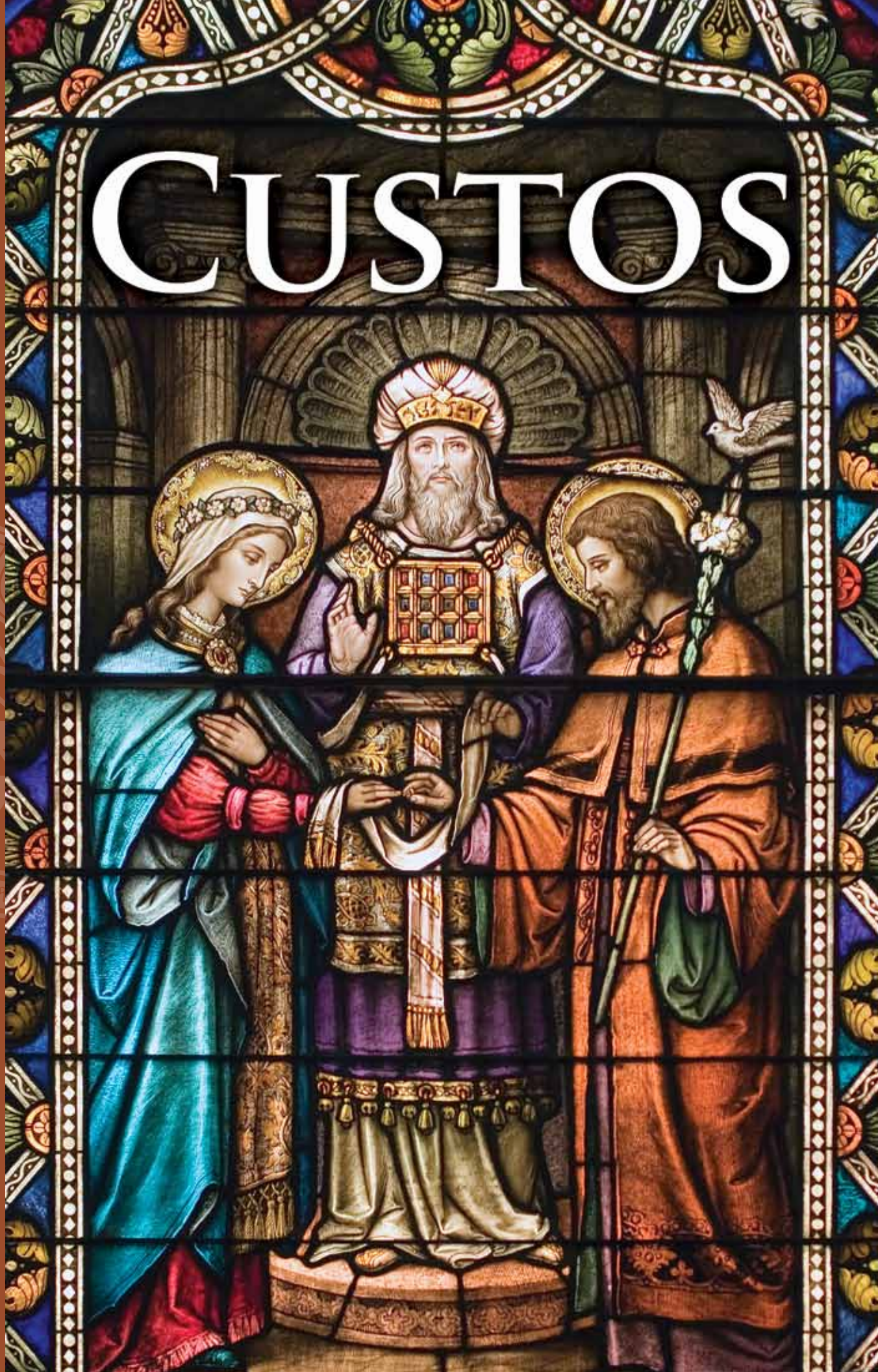


Inaugural Issue

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A publication of the
Oblates of St. Joseph,
Holy Spouses Province,
United States of America

CUSTOS



*"Holy Spouses, pray for
us sinners, our families
and communities, now
and at the hour of our
death. Amen."*



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We are dedicated to sharing the charism of the Oblates of St. Joseph with you through meditations on our Josephite-Marellian spirituality, sound theological reflections, and news and events from our Congregation.

CUSTOS

A publication of the Oblates of St. Joseph, Holy Spouses Province, U.S.A.

The title of our magazine ‘Custos’ is the Latin word for ‘Guardian’ and refers to St. Joseph in his vocation as the guardian and protector of Jesus and Mary.

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Front Cover: Stained glass window from St. Joseph Church, Omaha, NE.
Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).

DEAR FRIENDS OF the Oblates of St. Joseph,
With great joy in my heart, I am honored to greet you through this inaugural issue of our CUSTOS magazine, the new official publication of the religious congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph, Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.). We are coming up on the first year anniversary of our newly united American province, created through the merger of



the former Pennsylvania and California provinces. Great progress has been achieved during the past year in working through the tedious details of all that is involved with a merger of any kind. Our unification is not just something juridical or merely on paper, but the blending of hearts, dreams and goals to better serve the People of God in this land of ours. Much work still needs to be done; but, we are confident that the Holy Spirit is guiding us through the process. We are also blessed with the prayerful support of people like you, who form an integral part of our religious family. This new year of 2014 also marks the 85th anniversary of the presence and ministry of the Oblates of Saint Joseph here in the United States. Our Oblate brothers and priests from decades past have inspired us along the way and bring us to where we are today. Our gratitude to them is to be translated in carrying on faithfully and with renewed zeal the mission of Jesus Christ in the places where we are currently ministering on both the east and west coasts. If the Lord grants us the blessing of an abundance of holy vocations, we may then have the possibility to ex-

pand the Oblates of Saint Joseph spirit to other states and to new people who hunger for the presence of Christ in their lives. Please keep this intention for an increase of vocations to our new Province in your prayers.

Our USA Province is appropriately dedicated to and placed under the protection of the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph. Often we become angry and frustrated when “our plans” are turned upside down, but the Holy Spouses show us by their love of God and their love for each other within the marriage covenant how to be completely open to the Will of God. Their deep faith and love will be exalted and presented as a model for all married couples of today when we celebrate their special feast on January 23rd.

Among the many joyous moments we shared in 2013 as the USA Oblates of Saint Joseph, the most significant was the official visit of our Superior General, Very Rev. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., from October 11 to November 11. He brought into our hearts of each a spark of renewed enthusiasm so that we can better serve you by being more faithful and loving servants of Christ as desired by our Holy Founder, St. Joseph Marelllo. Kindly pray for us as we promise to do the same for you in appreciation for all the loving support you offer to us, spiritually and materially, as we journey together towards the eternal Kingdom.

May the joyful hope that rests in our hearts lead us throughout this new year of 2014 as we will experience God’s presence and blessings in the expected and unexpected moments of our lives.

Yours in the Holy Spouses,
Rev. Paul A. McDonnell, O.S.J.
Very Rev. Paul A. McDonnell, O.S.J.
Provincial Superior, Holy Spouses Province

The Holy Spouses Rosary

This devotion for married couples, single individuals, widows, widowers, and consecrated men and women around the world could have a profound impact on your own spiritual life as well as on our society and culture.

For centuries the Church has been invoking the assistance of our Blessed Mother through the recitation of the holy rosary. It is a prayer which has transformed lives, led to miraculous intercession, and helped billions of Catholics to know and love Mary better. For many people, the rosary leads them to their most intimate reflections on the life of Jesus and Mary.

But the rosary is also an organic prayer. It has been adapted through the centuries in order to help the faithful enter more deeply into the mysteries of Christ’s saving work. The most dramatic recent example of this is probably Blessed John Paul II’s proposal of the Luminous Mysteries, but such adaptations have occurred through-

out the history of the rosary as a devotional prayer. With the attacks on marriage, family and life, it is not surprising that the rosary can help us to combat such evils in our own times.

The Holy Spouses Rosary is just such a tool. Mary and Joseph, the individuals that lived their marital vocation perfectly according to God’s will, can help us respond to the needs of our troubled times by leading us closer to the child they raised, Jesus our Lord. Here we would like to share with you this beautiful devotion so that you too might profit from the assistance of Mary, the Mother of God, and Joseph, the Guardian of the Redeemer.

What is the Holy Spouses Rosary?

When some hear of the Holy Spouses Rosary, they presume that it must be dramatically different from the officially approved devotion known as the Marian Rosary. In fact, the Holy Spouses Rosary is a simple adaptation of the Marian Rosary that does not seek to replace it but to complement it. It is

prayed on the same beads and in a nearly identical manner as the traditional rosary, with two primary distinctions: 1) in the place of the Hail Mary, the Holy Spouses Prayer is used during the recitation of each decade, and 2) ten scriptural mysteries which span the Incarnation and Hidden Life of Jesus are used for reflection and meditation.

Why the Holy Spouses Rosary?

In the nineteenth century, Pope Leo XIII asked the faithful to invoke the assistance of Joseph at every recitation of their rosary. John Paul II reiterated this request in his own apostolic exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*. While a special relationship with Mary is foundational for Catholics, we are also experiencing a new appreciation for entering into the mysteries of Christ through the person of St. Joseph. By including Joseph in our recitation of the rosary, we are not only heeding the advice of the Church—we are discovering that St. Joseph can help us to know Jesus and our Blessed Mother that much more. →

Understanding the Holy Spouses Prayer

The Holy Spouses Prayer is founded on scripture, tradition, and the magisterium of the Church. But since it might not be immediately evident why that is the case, we break down for you here the theological underpinnings of the prayer and why it serves as such a beautiful vehicle for reflection.

Phrase	Explanation and Meaning
<i>Mary, full of grace,</i>	The salutation used by the angel Gabriel
<i>and Joseph, Son of David,</i>	The salutation used by the angel that appeared to Joseph
<i>honor to you Mother of God,</i>	The ancient title the Church gives to Mary
<i>and to you Guardian of the Redeemer.</i>	The title given by the modern Church to Joseph
<i>Eternal praise to the child,</i>	All of our praise goes to Son of God
<i>with whom you formed a family, Jesus.</i>	Jesus is at the heart of the prayer as he is at the heart of the Holy Family
<i>Holy Spouses, pray for us sinners,</i>	We invoke the intercession of Mary and Joseph as Spouses
<i>our families and communities,</i>	Mary and Joseph are also important intercessors for those around us
<i>now and at the hour of our death. Amen.</i>	As in the Hail Mary, we plead for their assistance for our whole life

The Mysteries of the Incarnation and Hidden Life

- 1. The Betrothal** (Mt 1:18a, Lk 1:26-27, 2:4-5a). Before the Incarnation the immaculate virgin and the just man are wedded to each other in true married love.

2. The Annunciation to Mary (Lk 1:28-38). God chooses the virgin Mary, betrothed to Joseph of the house of David, for the miracle of his coming in human flesh.

3. The Annunciation to Joseph (Mt 1:18b-23). God’s design is for Mary’s husband, the just man of the house of David, to continue with their plans to form a home together.

4. Joseph Takes Mary his Wife into his Home (Mt 1:24-25). The Son of God depends upon a chosen human father, committed in a virginal marriage, to provide a loving, caring, and wholesome home for him.

5. The Birth of Jesus (Lk 2:6-16). The Son of God is born in the poverty of a stable in the town of David, received by the love of the humble Holy Spouses, and adored by poor shepherds.
- 6. The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus** (Lk 2:21). The covenant of Abraham and the law are brought to fulfillment and the Holy Spouses give him the name they received from the angel, Jesus.

7. The Presentation of Jesus (Lk 2:22-35). As the Holy Spouses rejoice at Simeon’s prophecy of light for the nations and they grieve at the thought of the sword of rejection.

8. The Flight to and Return from Egypt (Mt 2:13-15). Returning from Egypt, the Son of God establishes the New Covenant, leading us from the slavery of sin into the new promised land, his kingdom.

9. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:41-50). When Jesus stays behind in the temple, his parents, Joseph and Mary, are confronted with the mystery of Jesus’ reference to his “Father’s house.”

10. The Hidden Life at Nazareth (Lk 2:51-52; 3:23). For thirty years, Jesus lives obediently to his parents in an ordinary, hidden life of prayer, family, and work, before beginning his public ministry, calling us to also find holiness in the ordinary.

By reflecting on the lives of Mary and Joseph through the lens of their vocation to marriage, we also gain a new appreciation for how they can be models for us. Married couples can learn to appreciate and imitate their total self-giving and sacrificial service to one another. Single people can grasp better the commitment to virginity and celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom that both Mary and Joseph embraced. Consecrated men and women see in Mary' and Joseph's total commitment to one another and to Jesus an example of their own total consecration to Christ. In short, the Holy Spouses are patrons for Christians in all walks of life, because they lived out so well their own vocation.

Praying the Holy Spouses Rosary

At the heart of the Holy Spouses Rosary is the Holy Spouses Prayer, patterned after the form of the Hail Mary:

Mary, full of grace, and Joseph, Son of David, honor to you Mother of God, and to you Guardian of the Redeemer. Eternal praise to the child, with whom you formed a family, Jesus. Holy Spouses, pray for us sinners, our families and communities, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Along with this special prayer are ten mysteries of the Incarnation and Hidden Life of Jesus which can

be found on page 3. Not surprisingly, many of these are the same as the Joyful Mysteries, since the Joyful Mysteries also encompass the events around the incarnation, birth, and childhood of Jesus.

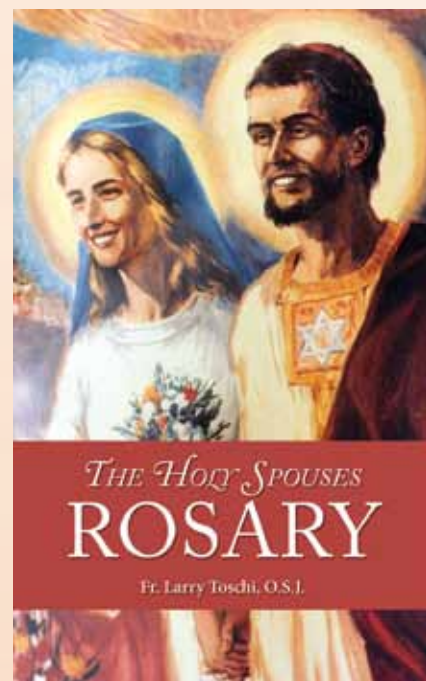
With all of the above in mind, if you know how to pray the Marian Rosary, you can easily pray the Holy Spouses Rosary: we begin with the introductory prayers of the Sign of the Cross, the Apostles' Creed, one Our Father and three Hail Mary's, and the Glory Be. Then select five of the mysteries above to meditate on (a simple way to do this is to choose mysteries 1-5 or 6-10). As you recite each decade using the Holy Spouses Prayer, meditate on the mystery of each decade, reflecting on how the Holy Spouses are calling you to grow in love and service of Jesus.

A prayer for you!

The Holy Spouses Rosary is not meant to replace the Marian Rosary. God knows how important the Marian Rosary has been for so many people through the ages, and this must certainly continue in your own devotion life. But since the Holy Spouses Rosary is a tool that you can also use in your prayers to Mary, we recommend you consider praying it in place of your daily rosary occasionally. It will help you incorporate St. Joseph more into your recitation of the

rosary and to meditate on the life of Jesus through the eyes of the two people closest to him.

As you are no doubt aware, the Province of the Oblates of St. Joseph in the United States has been placed under the protection and patronage of the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph. This fact places this devotion in a special place in our lives. We want to share this devotion with you so that you might grow in your love and appreciation of the vocation of Mary and Joseph and their unique relationship to Jesus. May the Holy Spouses lead you to greater trust and confidence in Jesus!



For more history, reflections, and meditations on the Holy Spouses Rosary, we invite you to check out our book with the same title. Go to osjusa.org/rosary to get it.

Superior General Visits the U.S.A.

by Very Rev. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J.

From October 11 to November 11, 2013, Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., Superior General of the Oblates of St. Joseph conducted his canonical visit to all the communities of the Holy Spouses Province. What follows are some of his observations on the Oblates' work in the United States.

From October 11 to November 11, 2013, I carried out, along with my General Councilor, Fr. Brian Crawford, the Canonical Visit to the new "Holy Spouses Province" in the United States of America. I would like to share with all of you some of the aspects of this Province so that we might feel ever more united as a Family.

In the Province much importance is given to Youth Ministry, the apostolic charism of the Congregation. We met with the parish youth groups: it is always a pleasure to enter into the "world" of youth and to listen to their struggles and hopes for a better future. I presented to them the youthful enthusiasm of St. Marelo, which was then carried out always and everywhere in seeking "the interests of Jesus." Our confreres work with both English and Spanish speaking groups and facilitate the integration of the different cultures and sensibilities. The Province has a modern and large Marelo Youth Retreat Center in Loomis, CA, which is also available for use by the local dioceses.

I had the pleasure of meeting with the O.S.J. laity both in Pennsylvania and in California. I noted with pleasure their sense of belonging to the Family of Marelo and the love and respect which they have for our confreres who seek to pass on to them our Josephite-Marellian Spirituality and Charism. The formation conferences which we had with them were much appreciated and received with great openness. As a sign of solidarity with the social

works of the Congregation, they offered generous donations for our missionary projects.

The Holy Spouses Province for many years has emphasized the formation of some Laity who are committed with great love to live with greater intensity the Josephite-Marellian

spirit according to the indications found in our Constitutions. Presently there are five officially recognized Lay Associate Members, and others are in formation in order to be admitted. In the special meeting I had with them, I noted the serious nature of their conviction to be a part of the Oblates in

Let us ask for the help of our Founder St. Joseph Marelo so that the ministry of our American confreres will help in the human, spiritual and social growth of the people entrusted to them.

order to live their lay vocation in the spirit of our Founder.

For many years one of the important characteristics of our parishes, both in Pennsylvania and in California, is the religious and social ministry among Spanish speaking immigrants. Already all of the confreres must be bilingual, as also the liturgical celebrations, catechesis, parish groups and assistance in the parish office. Many of these immigrants are undocumented and have no fixed home and work. Our confreres, with the assistance of the laity, do all that they can to help these brothers and sisters who have left their home countries and culture in search of a better future, hoping to become a part of the society in the United States. This is a ministry which is not only social, but also religious, so as to maintain the Catholic faith and help them to reject the pressure coming from numerous other religious denominations. I visited the soup kitchen for the poor in our parish in Madera: it is impressive to see the number of people who are served (at times up to 500 a day) and the love with which the assistance is offered.

Another important initiative of the parish in Madera (population of almost 70,000) is the St. Marelllo Bookstore. In a very spacious setting they sell books, religious articles, CD and all things useful for Catholic devotion. This is also a wonderful ministry which our confreres offer following the example and in the spirit of the Founder.

Some of the socio-religious issues which the confreres are facing in their ministry include abortion, contraception, the culture of death, and families in crisis. In defense of Christian values they present the figure of St. Joseph, "Protector of Life," and in a special way, "Protector of the Unborn." They have nurtured for years now this popular devotion, followed by many, some to spread the devotion and others who, conscious of the grave sin being committed, join together for the defense of life. The center for this devotion is the Shrine of "St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer," in

Santa Cruz, CA. In the gardens surrounding the Shrine is found the life-sized statue of St. Joseph, seated on a bench with a human fetus held in his fatherly hands. The affectionate and tender gesture of St. Joseph makes one think of the sacredness of life and of children as God's gift to humanity.

The confreres are also committed to spreading devotion to the Holy Spouses, Joseph and Mary, made up of prayers and meditations on Christian family values. In this way, they witness to the Church being close to troubled families.

Let us invoke upon our "new" Province in the United States of America the protection of Our Lady of Sorrows, Mother of our Congregation and of our vocation, so that she might intercede to the Lord for our confreres and for good and holy vocations to the Religious Life and the Priesthood. Let us ask our Protector St. Joseph, master of the spiritual life and the apostolic life, to cover with his fatherly mantle our confreres who call upon him, along with the Christian faithful, as Protector of life and of unborn children. Let us ask for the help of our Founder, St. Joseph Marelllo, so that the ministry of our American confreres will help in the human, spiritual and social growth of the people entrusted to them. May the Servant of God, Fr. Joseph Calvi, by his holy life and example, inspire the Oblates of St. Joseph living and working in the U.S.A. May they persevere on their journey of faithfulness to their vocation so that they might truly become Carthusians indoors and Apostles outdoors.

As always, and truly, I say to myself: how can I not be proud to be an Oblate of St. Joseph, witnessing the life and ministry of our confreres in the Holy Spouses Province?

Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., serves as the Superior General based in Rome, Italy at the Generalate of the Oblates of St. Joseph.

Facing page: The Holy Father, Pope Francis, greets Fr. Piscopo at the Synod Hall in the Vatican on November 27, 2013.



“The Gospel of Joy”

by Rev. Gregory Finn, O.S.J.

St. Joseph Marelllo was a master catechist and faithful interpreter of the magisterium of the Church. In that spirit, Fr. Gregory Finn shares with us in this and upcoming installments his reflections on magisterial teachings and on catechetics.

LAST NOVEMBER OUR Holy Father Pope Francis, published his first Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, meaning “The Gospel of Joy.” His intention is clearly to

carry us back to the heart of the message of Christ our Savior and the effect it is supposed to have upon our lives. It would appear that our Holy Father is well aware, as our we, that all too often those who claim to be Christians, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t seem to be people just overflowing with a spirit of joy and happiness for having been touched by His grace. Just the opposite! At times Christians appear angry, disgruntled, negative,

frustrated, dour and sad. We have all met such people, even in church, and the mass media has practically made a universal stereotype of the mean grumpy Christian—something that would be hard to get away with if there were not some basis for it. Maybe we cringe whenever we see Christians portrayed in such an unfriendly way, and thus made fun of or dismissed as crackpots or malcontents. However, we also need to examine ourselves and see whether



the reasons worldly people see us as so unhappy is because that is what we project. If that’s so—and our Holy Father is bold in suggesting that maybe it is—then something has to be done about it.

Pope Francis begins his Exhortation: **“The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.”**

The Pope reminds us that Jesus and all He did and taught are to have the effect of creating joy. Where Jesus genuinely enters a life, the joy of God enters with Him. Where His truth is understood, joy is embraced. Where His paths of goodness and love are practiced, joy is the fruit. Where even His cross and sacrifice touch our lives with struggle and pain, joy still seeps through. In essence, to know God and genuinely know His grace cannot but be the cause of joy, for it is the very nature of God and His essential purpose in all of this to do so.

Strangely there are Christians who have never been taught that the love of God is supposed to be

a source of joy for us—that God wants His children to be happy. However, that is the truth! The delight of God is to give life to His children, and to restore it if it is lost, to save them, to redeem them to walk with them, to lift them on high. This delight should reverberate in us and lead to joy—God intends it.

Yet there are so many Christians who apparently don’t experience joy, and certainly don’t seem to show it or live it. Why? Well, in part it seems almost too good to be true. Maybe also because we were never taught to look for it, and thus make little of it, overlook it, distrust it if we seem to experience it, and instead seek elsewhere for it. This could get us into trouble. For if we start to seek elsewhere for joy, it usually means someplace other than in God or in what He provides. Pope Francis goes on:

“The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too.

Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.”

Where do we go to find joy if not in God? We become selfish and self-centered. We look for joy in passing things and in places where it doesn’t really last or even isn’t really there. That can only lead to unhappiness and frustration. Here perhaps we begin to understand the grumpy Christian—a person who believes in Jesus, but doesn’t know well His joy, but does seem to seek it elsewhere. For that person our Faith becomes more a question of doctrines and rules, but what gives quality and meaning and joy to life, comes from other things that often disappoint—thus that person lives a sour life as a follower of God. Our Holy Father wants to get us back on track and deep into the real heart of Jesus’ salvation and truth and to experience His joy. The rest of the Pope’s exhortation will warn us of dangers, but also encourage us in the midst of a difficult time in the world. We will, in future articles, look more closely at what he says.

Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J., is the pastor of Holy Annunciation parish in Hazleton, PA.

Homily of Pope Francis to Youth

These are the inspiring words of Pope Francis to youth in the final Mass of World Youth Day at Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach, July 28, 2013.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

"Go and make disciples of all nations." With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: "It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others." Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission! Today, in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve.

1. Go. During these days here in Rio, you have been able to enjoy the wonderful experience of meeting Jesus, meeting him together with others, and you have sensed the joy of faith. But the experience of this encounter must not remain locked up in your life or in the small group of your parish, your movement, or your community. That would be like withholding oxygen from a flame that was burning strongly. Faith is a flame that grows stronger the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ,

the Lord of life and history (cf. Rom10:9).

Careful, though! Jesus did not say: "if you would like to, if you have the time", but: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church,

Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent.

and that includes you; but it is a command that is born not from a desire for domination or power but from the force of love, from the fact that Jesus first came into our midst and gave us, not a part of himself, but the whole of himself, he gave his life in order to save us

and to show us the love and mercy of God. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, but as free men, as friends, as brothers and sisters; and he not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love.

Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love...

2. Do not be afraid. Some people might think: "I have no particular preparation, how can I go and proclaim the Gospel?" My dear friend, your fear is not so very different from that of Jeremiah, a young man like you, when he was called by God to be a prophet. We have just heard his words: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a

youth". God says the same thing to you as he said to Jeremiah: "Be not afraid ... for I am with you to deliver you" (Jer 1:7,8). He is with us! "Do not be afraid!" When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: "I am with you always" (Mt28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus does not leave us alone, he never leaves you alone! He always accompanies you.

And then, Jesus did not say: "One of you go," but "All of you go": we are sent together. Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had. Jesus did not call the Apostles to live in isolation, he called them to form a group, a community. I would like to address you, dear priests concelebrating with me at this Eucharist: you have come to accompany your young people, and this is wonderful, to share this experience of faith with them! But it is a stage on the journey. Continue to accompany them with generosity and joy, help them to become actively engaged in the Church; never let them feel alone!

3. The final word: serve. The opening words of the psalm that we proclaimed are: "Sing to the

Lord a new song" (Psalm95:1). What is this new song? It does not consist of words, it is not a melody, it is the song of your life, it is allowing our life to be identified with that of Jesus, it is sharing his sentiments, his thoughts, his actions. And the life of Jesus is a life for others. It is a life of service. In our Second Reading today, Saint Paul says: "I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more" (1 Cor9:19). In order to proclaim Jesus, Paul made himself "a slave to all". Evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.

Go, do not be afraid, and serve. If you follow these three ideas, you will experience that the one who evangelizes is evangelized, the one who transmits the joy of faith receives joy. Dear young friends, as you return to your homes, do not be afraid to be generous with Christ, to bear witness to his Gospel. In the first

Reading, when God sends the prophet Jeremiah, he gives him the power to "pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). It is the same for you. Bringing the Gospel is bringing God's power to pluck up and break down evil and violence, to destroy and overthrow the barriers of selfishness, intolerance and hatred, so as to build a



Pope Francis embraces a young boy from the crowd while in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during World Youth Day celebrations.

new world.

Jesus Christ is counting on you! The Church is counting on you! The Pope is counting on you! May Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, always accompany you with her tenderness: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Amen.

Find Your Mission

by Rev. John Shearer, O.S.J.

THIS PAST SUMMER, many Oblates and the youth we serve were blessed with the opportunity to attend World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro with Pope Francis. It was such an uplifting experience to be there worshipping the Lord with so many young people from around the world. While we were there, our Holy Father commented on the gift of our particular vocation. He said, "God calls you to make definitive choices, and he has a plan for each of you: to discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move toward personal fulfillment. God calls each of us to be holy, to live his life, but he has a particular path for each one of us." Finding our personal vocation is our key to being happy in this life and the next. The Lord has given each of us special gifts and talents that are to be used for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

As Oblates of St. Joseph, we strive to help the people we serve to discover and live out their particular vocations. It can be difficult to hear the Lord calling with all of the distractions in our world today, but since our happiness and fulfillment are dependent on us making



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"With new beginnings comes great enthusiasm!"

good and holy choices regarding our path in life, it is worth the effort.

As vocation directors, Fr. Sergio and I are here to help young people find their special mission. We especially pray that the Lord will send many young men to our religious community so that they can experience the joy of living a life of holiness and service in our Oblate family. This is a time of new beginnings in our Church and province, and with new beginnings comes great enthusiasm! If you sense the Lord calling you to serve Him in imitation of

St. Joseph, we invite you to contact us and see if the Lord has chosen you.

Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J. and Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J. serve as vocation directors of the Holy Spouses Province.



Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J. and Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J. (vocation directors of the Holy Spouses Province of the Oblates of St. Joseph) with participants of a recent vocation retreat.

"A blind date with Jesus..."

by René Vargas

In November 2013, the Oblates of St. Joseph held their first vocation retreat as a new Province at Mount St. Joseph in Loomis, CA. One of the retreatants from that weekend reflects here on his experience.

BEFORE THE RETREAT last November, I was very nervous but at the same time I was very happy because I was going to spend an entire weekend with Jesus. I prepared myself by wearing my best spiritual outfit (being in God's grace) and taking my heart, mind, and soul as the "present" that I was going to offer to Jesus. When I was on my way to Mount St. Joseph Seminary I felt like I was waiting on a bench for Jesus to come and I was there thinking of all the beautiful things that He had prepared for me.

When we finally arrived at the seminary, I was able to experience a peaceful and warm welcome from the Oblate priests, from Brother Mat, and from the other retreatants. When I finally entered the presence of our Lord during Benediction I knew that my blind date with Jesus had started. In the first night I experienced a similar calling as Samuel (1 Samuel 3:2-11). After spending a few minutes in prayer I was finally able to go to sleep and end my first blind date with Jesus. In the second day which was a day full of emotions, I experienced happiness, peace, love, compassion and friendship. I never thought that the priests would be so much fun and project so much brotherhood between them and also towards us. In this second day I was able to work with the priests: not just physically but also spiritually. These were the moments that got me thinking about the possibility of saying yes to entering the



seminary. The entire day I was able to reflect on the life of a seminarian and if this was the right vocation for me. I have never felt so much joy in my life.

There was a specific time in this retreat when I asked God: "Where do you want me to serve you? What do you want me to do with my life?" After having a moment of silence with Jesus and meditating on what He wants from me, I started walking around the seminary grounds. I found a tree and decided to spend the rest of my meditation time under that tree. When I got to the tree I noticed that there was a cross on the ground. As I paused before this cross, it was at that time that I knew for sure that God wants me to dedicate my life to serve him as a priest. When I got up and started walking back to meet the other retreatants, it was then that I realized that the cross was actually the start of a Rosary path laid out on the ground. Not only was God with me, but also the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe! I felt overcome with joy and the knowledge of what God wanted me to do with my life.

With the grace of God, I know that one day I will be a seminarian and will be able to have a deeper relationship with God. At this moment of my life I am open to any plans that God has for me. I will continue praying for my vocation, for the vocations of my brothers that attended the retreat, and for priests around the world so that they may continue projecting the love of Christ our Savior and especially for the Oblates of St. Joseph.

Please pray for René and for all those men contemplating a vocation to the Oblates of St. Joseph. With our assistance, may they follow God's plan for them!

United by the Holy Spouses

by Elaine Fisher

Many changes and new beginnings took place this year for the Oblates of Saint Joseph California and Pennsylvania Provinces...including among the laity!

WE ARE NOW the Holy Spouses Province U.S.A. The Josephite-Marellian Laity Association, better known as "SLJM", has been working together since the beginning of this year getting acquainted to create unity and spirituality among all laity members.

In our journey of faith, we have been asked by our Superior General, Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J. to not only assist our local neighbors and communities; but to go the extra mile in the "Year of Faith" and help support the building of a school in Nigeria. As our first combined project as a united Province, we raised \$5,500 which was presented to the Superior General on October 26th at the annual O.S.J. Laity gathering in Santa Cruz, CA.

What better way to maintain our spiritual connection as one Oblate family in the U.S.A. than to pray for each other. SLJM created prayer cards of all of the Oblates and SLJM officers in our Province. The cards



include a picture and a few words about each. They were to be distributed to all SLJM members.

As a sign of our unity in both the East and the West, it has been decided to begin each meeting with a decade of the Holy Spouses Rosary. Despite the great geographical distance between us we remain very close in heart and prayer.

In our efforts to establish greater unity among us as laity of the Oblate family, a pilgrimage was organized in mid-September

2013, allowing the possibility for our friends in California to better understand the presence of the Oblates of St. Joseph in Pennsylvania. It proved to be a wonderful experience for all. Plans are now underway in organizing a similar trip for our East Coast friends to visit California in the near future!

Blessings to everyone as we remain united by the Holy Spouses.

Elaine Fisher serves as president of the O.S.J. Laity in Pennsylvania.

Pilgrimage to Pennsylvania

Karen Chappellear

FOR EIGHT DAYS (September 15th to 22nd), friends of the Oblates of St. Joseph from Granite Bay, Madera, Bakersfield and Sacramento, CA, travelled as pilgrims to the East Coast. We shared our Catholic faith, prayer and the Eucharist as lay members of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.). This unique travel experience to Pennsylvania combined prayer, educational opportunities, and social interaction. We took an historical look at the Oblates of St. Joseph and their arrival to America in 1929. After listening to a presentation from Fr. Paul McDonnell on the 84 year presence of the Oblates of St. Joseph in Pennsylvania, we toured the building and properties currently and formerly administered by the Oblates of St. Joseph. We prayed at the graves of deceased Oblate priests and brothers at St. Rocco's cemetery. We also had an opportunity to experience the history of coal mining as was lived in the early twentieth century with visits to Eckley Miners Village and a trip down into the Lakawanna Coal Mine.

We left Pennsylvania for a day to visit New York City, including St. Patrick's Cathedral, the 9/11 Memorial, and the annual San Gennaro festival in "Little Italy," which gave us insight into the city's history and heritage. Other places visited included Amish country in Lancaster, PA. Before returning to the West Coast, our final stop on the tour was Philadelphia, the "City of Brotherly Love." This last visit served as a perfect conclusion to a pilgrimage that demonstrated the bond of the larger family of brothers and sisters affiliated with the Oblates of St. Joseph.

Karen Chappellear is a member of the O.S.J. Laity of the Loomis / Granite Bay chapter, who assisted in coordinating the California pilgrimage to Pennsylvania.

Top: The pilgrims from California gather for a group photo at St. Joseph Marellio Parish in Pittston, PA. Right: An image of San Gennaro from the festival in New York, NY.



News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA

■ In August and November, friends of our Shrine community offered fond farewells to OSJ confreres who faithfully served in Santa Cruz and the surrounding area: Fr. John Warburton, former CA provincial superior & shrine rector, currently assigned to St. Joachim's Parish, Madera, as pastor & rector of the religious community; Fr. James Catalano, administrator of St. Vincent De Paul Parish, Davenport, and associate shrine director, now assigned as parochial vicar at St. Joachim's Parish, Madera.; Bro. David Pohorsky, sacristan and maintenance supervisor, recently assigned to serve at Mount St. Joseph, Loomis.

■ Warm welcomes were extended over the summer and fall months to the Oblates of St. Joseph newly assigned to the Shrine and religious community: Fr. Paul McDonnell, provincial superior & shrine director; Fr. Jackson Pinhero, administrator of St. Vincent De Paul Parish, Davenport, and associate shrine director; Bro. Marcello DiNardo, who, after serving 10 years at our General Headquarters in Rome, Italy, has returned to Santa Cruz to assist with daily duties of the religious community.

■ Members of the Josephite-Marellian Lay Society (SLJM) of California, formerly known as the "Family of St. Joseph", were hosted on Saturday, October 26th, for their annual day of prayer and recollection. Principal celebrant for

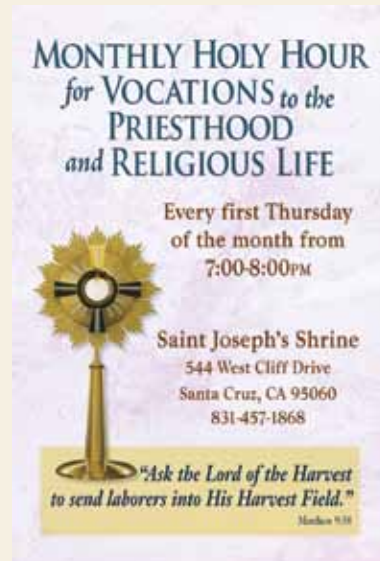
the Mass was Very Rev. Michele Piscopo, OSJ, Superior General of the Oblates of St. Joseph. Inspirational talks were presented afterwards to the over 100 participants by the Superior General and Fr. Brian Crawford, general counselor of the Oblate Congregation.

■ The conclusion of the "Year of Faith" was celebrated on the Solemnity of Christ the King (Nov. 24) with Mass and afternoon exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The day ended with the communal praying of vespers and Benediction.

■ Appreciation was expressed to all Shrine volunteers for their time and dedication with an enjoyable Christmas dinner party on Sunday, Dec. 15th, at a restaurant located on the Santa Cruz pier.

■ Christmas Day welcomed various visitors from near and far to the Shrine's 11:00am Mass celebrating the Birth of Christ. Following the solemn celebration, Christmas greetings were exchanged between old and new friends alike.

■ Monthly Vocation Holy Hour begins on January 2nd and will continue at the Shrine every first Thursday of each month from 7:00 to 8:00pm. The Holy Hour includes exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, praying of the rosary with vocation-theme meditations, Scriptural reading and reflection, general intercessions and Benediction. Friends of the Shrine and the surrounding communities are invited to this monthly holy hour to pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially to our Oblate USA province.



■ For the first time ever, a nine-day spiritual preparation from January 14-22 is planned for the Feast of the Holy Spouses (Jan. 23) at the daily morning Masses. Meditations will be offered on each of the mysteries of the Holy Spouses Rosary as outlined in the recently published book by Father Larry Toschi, O.S.J.

PITTSTON, PA

■ The Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Pittston, PA was the setting for the Josephite-Marellian Laity annual fall formation conference on Sunday, November 17th. Fr. Gregory T. Finn, O.S.J., pastor of the Oblate parish of Holy Annunciation in Hazleton led the conference. Father Finn fittingly spoke about the Holy Spouses, which set the tone for the season of Advent.



■ Members of the SLJM group from Pennsylvania held their annual Christmas Party on December 13, 2013 at Grico's Restaurant in Exeter. The spirit of unity, giving and friendship was shared by all who attended. The group presented Rev. Raymond C. Tabon, O.S.J., a check to help his family who were affected by the devastating Typhoon in the Philippines.

MADERA, CA

■ On January 25, 2014, St. Joachim Church will be sponsoring seven buses of youth and

adults to travel to San Francisco for the annual Walk for Life. The event will be preceded by a rally at St. Joachim Church for youth to stand up and express their support for unborn children, mothers, and fathers affected by abortion.

■ Fr. John Warburton and Fr. Shaji Athipozhi ask your prayers for their mothers (Patricia and Philomena) who are both undergoing serious health issues.

■ The monthly gathering for men who are discerning their vocation continues to be held on the last Friday of every month at the rectory. Men interested in the religious life and the priesthood are invited to attend. Please contact the parish office for more information.

HAZLETON, PA

■ Last year Holy Annunciation parish sponsored a Walk for Faith as a public manifestation of their Catholic identity during the Year of Faith. Parishioners and members of all parish groups walked through the streets of Hazleton singing and praying, pausing at various locations for public reflections and dramatic presentations of the faith. The Walk was led by Fr. Gregory Finn and Fr. Victor León, together with the parish deacon, Wilson Velez.

LOOMIS, CA

■ After many years of dedicated service in the community of Loomis, Bro. Mathew Chipp will be transferred to work at St. Joseph Marellio House of Studies in Oxnard, CA. The Oblates in Loomis along with the all of our friends will greatly miss his presence in Loomis; they are grateful to God for the lasting impact he has had on all in Loomis and wish him well in his new assignment in Oxnard.

We are proud to announce the launch of our new **Province website**, which can be found at <http://osjusa.org>. Our new site was rebuilt from the ground up to bring you even better content on all media platforms, including your mobile and tablet devices. Log on now!



BAKERSFIELD, CA

■ On December 12, 2013, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church dedicated their new grotto in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the site of the new church. The grotto features a handmade mosaic of the image of the virgin of Guadalupe that was commissioned by the parish and completed by the world renowned Vatican Mosaic Studio.

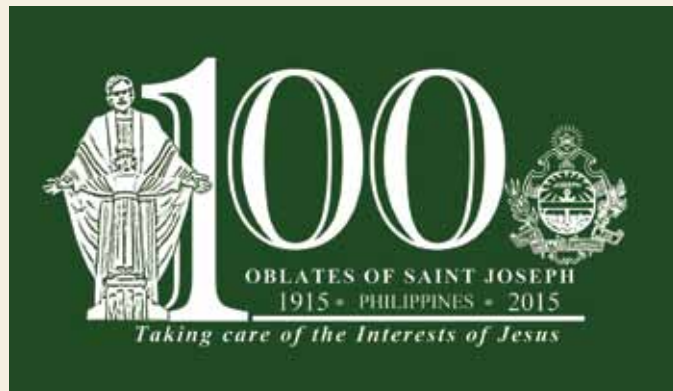
up to the anniversary itself. We will certainly have more information about the anniversary celebrations as they approach.

MEXICO

■ The Eleventh International St. Joseph Symposium took place in Texcucca, Jalisco, México, from September 29 to October 6, 2013. The Symposium featured conferences and presentations on such diverse topics as “The Two Trinities, Heavenly and Earthly: Foundations of a Theology of the Family;” “St. Joseph in the Writings of Edith Stein;” and “The Holy Spouses Rosary.” Fr. Larry Toschi, O.S.J., represented the Holy Spouses Province and presented a paper to the participants.

BRAZIL

■ The Center for Josephite-Marellian Spirituality in the Americas (under the guidance of the Oblates of St. Joseph) is pleased to announce the Fifth Theological and Pastoral Congress on St. Joseph, to take place from September 23 to 28, 2014 in Curitiba, Brazil. The event will be sponsored by the Oblates and is open to Oblates and Oblate laity from around the world.



PHILIPPINES

■ In 1915, the first Oblate missionaries to leave Italy arrived in the Philippine Islands to serve the people and share their love for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The Oblates of St. Joseph are preparing for the centenary celebration of the continual presence of the Oblates in the Philippines for the last 100 years. The Superior General, Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., has asked Oblates and Oblate laity from around the world to be aware of the celebrations that are beginning even this year and leading

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New Beginnings, New Endeavors

by Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J.

It is hard to believe that only a few weeks back we said good bye to 2013 and ushered in a new year. Are you still thinking about your New Year's resolutions!?

WE LAUGH AT our New Year's resolutions, we get frustrated that they are so quickly forgotten, and we wonder why we continue to make them. But the fact is that whenever a new year rolls around, we think again about how we can improve our lives. And this is a good thing!

Every new beginning must inevitably bring with it new endeavors, new efforts on our part to make



the most of a change in our life. This has certainly been the case for the Oblates of St. Joseph living and working in the United States this past year. In the foundation of our new Province, we as Oblates have had to take on new endeavors in so many ways: new communities, new locations, new ministries, new perspectives—and of course, this new magazine you are holding in your hands!

Most of these things are certainly more important than this humble magazine, but what all of these different undertakings have in common is that they are not ends in and of themselves: we do not change communities just to be with different people, nor embrace new ministries just for the fun of it, nor do we present this magazine to you simply to appreciate the images and articles it contains. In fact, all of our new endeavors—whether they are our New Year's resolutions or the beginnings of a New Province for the Oblates of St. Joseph—should be oriented to give glory to God, and to lead us into a deeper relationship with Him through our Blessed Mother and her husband St. Joseph. With this inaugural issue of our new Province magazine I want to state for the record to you, our dear friends and collaborators, that this also is our hope for you!

We have many wonderful things in store to share with you through this new quarterly magazine: reflec-

tions on our charism as Oblates of St. Joseph, articles about our spirituality and about the Church, and news from around the country and the world. But most importantly, we pray that what you find in this magazine might enkindle in you a new love for your faith and for our God who loves us so much. We hope that what you read in this and future issues will inspire you to strive for holiness in imitation of the Holy Family of Nazareth. We know that if you do, you will grow in appreciation for the persons of Mary and Joseph, who always lead us into greater unity with Jesus.

May all of your new endeavors this year lead you to know, love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ with greater fidelity!

Fr. Matthew serves as Director of Communications for the Holy Spouses Province and as rector at Mount St. Joseph Seminary and Novitiate in Loomis, CA. You can reach him at msspencer@osjusa.org.



SERVE JESUS. IMITATE JOSEPH.



The Oblates of St. Joseph are a religious family of priests and brothers who serve God in imitation of St. Joseph. They dedicate themselves totally to Jesus. They have a special love of Mary. They are faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. They foster a deep interior life through prayer, hard work, and an unshakeable trust in Divine Providence.



Remember the Oblates of St. Joseph in your Will and Estate Plan

A simplest way to make a gift to the Oblates of St. Joseph is through a bequest in your will. Such bequests help us continue our mission in many ways. They support our missionary efforts both within and outside of the U.S.A., provide upkeep and assistance to our poorer houses and ministries of the Province, and assist in the cost of forming candidates for the brotherhood and the priesthood.

Here is the suggested wording you can use when writing a charitable bequest to the Oblates of St. Joseph:

"I, (your name), of (city, state, zip), give and bequeath to the Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province U.S.A., (written amount, percentage of residuary estate, or description of specific property) for its unrestricted use and purpose."

For more information, please contact the Provincial headquarters:

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