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# Mexico's drug 'saint' draws Facebook fans

By DANE SCHILLER HOUSTON CHRONICLE Dec. 30, 2009, 8:18AM

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### • Saint's Facebook page

They ask him to protect them from arrest and safeguard their drugs. They thank him for riches and keeping them alive.

Cyber citizens with a cult-like bent are using Facebook to reach out to Mexico's so-called patron saint of drug trafficking.

Jesus Malverde, the Robin Hood-like criminal hanged a century ago, has a fan page with hundreds of registered visitors.

Requests come steady. Motives are hardly veiled.

"Oh powerful Malverde, protect us from (the feds) and don't let the cops grab us with more than 5 grams of pot," reads one posting.

Another message was posted "from the deserts of Durango," the state with a new wave of violence, including the beheading of five small-town police officers and a prosecutor.

"Thanks to you for how things turned out," it reads, "and how nobody was grabbed."

### 'Highly superstitious'

It is impossible to know how many visitors are legitimate.

Clearly, gawkers and the curious outnumber devotees, but traffickers have a long history of mysticism and believing in higher, darker powers to guide them.

"These people are highly superstitious. They use patron saints, religion, in a very convoluted way for any edge to continue their criminal enterprises unscathed," said Mike Vigil, who retired after having served as the Drug Enforcement Administrations' chief of international operations.

The faith can be dangerous, he said.

"They feel they are invincible and many times they will shoot it out with law enforcement thinking the bullets will not hurt them."

Folklore has it that Malverde was a thief who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. His saintly status is not recognized by the Catholic Church, notes a biography posted on the site.

### High-tech shrine

The Facebook page amounts to an online extension, perhaps for a new generation, of the popular shrine dedicated to him in the state of Sinaloa, home to many top drug traffickers, including Arturo Beltran Leyva, who was killed last week in a gunbattle with Mexican marines.

Sprawled on the floor of a room sprayed with bullets, Leyva's body had an array of trinkets and religious icons around it.

At Malverde's shrine, there are hundreds of candles and photos as well as a few vendors hawking mementos such as leather necklaces with his image on pendants.

Howard Campbell, a University of Texas at El Paso anthropologist, said Malverde's popularity has grown and evolved as has the drug trade.

"Malverde is revered just as are other rebel bad-boy types such as James Dean, (Marlon) Brando and the Rolling Stones," he said.

dane.schiller@chron.com

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FarBeyondDriven wrote:

Are things so slow in the news room that you must waste our time with an article about a facebook page paying tribute to a drug trafficking "saint"? How about a story about the people praying they will make it through another day in Mexico. How about the story of the innocent children caught in the cross fire. How about a follow up on the Soldiers family that was slaughtered after his funeral by the animals you call traffickers. I see you found time to mention Beltran Leyva but forgot about what happened after that. Dont waste our time with this garbage.

12/30/2009 12:49:45 AM

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TheOxycontinCzar-RushLimbaugh wrote:

FarBeyondDriven wrote:How about a story about....


\*\*\*\*\*

Or, how about a story of how we spend billions each year arresting and incarcerating otherwise law-abiding citizens for possession and use of drugs in a failed drug war....


12/30/2009 1:22:42 AM


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**Finkle** wrote:  
The devil can protect them so much before GOD has enough.  
12/30/2009 6:19:47 AM  
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**blkdogg49** wrote:  
i thought they were talking about the mexican government  
12/30/2009 5:29:13 AM  
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**Catharyne** wrote:  
Well I guess the fans of this latest piece of trash would want to suck up to their supplier of drugs . What a poseur .  
12/30/2009 7:03:07 AM  
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 (870)





**scherza** wrote:  
What a great way for the Feds to find these people!  
12/30/2009 11:40:57 AM  
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**Veebot** wrote:  
are these the same traffickers that kill entire families?  
12/30/2009 9:34:28 AM  
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**minty\_fresh** wrote:  
Bobbybooshay - you are so right, micking God is just wrong!  
12/30/2009 9:02:17 AM  
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