I wouldn't be welcomed at any ministry at Cristo Rey. I told him, 'I'm too old for anyone to tell who I can be friends with!'"

At Holy Family, Roy continued many of his former ministries from Cristo Rey: He was part of the Pastoral Council and Finance Council, he coordinated weekly Sunday breakfasts, and he continued the ministry of the Saint Francis of Assisi Joy Group. Rosa Gil recalls how Roy invited her into parish ministry when she visited Holy Family after ten years of separation from the Roman Catholic Church. She says, "He knew that I helped with parish breakfasts at Cristo Rey for years, so he asked me, 'Would you help with our breakfasts?' Ten years later, I'm still helping!"

Roy also played an instrumental role during the transition of the community from Father Jayme's home on Willow Street, to the church's new facility: *Los Dos Laredos* Dance Hall. Owned by Cristo Rey parishioners Ignacio and María Elena Loredo, the hall was seldom used, except for raves. It was located at 8613 Lava Hill Road, off of Highway 183 South, within sight of the extinct volcano at Pilot Knob. Father Jayme remembers, "Roy had a few years on me, but he was running circles around me, muscling the refrigerator and grand piano out of the rectory and onto his trailer. He coordinated that entire move—a lot of work by a lot of folks!"

For nearly nine years, Roy oversaw the finances of Holy Family, weekly visiting the bank with the Sunday collections and deposits. Mary Helen "Nena" Quintero worked closely with Father Roy, volunteering to do the church's bookkeeping for nearly nine years. She says, "I used to call him with questions, and he always had good suggestions for parish finances. I really got close to him and enjoyed working with him."

By the fall of 2012, Father Jayme asked Roy to discern the possibility of serving the Church as a deacon. Dottie Chapa shares that it wasn't a surprise to hear this news. "Roy was always ready to help, whenever. He helped my family long before he was a priest, and he was always someone you could call when you needed help. The way that he talks



Deacon Roy Gómez, January 2015.

to people, and the leader that he is: We expected him to be a priest—and we all thought, 'Roy deserves to be a deacon. He deserves to be a priest!'"

Rafaela Leal similarly shared, "It was no surprise that Roy was ordained. He always enjoyed serving people. That was his gift. It didn't matter what time of the day or night, he was there for people. If you needed someone to pray, he was always available to serve the people. He always wanted to serve God and the people he encountered. When he was ordained a deacon, Dad and I knew that he would one day be ordained a priest. He enjoys helping people! Even when he takes Michael to dialysis, people ask him to pray with them—and he's happy to help them. He has a gift for listening to people and giving them words of encouragement. And he has a knack for telling jokes: If you give him a word or phrase, he can come up with a joke!"

On October 26, 2013, Roy was ordained to the diaconate by Archbishop William A. Johnson at Holy Family American Catholic Church.

While serving as Administrator of Holy Family Catholic Church, Deacon Roy continued to pursue his studies at the Holy Family Theological Institute, often serving at the



Deacon Roy Gómez lying prostrate on the floor during the Litany of the Saints, during his priestly ordination on December 12, 2015, with Archbishop William Johnson, Deacon Angelita Mendoza-Waterhouse, Father Libardo Rocha & Father Cleofas María Cruz.



The newly-ordained Father Roy Gómez, applauded by Archbishop William Johnson (right) & Father Jayme Mathias (left), December 12, 2015.

altar and helping the community in myriad ways. He assisted Father Jayme Mathias, Pastor, and Father Libardo Rocha, Associate Pastor, serving alongside longtime Roman Catholic Deacon Cleofas María Cruz, Deacon John Hubert "Canica" Limón, and Deacon Angelita Mendoza-Waterhouse.

On December 12, 2015, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Deacon Roy was ordained to the Catholic priesthood by Archbishop William A. Johnson at Holy Family Catholic Church.



Father Roy Gómez (lower left) & parishioners of Holy Family Catholic Church, June 2017.

In addition to his sacramental responsibilities, Father Roy led Holy Family's weekly bible study and rosary for nearly five years. Christopher Leal, who served at the altar at Holy Family for four of those years, remembers with fondness Father Roy's leadership of that group. He recalls even walking .6 mile between masses one Sunday to fetch Father Roy a candy bar from a local store.

John Zavala recalls, "We started doing breakfasts for a while at Cristo Rey, when Father Roy was very involved there, but we really worked with Father Roy here at Holy Family. When I began coordinating Holy Family's *jamaicas*, he came to me with recommendations, which made things easier for me. We all looked up to him. He was so involved in the church and was such a great asset to Father Jayme, always helping with so many things!"

Deacon Elsa Yolanda Nelligan, Holy Family's newest deacon, recalls the mentoring that she received from Father Roy. She says, "Father Roy is kind and helpful, always ready to help with any need—and when he can't help, he knows someone who can!"

Waldine Hernández-Gonzales shares, "Father Roy was always there, organizing things at the church, heading the breakfast groups, and always available to help, when needed. He never said, 'no.' There were times when he had difficulty walking—and yet he was out there climbing ladders and painting! He's a tremendous person, always giving, giving, giving, and I always enjoy his stories. During Mary Lou Piña's last years, Leonard and I enjoyed spending time with, and she just loved Father Roy: He was so kind to her, visiting her and praying for her. Their ministry of funeral rosaries really brought them together, and they enjoyed a special friendship." With Father Roy's leadership and Mary Lou's assistance in coordinating volunteers, the Saint Francis of Assisi Joy Group led well over 1,000 funeral rosaries.



Fr. Roy Gómez celebrating mass at Holy Family Catholic Church, with Deacon Johnny Limon (left), Fr. Jayme Mathias (right) & Christopher Leal (back), March 2018.

Volunteer extraordinaire and President of the Holy Family Board of Directors Becky Saenz says, "Father Roy is a true, humble servant of our Lord. He is a great teacher of ministry and has guided me, teaching me all the 'ins and outs' of the mass. I love it when he says that his ministry is to pray for the sick and dying and to provide them food—the Eucharist—for their spiritual journey. I feel grateful and blessed that the Lord put Father Roy in my path in this life!"

Father Roy retired from active ministry on December 31, 2020. He retains the title of Vicar Emeritus at Holy Family Catholic Church, and

he returns to celebrate masses and sacraments at least once each month. In his own words, he feels his mission is to "live a life of service to those who are most in need: the elderly, immigrants, and victims of social injustice." Father Roy says that his greatest satisfaction comes from leading a life of service to others and witnessing the joy they receive as a result of the Church's ministry. As he completes 30 years of ministry to the Church, he shares, "I am grateful for the friendship of all who have allowed me to serve them and to minister to their families. Saint Francis said that 'it is in giving that we receive.' For me, that's what ministry is all about: the satisfaction that we receive in giving!"

Father Roy now enjoys doing odd jobs around the house, helping neighbors, and spending time with his six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



Father Roy's grandchildren & great grandchildren, 2018.

My favorite memories of Father Roy…

Stories I've heard about Father Roy…

Notes on my own spiritual story…

How I want people to remember me…

Other reflections…