

is unambiguously clear in his blame of the corrupt English Clergy for

cast out of Rome after he developed the Plague on a pilgrimage to the city. He eventually wandered into the woods, where a miraculous stray dog licked his plague sores and cared for him until the disease subsided.⁸ The allegorical significance of a plague victim being cast away from the traditional center of Christianity, only to find relief through less than traditional means, cannot be ignored. Gabrielle de Mussis, when noting the role of St. Anastasia played in Plague victims' beliefs, reiterates his previously mentioned dissatisfaction with the Church hierarchy. It is not a priest or other traditional cleric but "a certain (anonymous) holy person" having visions who first encourages people to pray to St. Anastasia.⁹ Furthermore, it seems that many people felt they would be better off praying to a saint rather than relying solely on standard religious practice as "many held the opinion that (by turning away from Church institutions and toward these saints) they could preserve their health against the plague's onsets."¹⁰ As almost an afterthought at the end of his document, de Mussis mentions that Pope Clement VI also issued an indulgence to whoever genuinely repented their sins.¹¹ Clearly, though, clerical and popular imaginations alike had been captured by these new targets of worship.

Michele de Piazza's description of the Plague in the Sicilian towns of Messina and Catania expresses how fanatical saint worship became in some Plague-infected towns. After Messina became infected with Plague, de Piazza suggests most of the Messianese marched to the nearby city of Catania for the relics of St. Agatha. "For we believe," he quotes, "that with the arrival of the relics, the city of Messina will be completely delivered from this sickness."¹² Not wanting to give up their relics, which were presumably keeping them safe from the Plague, the people of Catania wrested the keys to the Church away from the priest who had nearly capitulated to the Messianese and appealed to the town's secular authorities. After a tense stand-off, it was decided that the Messianese would be given holy water made from contact with the relics; the relics themselves, however, would stay in Catania.¹³ Reportedly, the holy water worked as intended and many were cured.

⁸ Gregory Cleary, "St. Roch" In
Appleton Company, 1912, onrenewadvent.org (My te

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with it, but the people of Messina then had to contend with packs of wild dogs now roaming the city. One large and especially ferocious black dog brandished a drawn sword in its paw and rushed around the local church breaking things and terrorizing people.¹⁴ Understandably, people were slightly terrified so they decided to appeal to another local religious figure—the Blessed Virgin of Santa Maria de la Scala. After the townspeople return from the shrine with an image of the Virgin, the Virgin decided the city was sinful and would rather not be there and turned away from the city, causing a large hole to suddenly open up, swallowing the horse carrying the image up whole.¹⁵

De Piazza's description illustrates how important the role of saints during the Plague became. Rather than praying through a corrupt clergy led by a man in city hundreds of miles away, whose actions may have

