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



*"St. Joseph, our life is in
your hands. Protect us
and guide us, as you did
for the Holy Family."*

CUSTOS



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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 quarterly 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 of the seal of the Oblates of St. Joseph, found in the newly renovated chapel of Mount St. Joseph, Loomis, CA.
Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).

DEAR FRIENDS OF St. Joseph,

Our Holy Father Pope Francis officially opened the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in the Vatican from October 5–19, 2014, on the theme “*The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization.*” It is very important that an extraordinary Synod has been con- voked on the theme of the pastoral care of the family. This is the way in which the Pope intends to promote reflection and to guide the path of the community



of the Church, with the responsible participa- tion of bishops from different parts of the world. It is right that the Church should move as a community in reflec- tion and prayer, and that she takes common pastoral directions in relation to the most im- portant points—such as the pastoral care of the family—under the guidance of the Pope and the bishops. The convocation of the extraordinary Synod clearly indicates this path.

I ask you, my dear friends, that you offer your prayers for the success of this Synod and that there be a spiritual renewal within all Christian families: a return to the Church and the sacraments, daily prayer in the homes, and the greater living of Chris- tian values between spouses and their children. As you know the family is under great attack because of the atheistic tendencies of the world, rampant immo- rality and its implicit approval by society. We can see just by the television programs that come into our homes on a nightly basis how many are contrary to Christian beliefs and morality. All of us as members

of the Oblates of St. Joseph religious family are espe- cially given the task and privilege to renew the world by renewing families in the spirit of the Holy Fam- ily—Jesus, Mary & Joseph—as they lived in hidden holiness embracing the will of the Heavenly Father. Our Holy Founder, St. Joseph Marelllo, was prophetic to this year’s Synod on the Family because of his Pas- toral Letter written February 4, 1892 as the Bishop of Acqui (Italy), where he speaks at length of the role of the Christian family as the primary place for the for- mation of children. He writes extensively about the duty of Christian parents to care for the bodies and souls of their children and specific methods to guide, encourage and correct children in order to maintain virtue and discipline in their lives. This pastoral letter is available in print for free, just ask any Oblate of St. Joseph to provide a copy for you. I urge you to read this document written from the outstanding mind and heart of our beloved Founder, giving clear and precise indications of how the Christian family is to live and grow in God’s love.

Let us entrust all of our families to the Holy Fam- ily so that the world will witness the sanctification of all marriages and families. We recall the memo- rable words of the late beloved Father Patrick Peyton (1909-1992), founder of the Family Rosary Crusade: “*The family that prays together stays together.*” May our families be sanctuaries where Jesus dwells among us and where His love is shared both within and outside our homes.

Mary, Queen of the Family, and Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, pray for us!

United in Christ, our Risen Lord,

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



Mount St. Joseph 50th Anniversary

ON SEPTEMBER 12, Mount St. Joseph Novitiate in Loomis, CA commemorated the fiftieth anniversary since its opening in 1964. The evening's festivities began with a Mass celebrated in the courtyard of the novitiate, with Bishop Jaime Soto,

(bishop of Sacramento) presiding. After the Mass, there was a wonderful reception with many friends, benefactors, and visiting Oblate priests and brothers.

The Oblates of the Holy Spouses Province are grateful to God for

the many men formed at Mount St. Joseph over these last fifty years, and we ask that you continue to pray that God will fill up the rooms at the Mount with many more men dedicated to serving Jesus in imitation of St. Joseph!

Clockwise from upper left: Participants in the celebration, including Bishop Jaime Soto, the Knights of Columbus Color Guard, and friends of the Oblates gather on the front lawn for a photo after the Mass; Bishop Jaime Soto presides at the Mass, along with Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. (Provincial Superior) and Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J. (Rector); friends of the Oblates and of the Mount filled the courtyard for the Mass and reception that would follow; Fr. Gustavo López, O.S.J., Fr. Philip Massetti, O.S.J., Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J., and Fr. Shaji Athipozhi, O.S.J. concelebrated at the Mass; families and friends enjoy good food, refreshing drinks, and wonderful company at the reception.

All photos courtesy of Paul Flores Photography.





Renovations at Mount St. Joseph

AS PART OF the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of 2014, the Oblates worked to renovate the novitiate chapel to make it an even more reverent and beautiful place of worship for the Oblate community as well as for the frequent visitors to the seminary.



All of the walls were replastered and repainted, and the alcoves for the statues of Mary and Joseph were reshaped. The statues themselves were restored by a local artist that specializes in religious artwork. The lighting in the chapel was completely replaced to help create an atmosphere of peace and prayer.

The floor was also complete redesigned, to

accentuate the sanctuary area and the aisle that leads us all to the altar. The pews were brought over from St. Rocco's parish (whose parishioners now form part of St. Joseph Mareello parish in Pittston, PA).

Finally, there are new mahogany doors that provide a dignified entrance to the chapel from the courtyard.

The chapel renovations would have been impossible without the many people who gave of their time and resources to make the project a success. Be sure to come visit the chapel when you're in the area!



The Synod of the Family

An interview with Cardinal Raymond Burke by Andrew Summerson

On October 6, 2014, Andrew Summerson of Vatican Radio spoke with Cardinal Burke about the Extraordinary Synod of the Family, regarding current issues on marriage and family, and what effect the Synod might have on the Church.

Q: Your Eminence, you recently authored a chapter in a book about the indissolubility of marriage, entitled *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*. What motivated the book and what is its underlying premise?

Cardinal Burke: At the extraordinary consistory of Cardinals, which was held on February 20 and 21 of this year, Cardinal Walter Kasper gave a lengthy discourse on marriage and the family in which he invited a dialogue about what he had stated in his discourse. A group of us decided to ponder more deeply a number of questions which he raised in his presentation and to respond to them in a systematic way. And thank God, with the help of the general editor, Father Robert Dodaro of the Augustinianum, we were able to put this together as a

service to the Synod and above all to the Holy Father in his desire to present once again the beauty of the Church's teaching on marriage

The family today has to be especially alert to the subtle influences of the secularized culture, what St. John Paul II once called the Godless culture, especially its insinuation into the lives of the members of the family and the family itself.

and the family.

Q: Going into the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, what would you identify as three of the big-

gest challenges to the Catholic family today?

One of the biggest challenges is the defective catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church—I can speak from my experience in the United States—for the past 40 to 50 years. Children and young people are not well catechized with regard to marriage. Coupled with that is the recent entrance of a so-called “gender theory” that alienates human sexuality from its essentially conjugal meaning. This is now being brought into schools along with the advancement of the homosexual agenda. This is a big challenge for families. It is only in the family that the true sense of who we are as man and woman is taught effectively both by the example of the father and mother, but also in catechesis to amplify that

and assist the parents in the fuller teaching of the faith. So this is one major difficulty.

Obviously too, we are dealing with a culture, at least in the West, which is totally secularized and therefore denatured. When God is no longer taken into account, and His plan for creation is no longer considered... Instead, we have the pretense to decide for ourselves the meaning of our own lives and the meaning and destiny of our world, the family suffers first and foremost. The family today has to be especially alert to the subtle influences of the secularized culture, what St. John Paul II once called the Godless culture, especially its insinuation into the lives of the members of the family and the family itself, through the mass media and above all through the Internet and the horrible reality of pornography on the Internet, which is causing so much damage to families. The second big challenge to families is secular society itself and the challenge to Christian families today to be countercultural.

A third challenge is the whole question of marriage itself and the effective presentation of the Church's teaching about marriage, which in fact is also known by reason. Marriage is part of our human nature and therefore it is taught by natural law. Faith illumines reason

and helps to see the truth in all its richness. So, we need to help especially young people when they are at the age where one is preparing for marriage to see marriage itself as a beautiful call, a way to eternal salvation—not only to their happiness now on earth—and to assist them in every way we can. I think if we have a good catechesis for children and for young people it will be easier to reach them with the message of the Church, the message of reason and faith with regard to marriage as they come into their young adult years.

Q: How can we renew our pastoral care for people who are divorced and those who are divorced and remarried?

What we must do for those who are in irregular unions is to show care to each and every one of them, the same care we are called to share with every member of the Church, especially those who are in the most need. There is no question that those who are living in irregular unions have a very particular need of the Church's care. I think the important thing for us is to show them how, even in their particular situation, they can convert themselves more and more to Christ and conform themselves more to Him. It is not easy; it is one of the more particularly challenging situations in which a

Christian can find him or herself, but nevertheless there is grace to respond in a way that is true to the teaching of Christ and therefore liberating.

It would be a big mistake to approach the situation simply from the point of view of trying to figure out how to admit persons in irregular unions to the sacraments. This is a contradiction in itself and would truly miss the point of the authentic pastoral care that these couples need. The Church has a long history of trying to help couples who, for one reason or another, are not able to leave an irregular union to live chastely and to live justly as they can in that situation.

Q: The Synod has attracted a great deal of media attention. How do you think the media reporting has impacted the Synod and people's perception of it?

Certainly one good thing is that people are very much aware that there will be a Synod on the family! That message has gotten out. The sad part is that the message has been colored by the media with expectations which are unrealistic and actually not true to the nature of the Synod and, even in a more serious way, not true to the doctrine of the faith.

I have experienced myself in talking with the faithful and with bishops and priests that there has

been built up this expectation that the Church is now going to change Her teaching with regard to the indissolubility of marriage and permit now second and third marriages and that for those in irregular unions there will be access to the sacraments. These kinds of expectations are unreal. They are not true to the work of the Synod in the first place and, in a more profound sense, not true to what Christ himself has taught us, the truth that human nature itself teaches us. Therefore, that part is very sad. It has been going on now for several months, which is not a good situation. The Church's teaching needs to be made clear now and her fidelity to Christ needs to be very clear in the Synod. Just like the title of the book to which I contributed, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, which is taken from St. John Paul II's post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*. That is what the Synod is all about: remaining in the truth of Christ.

Q: What would you like to see come out of the Extraordinary Synod?

I'm hoping that it will take up again the great papal Magisterium, which is a gift to us, beginning with *Casti connubi* of Pope Pius XI, the teaching of Pope Pius XII, then in more recent times, the prophetic and heroic teaching of *Humanae*

vitae of Pope Paul VI, soon to be beatified at the end of this Synod, as well as the teaching of *Familiaris consortio* of St John Paul II. Fundamentally, what I hope will emerge from the Synod is this beautiful truth about the human person, who has written into his nature the call to union and communion between (one) man and one woman, which is faithful, which is indissoluble, and which by its very nature is procreative; it participates in the creation of new human life

in the image and likeness of God, what the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World referred to as the "crown" of marital love, the gift of offspring.

Whatever the Synod's particular emphases are—marriage preparation, teaching on natural family planning, all the particular questions—I hope what would emerge over all is the splendor of the truth about marriage as God created us from the beginning.



Materialism and Division

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

Fr. Gregory Finn continues his reflection on the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

AS WE CONTINUE to reflect on Pope Francis' exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*/*The Joy of the Gospel* the Holy Father spends some time looking at the things that could get in the way of us both experiencing and spreading this happy transmission of the grace of Jesus our Savior. It should probably come as no surprise to us that the Holy Father sees one of the great challenges to be how much materialism—the focus on the accumulation of earthly goods and prosperity—blocks a genuine appreciation of Christ and His love.

If Jesus, the Son of God, is the greatest expression of God's willingness to give to us out of pure love, then the exact opposite of that is selfishness in all its forms! We don't have to look far to see how this becomes the unrestrained search for indulgence, for greed and ambition and status seeking. The Holy Father is particularly concerned that we notice how this mindset has become the guiding principle of global economies,

which see the world simply as a place to exploit, and its people to be simple instruments in its desire for success. How can the love and joy of Jesus exist in such an atmosphere? Well there's our challenge: to make sure that it does! When the quest for financial security or the almost worship of money and prosperity take hold, we Christians, who see more than this world, who see the glory of the life to come, who see the wonder of the God who made us and redeems us, must take our stand and remain firm—and joyful!—in the struggle with this kind of outlook.

Not only is materialism a problem, but it often generates an attitude that separates people into haves and have-nots, creating conflicts, prejudices, rivalries, competitions, and even violence. These seem to us to be just social problems, but the reality is that they are spiritual ones. They are the result of people who know longer see themselves as children of God, who no longer see that their personal relationship to God makes being with one another a richness rather than a problem, who no longer see that the grace of God el-

evates lives, who no longer see the value of each person as someone known and loved by God and destined to be a brother or sister for all eternity, who no longer see that among our tasks on earth is not just to grow personally in goodness and holiness, but to reach out and help others to grow, or at least provide the means to grow themselves. It means that people have lost the entire Christian perspective on life, and the result is injustice, abuse, violence and suffering. Again, if we have the joy of the Gospel, this is a challenge for us. We must overcome the elements of this attitude that we may have absorbed into ourselves, and we must continue to proclaim the love and saving power of Jesus Christ to all people so that they too can overcome hatreds and hostilities, and be open to the love of Christ.

As if that is not enough, the places we live in this world seem quite deliberately focused on erasing every trace of Faith, every expression of Christian tradition, every element of Christ centered values, every God established institution (marriage, family, motherhood, fatherhood, etc.) from our

midst. How strange that cultures that grew out of a profound Christian sense of creation and our place in it, have now turned on the very religion that brought them into being! Yet, in a sense it is also logical: if our focus has become almost

Christ against all societal and cultural movements that have sought to oppose or move away from the Truth of God, His Creation and His Salvation. Today we face challenges in fundamental areas of our lives: the education of our children, the



Christ and the Rich Young Ruler by Heinrich Hofmann, 1889. See Matthew 19:16-30. Although Jesus wishes to offer us a life of joy founded on selflessness and generosity, we often delude ourselves into thinking that material wealth is what will bring us happiness.

entirely this worldly, if personal indulgence and prosperity is the ultimate value, and thus everything else is either a convenient tool or an inconvenient obstacle, then anything and anybody who says differently is a problem to be gotten rid of...us Christians! The Catholic Church has stood since

composition of marriage, respect for family, care for the neediest among us, protection for the unborn and helpless, support of the elderly, formulation of laws based on enduring principles, etc. The Christian and Catholic cannot hide himself from this, but happy that he has found Christ and His grace,

refuses to bow to the pressures and compromises of this wrong thinking society.

Instead our work should be to once more infuse our surroundings with the very Christian ideals, underlying principles, and guiding truths that we know come from God, and which our Church has defended through the centuries and which we know are the genuine paths to true happiness for all. The Faith that makes our hearts joyful is a Faith that must constantly be re-injected into all the areas of our society: government and civil service, business and economics, health care, education, social work...even the arts, music, literature. This is the joyful work of the Gospel.

When we reflect on the scale of all this, it seems almost impossible! How can anyone or even any group of us make a difference? Remember that the Lord has told us "with me all things are possible." The work is not just ours; it is ours with the all-powerful Lord and Savior in our hearts and lives. Thus we are not people of discouragement and despair, but of hope...and of joy!

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

Step by Step: A Reflection on Youth Ministry, Part I

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

Fr. John shares some reflections on the Oblate style of Youth Ministry around the world as described by our guiding document, *Step by Step*.

FR. SERGIO PEREZ, O.S.J., and I were discussing our Youth/Vocation Ministry plans for 2015, and we decided that it would be nice to use the Youth Ministry column to share brief reflections on the document *Step by Step: Oblate Youth Following the Way in the Third Millennium*. *Step by Step* is the concluding document from the Second Oblate Youth Ministry Congress that took place in Asti, Italy in August of 2005. Our Congregation has asked us to use the principles contained in the document as a guide for bringing Jesus to our youth in today's world. Here is an excerpt of the opening statement which was offered by our Superior General, Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J.:

Dear Youth: We, the Oblates of St. Joseph, love you and esteem you, we believe in you and, along with you, we want to build a world that is more human and dignified.

We want to dream with you, to live together with you. With St. Peter we want to say to you: "I have neither silver nor gold, but that which I

We, the Oblates of St. Joseph, love you and esteem you, we believe in you and, along with you, we want to build a world that is more human and dignified.

have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk" (Acts 3:6). We do not have money to give to you, nor power, nor a life free from suffering; but that which we have in our hearts we give to you willingly: we give you Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world. When

the Holy Spirit inspired the young priest from Asti, Fr. Joseph Marelllo, to found our Congregation, he placed in his heart the passion for youth, most of all those in need of help of whatever kind. This passion has been inherited by his spiritual children. Because of this, you are important and dear to us.

These touching words from our Superior General reveal the primary focus of all our youth activity. The Oblates of St. Joseph love our youth by sharing with them the greatest gift possible, Jesus Christ! In order to share the presence of Jesus with our young people today, we have to understand them and know how to communicate to them the love of God.

Part I of *Step by Step* is dedicated to understanding the situation our youth find themselves in today. It is safe to say that many young people are experiencing a crisis of faith. The traditions of past genera-

tions do not hold as much weight for many youth now as they did in years past. I have encountered many young people who seem to "fall between the cracks" in our Church and society and, for one reason or another, make choices that have lasting negative consequences for their lives. The question that arises, then, is how do we introduce our Lord Jesus and the truths of our Catholic faith to our youth today?

Last year, during World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis exhorted the youth of the world "to 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 Holy Father's call to bring Christ to the world, especially to those most in need is something key to Oblate Youth Ministry. *Step by Step* challenges those who work with youth to enter into "direct contact" with young people in order "to discover their hopes and frustrations, their desires and aspirations, their contradictions." Quoting our Holy Father yet again, "Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others,

and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 127). So what are we waiting for? Let us go out and share the Good News with our young people so they can experience the joy of a personal, loving relationship with the Lord Jesus that will change their lives forever!

Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J., serves on as a Vocation Director on the East Coast and as parochial vicar of St. Joseph Marelllo parish in Pittston, PA.



Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J., and Oblate seminarians (from left) José Batista, René Vargas, and Brian Ceja attend a youth event entitled "On Fire." Taking place in Vallejo, CA, the event draws youth, clergy, and bishops from around Northern California as they share their faith, reflect on their vocation, and encourage young people to grow deeper in the relationship with Christ.

Wake up the World!

by Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J.

The Church has given us a great gift in declaring the Year of Consecrated Life, and this should lead us to appreciate and promote vocations even more.

THE GOAL OF the Christian life is to become holy and enter into a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our baptismal calling to become holy and embrace the life of Christ into our lives, and it is important for each Christian to appreciate their vocation and seek their unique path to holiness. One particular path that the Catholic Church is preparing to focus upon is the Consecrated Life. In November 2013, Pope Francis announced that the Catholic Church will dedicate a “Year on the Consecrated Life” from November 2014 to February 2016. This is an opportunity for all members of the Church to learn, appreciate, and connect with those individuals who have consecrated themselves to the Lord, especially through the vows of Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience. This is also the opportunity for those consecrated men and women to evaluate, appreciate, and nurture their vocations as witness of the Gospel.

The theme for the celebration in the United States is “Wake up the world!” based on the words of Pope Francis. The Holy Father exhorted those in the Consecrated Life to “wake up the world to a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!” These words ought to assist those working in vocation ministry to be reignited in their faith and vocation. Vocation ministry is very important to the Church in the modern world, because it is by engaging young men and women that they will move to answer the call to “wake up” others in the faith.

This takes great time and dedication in accompanying our youth to realize their potential in serving the Lord as a consecrated person. Spiritually, the world has been



asleep to the presence of God due to the rise of relativism, indifference, and the need to be isolated from others. In the words of St. Joseph Marelli, *nunc coepi*: now is the time for the Church, our youth, and those consecrated men and women to make a difference in the world. It is time to “wake up” the world and expose the world to the beauty of Jesus Christ. This can only be done if those who have a vocation to the consecrated life will be bold in living out their vows and become “the light of the world” (Matt 5:14).

A question that may come up is: how are we as the faithful called to celebrate this year personally, in our parishes, and in our families? As mentioned, it is

a time for renewal, appreciation, thanksgiving, and invitation. This is a time for all members of the Church to pray for a renewal of the consecrated life and taking the opportunity to seek out the richness of this vocation. Even for those who are married, single, widowed, and discerning, there is much to value in this way of life. It is also an opportunity to become more familiarized with the local religious priests, brothers, and sisters in the community. The Oblates of St. Joseph located in California and Pennsylvania are blessed to be able to be present in various parishes and ministries that allow us to be connected with the faithful. It will be encouraging to speak with an Oblate or the local religious sisters about their vocation and the beauties of the consecrated life. Every consecrated person has a unique story that reveals God’s beauty and love for his people. It also is an opportunity to seek out how the local religious are “waking up the world” and how the faithful are able to be involved either through prayer, volunteering, or financial assistance. Every baptized person is invited to participate fully in the life of the Church and this includes in the ministry of those in the consecrated life.

Finally, it is important during this year to invite others to consider the consecrated life as a priest, brother, or sister. It takes an invitation or words of encouragement that assist a young person to make a decision in following the Lord as a consecrated person. Sadly, according to a 2008 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 69% of Catholics in the United States would not encourage vocations to the religious life or priesthood. About 27% of Catholics have not encouraged but would if the opportunity presented itself. Only about 4-6% of Catholics in the United States have actually encouraged someone to become a priest, brother, or sister. This is why the “Year on Consecrated Life” is such an important opportunity for many members of the Church to become a voice for Jesus Christ and to “wake up” our young people to



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consider becoming a religious or priest. It is time to plant the seed of God’s word into the minds and hearts of our youth and nurture them along the way in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Discussing the religious life and priesthood should begin at home with the parents, along with the assistance of the parish community through faith formation. Inviting religious and priests to the home or various functions in the parish allows young people and others to be comfortable and relate with them in a more personal level. This will not only benefit the young person in considering the religious life and priesthood, but also gives the religious the opportunity to witness to their vows and share it with others. Treating the discernment to the consecrated life as a normal process will allow young people and others to appreciate the vocation more and also embrace it as a viable option.

There are many beautiful aspects of the consecrated life and it is with thanksgiving that we support and encourage the ministries of the Church. Pope Francis has realized that there is a necessity within the Church and in the world in regards to the love, hope, and mercy of Jesus Christ. It is with this desire that consecrated men and women strive to bring the reality of the Jesus Christ into their ministry, prayer, and community. Together with the lay faithful we strive to look into the reality of consecrated life and see its beauty and allow it to transform their lives and relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J., serves on the West Coast of the United States as Vocation Director and Youth Director of the Holy Spouses Province.

The Church and the Family

by Fr. Sunil Kallarakal, O.S.J.

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES, the Church has maintained her constant teaching on marriage and family. It is quite beautiful to examine the plan of God in marriage and in family life as taught by the Church. The Second Vatican Council in its Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* devoted an entire chapter to promoting the dignity of marriage and the family (cf. GS, 47-52). This document described marriage as a “communion of life and love.” The true love between husband and wife implies a mutual gift of self and includes and integrates the sexual and affective aspects according to the divine plan. Furthermore, the spouses must be grounded in Christ. Christ the Lord “comes into the lives of married Christians through the Sacrament of matrimony” and remains with them.

Authentic married love is caught up in divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of Church, with the result that the spouses are effective-

ly led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty roles as fathers and mothers. A gift of oneself—free and mutual—is the adventure of conjugal love which is destined to be enriched with the precious gift and serious responsibility of procreation. The Christian

Especially in a Christian family, enriched by the grace and the demands of the sacrament of matrimony, children from their early age have to learn to become sensitive to God’s presence and to honor him.

family proclaims aloud both the present power of the kingdom of God and the hope of the blessed life. Couples should know that they are the co-operators with the love of Creator God, and his agents to transmit and educate human life; this should be considered as their own mission.

This project of God for the family is well expressed in the Decree

on the apostolate of lay people *Apostolicam Actuositatem*:

“Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith. They are the first to pass on the faith to their children and to educate them in it. By word and example they form them to a Christian and apostolic life; they offer them wise guidance in the choice of vocation, and if they discover in them a sacred vocation they encourage it with all care.”

According to the same document among the various works of the family apostolate, the following may be listed: adopting abandoned children, showing a loving welcome to strangers, helping with the running of schools, supporting adolescents with advice and help, assisting engaged couples to make a better preparation for marriage, taking a share in catechism teaching, supporting married people and families in a material and moral crisis, and in the case of the aged not only providing them with what is indispensable



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See <https://www.flickr.com/photos/anieto2k/>

but also procuring for them a fair share of the fruits of economic progress.

The family however is the first school of social virtues of which the whole society is in need. Especially in a Christian family, enriched by the grace and the demands of the sacrament of matrimony, children from their early age have to learn to become sensitive to God's presence and to honor him. It is through the family that the children are gradually introduced to society and the Church and so to love one's neighbor. As they educate their children the Christian couple concentrates both on the external and internal education of them: while they educate them externally through their words, corrections and instructions, the internal education which is the formation of heart is done through the witnessing of love. Here the parents have more tools at their disposal, such as prayer, love among the couples, offering assistance to other families and those who are in need.

We also know that wherever the intimacy of family life is interrupted, it is not rare that fidelity itself is in danger and the good of the children is compromised; then we see the threat to the education of the children and the courage to accept more children. When we consider the important role of the family in society and the attention

that the Church should give to it, we are called to intensify pastoral care of engaged couples at meetings in preparation for marriage, and likewise the pastoral care of young couples. The whole ecclesial community, including teachers, married couples, religious congregations and secular institutes, must work towards this goal. Priests must give this apostolate an important place in their ministry. In particular, they will remind parents of their responsibilities in awakening their children's faith and educating it. The words of Pope St. John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* are still so very relevant for families:

"Loving the family means being able to appreciate its values and capabilities, fostering them always. Loving the family means identifying the dangers and the evils that menace it, in order to overcome them. Loving the family means endeavoring to create for it an environment favorable for its development. The modern Christian family is often tempted to be discouraged and is distressed at the growth of its difficulties; it is an eminent form of love to give it back its reasons for confidence in itself in the riches that it possesses by nature and grace, and in the mission that God has entrusted to it. Yes, indeed the families of today must be called back to their

original position. They must follow Christ."

As we reflect on the family and married life we should appreciate those couples who live happily their married life as a lifelong commitment; they stay together in good times and in bad, in good health and in sickness. My mind goes to so many families I am connected to in Nigeria, in the United States, in Italy, and in my own country India where I have exercised my ministry as a priest and I continue to pray for their well-being. I would like to encourage couples reading this with some advice from the book *101 Tips for a Happier Marriage* by Jennifer Roback Morse and Betsy Kerekes:

"Expect conflict. Accept the fact that a certain amount of conflict is inevitable in any long lasting relationship. Low level conflict is not evidence that you chose the wrong person or that something is dreadfully wrong with one or both of you. Resolve conflicts by talking through the matter at a time when both of you are well rested, well fed, and calm. Seek help from your spiritual director or a trusted friend. If it is high level conflict, consider marriage counselling, but don't consider giving up on your relationship."

Fr. Sunil is the Provincial Superior of the Oblates of St. Joseph Province in India.

News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA

■ Labor Day weekend the community welcomed the youth of St. Joachim's Parish, Madera, on Sunday, August 31st. They enjoyed a day long visit at our shrine and the crowded beaches. Mass was celebrated together with Fr. Victor Garcia Padilla, O.S.J. at the nearby Holy Cross parish in Santa Cruz. At the Labor Day morning Mass, the O.S.J. community celebrated Mass together at the shrine with the participating faithful, giving special emphasis on St. Joseph the Worker. Special prayers were offered for all workers and the unemployed.

■ The Santa Cruz religious community welcomed the provincial council of the Oblate USA Province for a two-day meeting on September 9-10.

■ There was a solemn remembrance with an ecumenical prayer service at the shrine on 9/11 with the local chapter of the Knights of Columbus. Prayers and meditations were offered in remembrance of the victims of the terrorist attacks in 2001 and for world peace, especially in the Middle East.

■ The National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children was observed on our shrine property with a morning March for Life and an afternoon prayer service around the St. Joseph, Patron of the Unborn statue, located in the heart of the shrine gardens.

■ Santa Cruz Shrine welcomed the laity of our O.S.J. parishes located throughout CA (Bakersfield, Madera, Granite Bay) at the annual O.S.J. Laity Day, held on Saturday, October 11th. Mass was celebrated for all participants, along with opportunities for confession, Eucharistic adoration and talks in English & Spanish on

the Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*, issued 25 years ago (Aug. 15, 1989) by Pope St. John Paul II on the life and mission of St. Joseph in the divine plan of salvation.

PITTSTON, PA

■ Thank you to the service of new Josephite Marellian Laity officers elected in July. Officers are: Elaine Fisher (President), Joyce Capone (Vice President), Joan Wanat (Secretary), and Marianne Cameli (Treasurer).

■ For the month of November, our Pittston laity is collecting non-perishable food items. This is the annual Thanksgiving project, and this year all of the food will be donated to St. Vincent De Paul Soup Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

■ On Sunday, November 16th, the local SLIM chapter will hold its Fall Formation Conference at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Laflin, PA. Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J., will provide a reflection on "Josephite Marellian Spirit of Family." It will be held at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary from 3-5 PM.

■ On Sunday, November 23rd at 5 PM, Fr. Joseph Sibilano, O.S.J., will celebrate a special Mass of Remembrance at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Laflin, PA. All are asked to submit names of recently deceased family members, and friends who will be specially remembered. A light reception hosted by the Josephite Marellian Laity will follow.

■ The Josephite Marellian annual Christmas Party will be held on Friday, December 12, 2014 at 6:30 PM at Grico's Restaurant in Exeter, PA.

- The 50th Anniversary of the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Pittston will take place next year on May 30, 2015. The laity are organizing a committee to plan a reception. More details to come.

BAKERSFIELD, CA

- The Mareello Youth Council of Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to meet monthly so that all the youth coordinators of the various youth ministries can support each other and share ideas. The various ministries are the Confirmation program, the Saulo de Tarso group, the Theology of the Body group, the Holy Spirit “Revive” group, the Recollection movement, the junior high Bible group, and the young adult Bible group.

- On October 11-12 the parish hosted “Stand up for God and Vote” Sunday with the call to restore faith and moral values to our society through our active participation in society. They supported non-partisan voter registration on Sunday after Masses.

- On October 18th at the Shrine Pavilion, the parish hosted a program entitled *Witness to Life*. This event presented material in both English and Spanish on “Family Matters,” showing the connection between Pro-Life Ministry and Natural Family Planning.

- On November 2nd Our Lady of Guadalupe parish will be helping organize an All Souls’ Day commemoration (“Día de los Muertos”) at nearby Union Cemetery.

MADERA, CA

- On the evening of October 3rd, St. Joachim Church hosted the first Mass in the Extraordinary Form in nearly fifty years. It was a beautiful celebration with great parish participation,

and a reminder to all of the richness of the Church’s liturgical tradition.



- 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.

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

- St. Joseph Mareello parish has launched its capital campaign, which will help build a new parish ministry center, as well as eliminate debt from the building of the church and support the diocese in its evangelization efforts for the next several years.

- On October 24-26, the Oblates of St. Joseph will be hosting a Theology of the Body retreat (entitled “Freedom to Love”) at Mareello Youth Retreat Center for young adults in the Sacramento area. It promises to be a great event. Please pray for all those who will be helping and attending.

- The Oblates in Loomis and of the entire Province thank all of those who participated in and assisted with the fiftieth anniversary celebration on September 12th. It was a wonderful event, thanks to our many friends and benefactors who were present. See pages 2-4 for more details and photos of the festivities.

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Just do it

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

Are you struggling to find the motivation to improve your prayer life? How can we get back on track to pray as we ought?

PRAYER IS LIKE exercise. Wait, I know: this is not a particularly novel analogy, and I'm sure you could identify many parallels yourself: they both require effort and hard work, the payoff is often delayed but always worth it, the less we do it the worse we get at it... and the list goes on. It's a helpful analogy in many ways, though I recently find myself thinking about a more sobering similarity between the two: the vast majority of us



are not doing nearly enough of either one! Why is it so hard to do what we know is so important for us, both in the spiritual and human aspects of our lives?

A recent conversation with a young man made me think about this a little more carefully. He was telling me about his exercise regimen, and more impressive than the intensity of the program is the regularity he has observed over the last five years. He told me that

he has followed his program for almost five years now, four days a week, an hour a day, and that he has only missed his routine a handful of times. Impressed, I asked him: "But where do you find the motivation to keep going, week after week?" "Oh," he said, "motivation has nothing to do with it. Motivation comes and goes, and it's a great feeling to have but that's all it is: a feeling. I decided years ago that to be a healthy person meant doing healthy things. Exercise is simply what I have to do to be the person I was meant to be. It's just what I do, and missing it would be like not eating."

How many of us think of our prayer life like that? It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the problem with my spiritual life is the motivation I lost, when the reality is that to be a disciple of Christ means we simply must be people of prayer! It's simply what we do: we adore, glorify, and magnify the Lord. We depend on him for all our joy and happiness. We trust in his Divine Providence. And if we stop doing these things,

it's like not eating: we fail to do what is essential for our well-being, and we quickly wither and die.

Maybe you find yourself struggling with prayer. Maybe you haven't felt motivated to pray, and you're waiting to experience that motivation before you deepen your life of prayer. Maybe though, the solution is not to get motivated, but to simply *act*, to *decide* to make the time for Jesus.

Forget about whether it feels good or not. Forget about whether you're doing it perfectly or not. Forget about being motivated at all. Make the decision to give quality time to the Lord—maybe in the rosary, maybe in regular morning meditation, maybe in daily Mass—and eventually it will become part of who you are. And then going without it would be impossible.

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 m Spencer@osjusa.org.

Calling

The Oblates of St. Joseph are a religious community of priests and brothers founded in 1878 by St. Joseph Marello. They:

- Dedicate themselves to serve Jesus in imitation of St. Joseph
- Foster a rich interior life through prayer and meditation
- Are devoted to the Eucharist, the sacraments and the liturgy
- Work in the catechesis of youth and in pastoral ministry
- Nurture a special relationship with the Blessed Mother
- Live a humble and hidden life in Christ

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:

Oblates of St. Joseph
544 West Cliff Dr., Santa Cruz, CA 95060
phone: (831) 457-1868 • email: provincial@osjoseph.org



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