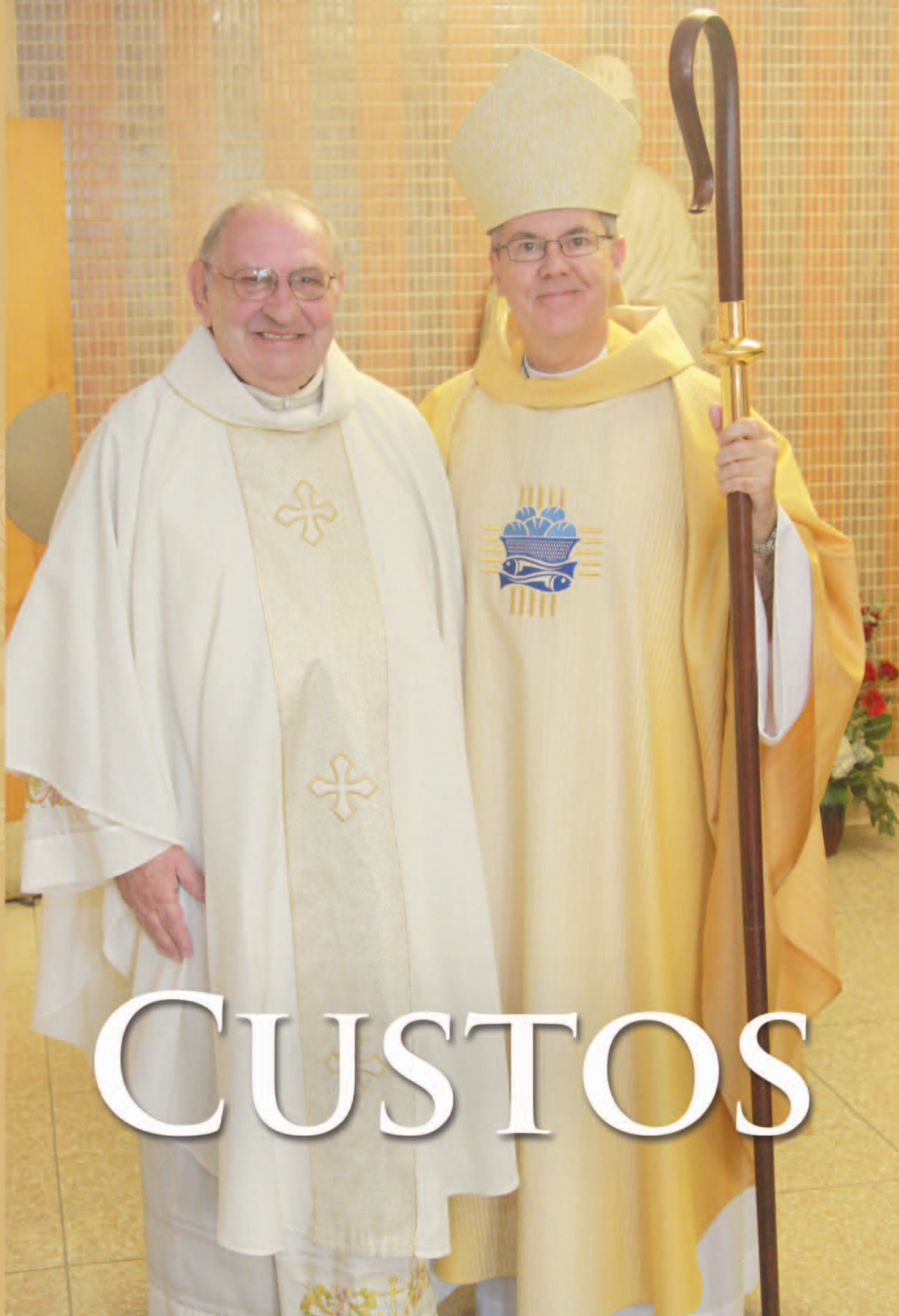


Summer 2015

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



CUSTOS

*"O Blessed St. Joseph,
keep us always faithful
in your service, that all
our actions might lead
the world to glorify our
Savior, Christ the Lord."*



Contents

From the Provincial Superior	1
Celebrating Fifty Years	2
Building Our Mother's Church	5
Missionaries of Joy	9
Toward Holiness	12
Prayer and Discernment	15
News and Events	17
Directory of Oblate Communities	19
From the Editor's Desk	20

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: Fr. Joseph Sibilano, O.S.J. and Bishop Joseph Bamera (Scranton, PA) pose for a photograph at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary on May 30, 2015, the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the Seminary.
Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).*

DEAR FRIENDS AND Benefactors,

We all know well that summer is a time to slow down a bit from our crazy pace of daily life and maybe have the opportunity to enjoy the wonder of God's creation by taking a vacation with family or friends. With school being out and a break from endless meetings and activities, it affords us an opportunity to enjoy the simple beauty of life and nature.



It is my hope that you get a chance this summer to slow down, even if for a brief period of time, to rest your minds and bodies and experience the Lord through silence, contemplating the grandeur of our created world or simply appreciating the people in our lives that we often take for granted.

We, Oblates of St. Joseph priests, brothers and seminarians, are also looking for some summertime rest. However, I must say that it will be a busy time for us as well. The most exciting event this summer will be the opening of our new formation house in the former convent building located on the property of St. Matthias Parish in Bala Cynwyd, PA (suburb of Philadelphia). We will have four of our seminarians residing in this building as they begin their studies in the fall at the nearby St. Charles Borromeo Seminary of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our students will be placed under the care and guidance of Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J. Let us keep these young men that God has sent us in our prayers so that they may persevere in their vocation in eventually becoming professed Oblates of St. Joseph and, if God's will, ordained priests in service of the Church.

Also, this summer has some of us USA Oblates traveling to our province in the Philippines for a series of meetings and events. This year our Congregation is celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Philippine Mission, the first outside

of Italy in the year 1915. Our Superior General, the Very Rev. Michael Piscopo, O.S.J., and his General Council, have prepared a series of activities that require our worldwide participation. First is the Council of the Congregation, which gathers all the provincial superiors from around the world to meet with the Superior General and his Council. There will also be an International Youth Ministry Congress and Education Symposium that will include lay participants from our province's parishes and schools. These separate meetings will then conclude with a grand celebration commemorating the centennial foundation of our Philippine Province in thanksgiving for the many graces received and the abundance of O.S.J. priests and brothers that have served and are serving in this part of the world while assisting in various other provinces as well.

Finally, preparations are being finalized for our participation at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, PA from September 22-27, which also includes the historic visit of Pope Francis to the United States as well as the Canonization of Blessed Junipero Serra, the founder of the California Missions. There will be a strong presence of our Province family at the World Meeting of Families, including faithful laity from our parishes, to support and defend the sanctity of marriage and the institution of the family.

It is an exciting moment in the life of the Church and we Oblates are proud and honored to be a part of it. Please share your joy and prayers with us as we all seek to serve the Lord in his earthly kingdom, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spouses—Mary & Joseph—and our Holy Founder, St. Joseph Marelllo.

Blessings to you and your families for a safe, fun and relaxing summer!

Lovingly in the Holy Family,

Rev. Paul A. McDonnell, O.S.J.
Very Rev. Paul A. McDonnell, O.S.J.

Provincial Superior, Holy Spouses Province

Celebrating Fifty Years

The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province are blessed to have just celebrated two very significant fiftieth anniversaries.

ONE OF THESE anniversaries commemorates the dedication of our Seminary in Laflin, PA. On June 14, 1964, construction for the new Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary officially commenced with the laying of the cornerstone. The celebration was presided over by then Superior General, Fr. Pietro Magnone, O.S.J. The celebration included the blessings of the chapel site and foundation, the recitation of the Litany of the Saints,

the blessing and laying of the cornerstone, and a brief address by the Superior General. On May 30, 1965, the seminary was dedicated by Bishop Jerome D. Hannan, followed by a special Mass presided by Fr. Pietro Magnone, O.S.J.

The Oblates are grateful to God for these past fifty years of our presence in the Seminary and in the greater Pittston area. Many young men have passed

The photos on these two pages are from the Seminary Anniversary Mass. Counterclockwise, from bottom left: Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, ordinary of the Diocese of Scranton and presider at the fiftieth anniversary of the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary, receives the offertory gifts from members of the Josephite-Marellian Laity; the statues of St. Joseph Marello and some of the stained glass windows help add beauty to the liturgies at the Seminary chapel; our lay friends and collaborators filled the chapel to help celebrate the great occasion; the entrance procession of the anniversary Mass. A special thanks to Bob Price Photography who graciously provided the photos.





through these seminary hallways, and many Oblates have brought their love for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to not only the young men in formation there, but also to our lay friends and benefactors, and indeed to the whole Diocese of Scranton. In a special way we thank all of those who have made it possible for us to persevere in our mission throughout these last fifty years.

Fr. Joseph Sibilano's 50th Ordination Anniversary

But we also celebrate another fiftieth anniversary, and this one even more special to our Province and

to our Congregation. On March 19, 1965, Fr. Joseph Sibilano was ordained to the priesthood, and this past March 19, 2015, he celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of this happy occasion with a special Mass and reception. His long service to the Oblates in the United States has touched the lives of countless people, and we are all so grateful to God for his presence in our Province and in our lives. We wish him many more years of faithful service in the vineyard of the Lord!

These photos are from the festivities of Fr. Sibilano's fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Counterclockwise, from bottom left: Fr. Sibilano presides at Mass, joined by Oblate priests and some of the local clergy; Fr. Joe's love for youth has not waned, and he continues to share the love of Jesus with young people of the Church, just as our founder, St. Joseph Marelllo, exhorted us to do; Fr. Joe incensing the crucifix during the Mass; the reception following the Mass allowed all to continue the celebration with Fr. Joe. The decoration on the cake reads, "50 Years of Making a Difference. Congratulations Fr. Joe, OSJ." Again, thank you to Bob Price Photography who provided the photos.



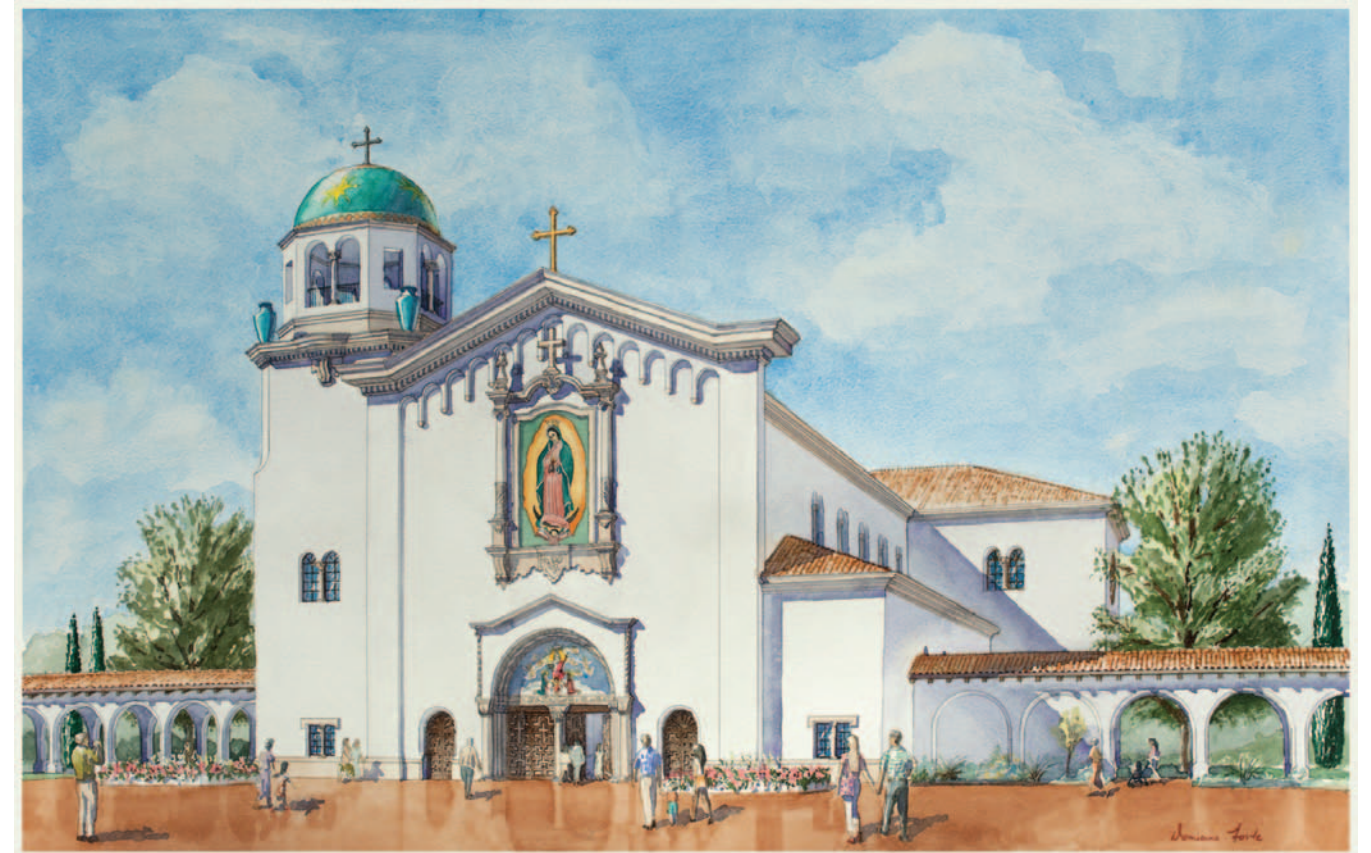
Building Our Mother's Church

PHASE II CONSTRUCTION

By Virginia Santos-Ruiz

FOR THE LAST fourteen years the Oblates of St. Joseph along with the church community of Our Lady of Guadalupe here in Bakersfield, CA have been working towards realizing the enormous project of building the first Catholic shrine in Kern County, CA. As mentioned in our previous article, this is an honor that has been given to all of the people here in the community. Although at times it seems that it is going to be impossible to achieve, the people know that with God all things are possible.

As you can observe by the pictures we have provided of our future shrine, we have stayed with a beautiful traditional architectural design. It is very important that we keep the design as consistent with our Catholic traditions as possible, so as to always be able to recall the sacred presence of God in the new shrine. We also wanted to be reminded of the simplicity and beauty that Our Lady of Guadalupe signifies. The grandeur of our Mother's image will always surpass the magnificence of any church that is built.



The conceptual designs for this article were created by Domiane Forte:
<http://domianeforte.com/>



We look forward to the devotees of Our Lady of Guadalupe who believe and will be a part of the pilgrimages that will come through our city. Many who trust in the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe come to her seeking help for the sick. Sicknesses range from physical illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, and help with the ability to conceive. Many of the devotees make promises to visit the Virgin of Guadalupe and are unable to get to the Basilica in Mexico. Many of the promises consist of pilgrims crawling on their knees for miles as they approach the shrine before praying to the Virgin. This shrine will be here for those that are unable to go to Mexico and need a place to fulfill their promise.

We are especially honored with the fact that the land where the shrine will be erected is in the poorest

area of our city, east Bakersfield. We believe that this has always been in God's plan. He sees the need for his mother's presence in an area where the value of life has been destroyed. Abortion rates rise in poverty stricken areas, where destitute young women are led to believe that all hope is gone and lives are dispensable. Drugs and violence are taking over the streets, again, because life seems to have no value. All of this can change with the presence of our shrine.

This shrine will be a place where the hopeless can come for faith and love, a place where the needy can find a helping hand, and a place where the preoccupied can find clarity and salvation. We will be able to spread the values that are at the heart of what the Catholic Church represents, the values that over time many people have lost or have never been introduced to. God

has a plan for us. God calls all of us to be his disciples and to spread the truth of His mercy and love, and this shrine and its people will proclaim the sacredness of human life from the moment of conception, to the moment of natural death.

We will be starting our bi-monthly mail-outs soon, and are requesting that people contact us to be able to receive our updates, and the way to do this is by becoming a "Friend of the Shrine." We have been able to obtain a little more than three million dollars in pledges and donations. However, we are still in need of nine million dollars in order for us to begin construction. Although, the numbers can seem daunting, this is nothing compared to the sacrifice that our Lord made for us. There will be no greater way to pay our Lord

homage, than to build this church for our queen and mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom Jesus desires so much to see loved and honored by all: the more she is honored, the greater is the glory of her Son. It is clear to us that with your support we will be able to make this shrine a reality sooner rather than later.

For more information on how to become a Friend of the Shrine, or to have your name added to our Shrine mailing list, please contact us!

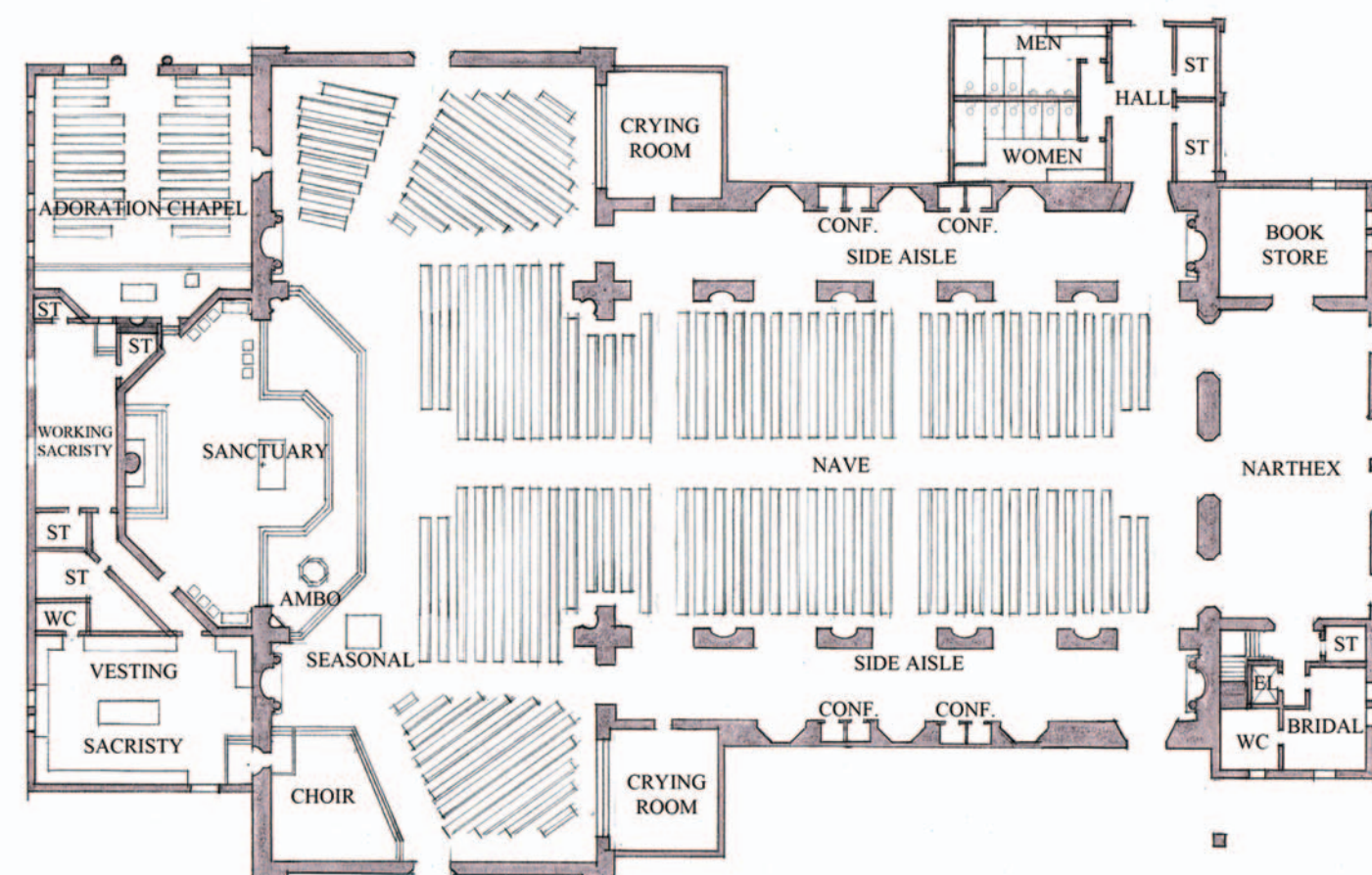
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Facing page: Artist's rendering of the interior of the shrine building.

Above: Preliminary layout of the shrine.

Family

The Oblates of St. Joseph imitate the Holy Family in their common life. They live together in their religious communities and foster a true family spirit in their houses:

- In faithfulness to their daily rhythm of liturgy and prayer
- Through sharing common meals and schedules
- By participating together in ministry and recreation
- While supporting each other in the challenges and trials of life

Is God calling you to be an Oblate of St. Joseph?

If you are interested in knowing more about our community and our spirituality, please visit our website at www.osjusa.org or get in touch with a local Oblate community. See our directory on page 19.



Missionaries of Joy

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

Our Holy Father Pope Francis, bringing his Apostolic Letter *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) to a close, moves from considering what it means to be a joy filled believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ to the mission each of us has to spread that joy as much as possible. It is a great thing to be loved by God! It is an amazing thing that the Son of God came to earth to save me! It is beyond imagining that the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us who believe, and it is our ultimate joy to know we have a place in eternal life prepared for us by Jesus himself! Our Holy Father has reflected on how this is meant to be experienced and lived by people in a genuine way. Sadly, all too often Christians allow themselves to be distracted by the world in which we live with its attractions and demands, and this diminishes our experience of God and his joy. We can sometimes be captivated by materialistic and ultimately self-centered ways of thinking and acting so common on this earth, and this interferes with the grace and happiness that the follower of God was meant to have. We can become stuck in useless patterns or limited in our perspectives, and thus miss how wonderfully God works in us and all around us.

Instead Pope Francis urges us to allow Christ to transform us, to remain open to the joy of the Lord and let it show in who we are and how we live. He especially urges those who work within the Church,

above and beyond all Christian faithful, to be particularly dedicated to tending to their faith, and making sure that the true joy of the Lord shines forth in every sermon spoken, every prayer offered, in every act of ministry organized and every service accomplished. Only servants who can themselves live the grace of Jesus Christ with authentic happiness can transmit it to others.

In a very particular way, the Holy Father sets forth the standard of care for the poor and needy of all kinds as the unique way of showing how a joyful faith in

Every person is beloved by God and is the object of his saving work—and the more needy and broken they are, the more God Himself seeks to come to their aid to help and save them.

Christ is best lived and demonstrated. Jesus our Savior himself set this example and urged it upon his followers. Every person is beloved by God and is the object of his saving work—and the more needy and broken they are, the more God Himself seeks to come to their aid to help and save

them. And so should we! How can we be content with being happy in the Lord, when there are those who are neither happy nor in the Lord? This world is often a cruel place where so many suffer, so many are deprived, so many are bound against their wills in situations that oppress them and leave them unable to have even the basic necessities of life. And this is true not only in material things, but also in the needs of heart and mind, where many are abused, lack education, and are given no room to grow or find respect. This is also true

spiritually, where worship and the practice of a faith that saves is prohibited or persecuted. It is most true in those unborn whose very life is taken before they open their eyes, or those sick and elderly whose lives are taken before their times. There is ample room for a follower of Christ to show his gratitude to the Lord by the good he can do. This is plenty of opportunity to share some of our grace and joy with those in need. Our Catholic Church has always been at the forefront of serving those most neglected, and that means us! How blessed would the world be if joyful Christians shared their joy by helping, healing, consoling, fixing, repairing, improving this world and its miseries.

Ultimately our Holy Father calls us to be evangelizers: people who are so touched by the love of the Lord and appreciate so much what He has done, that we are unafraid to share it, and indeed deliberately set out to look for opportunities to do it. He urges us to once again think of ourselves as a missionary people, with us being the missionaries. However, a good missionary is such only because of his personal, heartfelt and committed relationship to God. Only this relationship will allow him to be who he should be, find the joy that is God's gift, and be effective in spreading it. Our first efforts as Christians are to personally grow in this connection with God and never cease striving for more. When we do this together, we become a community, a people filled with the light of the Spirit of God, and then whole places, whole nations can be touched. If we did this all together as a Church—well, imagine what might happen!

Now you might wonder how you could be a “missionary” if you are linked to responsibilities or lack opportunities or don't seem to have abilities of a missionary. Pope Francis reminds us to not underestimate the Lord in finding opportunities for us to spread the Gospel, not sell ourselves short in what we really might do, but above all remember that even if it seems we can do

little, we can always pray! Prayer is a means to change the world as Jesus himself told us. There is never a time we are without the means to spread the gospel of joy, if only by prayer that brings grace to the neediest, strength to those who can get out into the world and be an inspiration to all. Do not neglect to remember

Pope Francis is a loving son of Mary who relies on her aid and prayer and motherly intervention to sustain him and the whole Church.

not only your personal needs or those of your immediate circle in prayer, but confidently include the needs of the whole Church, of those whose needs become known to you, those still looking to hear of Christ, and those looking to hold on. Pray for the intentions of our Holy Father who regularly brings the mission of the Church to us for the support of our prayers.

In the end, our Holy Father looks to Mary, Mother of God and Star of the New Evangelization. She is not only the model, living joyfully in union with Christ her Son, but also a faith-filled follower and a spreader of the news that God has come, that he is the Savior, that by faith in him we are all saved. She does this with love, with tenderness, with ears tuned to the Lord's inspiration. She continues to do this as our God given Mother from Heaven. Pope Francis is a loving son of Mary who relies on her aid and prayer and motherly intervention to sustain him and the whole Church. We can and must do no less. May Mary the Mother of all who live the grace and joy of Christ, help us and lead us to show the whole world our joy!

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



Toward Holiness

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

Authentic youth ministry includes not only walking with youth, but being present to them and participating in their lives in many different ways.

Many who know the Oblates of St. Joseph and their unique ministry within the Church understand the importance of young people in the Oblate identity. Our past articles on youth ministry were dedicated to the explanation of the official youth ministry plan of every Oblate community within the Congregation. The focus of Oblate youth ministry has always been to walk “step by step” with young people as they encounter obstacles, sorrows, and joys, and the role of the Oblate is to accompany each young person who needs guidance and direction. It is with this in mind that we must also acknowledge that simply walking with a young person is not enough.

Young people have many questions and are seeking answers that unfortunately are often left unanswered. It is for this purpose that the Oblates and all those who follow the Josephite-Marellian spirituality are to help young people towards the goal of holiness by an

active presence and participation in their lives.

There are many temptations and harmful paths that young people can follow, which is why the Church reminds every baptized person that their ultimate purpose in life is to be holy. The Church’s message to holiness can be overshadowed by the allurements of modern society, which prevent young people in knowing and embracing their vocation to holiness. This message needs to be proclaimed and shared with all, especially among youth. The Oblate way of life is to help young people not only know God’s message for them but to help them to reach that goal. The ultimate achievement of holiness is when we are united with God in Heaven. If Heaven is our goal, then what are we concretely doing to help youth to achieve this reality?

One way to help our young people is to recognize that they belong to a community, a family,

the Church. Unfortunately, many youth feel isolated from their families, society, and the Church. It is our responsibility to welcome young people into the Church and remind them that they are with and in the Church, which helps us to get closer to our goal of Heaven. Being a part of something bigger than oneself allows the young person to realize that there is more to life than their own limited experience. The connection with the Church should be something that motivates young people to fall in love with their faith and seek to go deeper into the mysteries of the Church. The Church encourages young people to take an active participation in their faith and community; to not be just bystanders and let opportunities pass by. It is the encouragement of the faithful that inspires young people to recognize that they have a goal in life and that they are not alone.

It is with this zeal that young people are called to share this goal

with others. This apostolic zeal provides them with a missionary spirit to offer their time and talents for the Lord. After young people understand that they belong to a community and experience the love and faith of that community, then they want to share it with their friends, their family, and all those who are willing to hear. The excitement of young people is needed to help enliven the spirit in others. Whether it is in their local communities or in distant countries, young people need encouragement to be ready and willing to live out their joy in the Gospel. Youth ministry of the Oblates of St. Joseph helps young people to focus their zeal through proper education, forma-

tion, and spiritual direction. By communicating with young people about their faith experience and forming them to appropriately become a living witness of the Gospel, we try to assist young people in realizing that they can live out their goal here on earth. The goal of Heaven is made present when young people recognize that their life in Heaven begins now. The best way to show young people on how to live out Heaven here on earth is by looking at the example of the one person who actually lived out that experience, St. Joseph.

As St. Joseph was able to live out a foretaste of heaven on earth with Jesus and Mary at his side, he is able to teach young people that

simply living out the message of God in our everyday lives is how one is able to experience heaven on earth. As the oft quoted maxim of St. Joseph Marello states, “do the ordinary in an extraordinary way.” This is the guiding principle that allows the Oblates of St. Joseph to help young people towards the goal of holiness. This is the path for all the faithful, but most importantly for the young people whom Jesus loves and places under the gentle protection of their patron, St. Joseph.

Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J., serves as Vocation Director and Youth Director of the Holy Spouses Province.

Below: Youth from the Oblates parishes and ministries in California gather in Loomis, CA for Oblate Youth Day on June 21, 2015.



Prayer and Discernment

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

“Father, how do I know if Jesus is calling me to the religious life or priesthood?” This is probably the most common question that I have been asked when speaking with young people about their vocations. Distractions abound in our world today, and turning to Google, Facebook or Twitter for answers can only get you general information on a religious vocation and stories on what others have experienced. These can be very helpful, but choosing a particular vocation is a response to a call from God, and this is different than researching a career path. In addition, the great variety of religious congregations and dioceses is often very overwhelming, and it is easy to get bogged down with all of the different options when discerning. So to the question, “How do I know if Jesus is calling me to the consecrated life and priesthood?,” my first response is, “PRAY!”

In her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, St. Therese of Lisieux writes, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned towards heaven; it is a cry of recognition and love; embracing both trial and joy.” Through prayer, we deepen our relationship with the Triune God who is always present to us. Our prayer time is a moment when we can have a “heart to Heart” with the One who created us, and through this encounter, he assists us in finding our particular call. In order to know if Jesus is calling you to the consecrated life and priesthood, you have to listen to him in prayer.

I recently have been reading a few reflections on priestly spirituality by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. In his booklet, *Ministers of Your Joy* (1989), he reflects on different Gospel passages and relates them to the call to the priesthood. Cardinal Ratzinger examines the retelling of the moment when the birth of John the Baptist was

announced to Zechariah (Luke 1:5-17). In verse 13 we hear the angel Gabriel speak, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard.” Allow me to share with you what Cardinal Ratzinger says about this particular passage: “The birth of this son, who at the same time ushers in the turning-point of the age, the redemption of the world, is hearkening to the prayer of a human being. It takes place as the response to the cry that a human being had made to the Lord. Prayer does not go into a vacuum; nor is it merely something like a kind of psychotherapy which we use to gather spiritual forces together and try to bring them once more into balance; nor is it a kind of pious fiction to exercise and calm our souls. Prayer is directed at reality. It is heard and hearkened to. God therefore is someone who has the power, the ability, the will and the patience to listen to people. God can answer.”

When a person enters into authentic moments of prayer, and listens to what our God has to say, powerful transformations occur. As Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “prayer does not go into a vacuum.” We are not just meditating passively when we pray, we are actively engaging in a loving exchange, with our almighty and merciful God who desires to help us find our path in this life. Finding our God-given mission here on earth is so important because it leads us toward our ultimate happiness, which is heaven. My friends, God truly listens to our prayers and responds in due time. Spend time with Him; ask him what your life’s calling is, and after you ask with an open heart, be patient and listen to what he has to say!

Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J., serves as parochial vicar of St. Joseph Mareello parish in Pittston, PA.

News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA

■ Divine Mercy Sunday, April 12th, was celebrated solemnly at our Shrine for all within the Santa Cruz/Watsonville region of the Monterey Diocese. Numerous priests were available for the afternoon confessions. Following the praying of the 3:00 Divine Mercy Chaplet, a solemn Mass was celebrated by Father Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., shrine director, followed by a social on the shrine grounds.

■ The Feast of St. Joseph the Worker was celebrated on May 1st at the regularly scheduled 11:00 daily morning Mass. Fr. Jackson Pinhero, O.S.J., associate shrine director, celebrated the Mass honoring all workers and offering special prayers for the unemployed.

■ Healing Mass was offered in our Shrine chapel on Sunday, May 3, by Father Nelson Osorio, O.S.J., from our Oblate Philippine Province. A full crowd participated in the Mass to experience the healing touch of our Lord through the celebration of the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick.

■ On Mothers' Day, May 10th, St. Vincent de Paul Church, in the nearby town of Davenport, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the parish. Serving as principal celebrant and homilist for the 10:00 AM Mass of Thanksgiving was Bishop Richard Garcia, D.D., Bishop of Monterey. Concelebrating were Fr. Jackson Pinhero, O.S.J., parish administrator, and Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., Provincial of Holy Spouses Province.



Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Davenport, CA.

■ Wednesday, May 13th, the Shrine community in conjunction with the Santa Cruz Knights of Columbus, Council #371, honored Our Lady of Fatima on the anniversary of her appearance at Fatima, Portugal in 1917, with



World Meeting of Families

Like Catholics around the country, the Oblates of the Holy Spouses Province in the United States are excited about the upcoming World Meeting of Families and Pope Francis' visit to the country. We have been working to secure options for accommodations and to coordinate our lay friends and cooperators that are interested in participating. If you and your family are planning to attend or seek to be united to the event spiritually, please contact your local Oblates. Most importantly, please continue to pray for the success of the gathering!

a special evening Mass, rosary procession and crowning of the Pilgrim Virgin Statue. A social followed for all participants and the Knights and their families in Masante Hall.

■ The Shrine welcomed numerous visitors on the Memorial Day weekend, kicking off unofficially the start of the summer season. A Mass of Remembrance was offered on Memorial Day morning for all of our men and women who made the supreme sacrifice in offering their lives in service to our country.

■ The Oblates of St. Joseph religious community staffed at the Shrine participated in the annual spiritual retreat of the USA province, held from June 1-5 at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, Illinois (just outside of Chicago). The retreat was preached by Fr. Dan Cambra, M.I.C., a priest from the Divine Mercy Shrine in Stockbridge, MA.

■ The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was solemnly celebrated on Friday, June 12th, with Mass and afternoon exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This Feast is very important in the life of the Church and dear to the heart of the Founder of the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph, St. Joseph Marelllo.

■ All fathers were remembered on Fathers' Day morning (June 21) at the Shrine. A special blessing was extended to them at the conclusion of Mass through the intercession of St.

Joseph, the protector of our Shrine and the Patron of Fathers.

PITTSTON, PA

■ The laity held a 50/50 drawing from June 8 thru June 12. The proceeds of \$1000 will be used to assist the Oblate fathers and brothers and the needs of the seminary in Pittston. Thank you to all who helped make this fundraiser a success.

■ A special thank you to Fr. Alvaro de Oliveira Joaquim, O.S.J., for the monthly Josephite Seed. This is a monthly publication of the Interamerican Josephite-Marellian Center.

■ The final SLIM meeting for the fiscal year was held on June 3. Elaine Fisher, President, thanked everyone for their participation and for another great year. Meetings of the laity in the Pittston area will resume on September 2.



The SLIM laity in Pittston sponsored a day at the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre to help feed the poor in the community.

Left: The Oblates of St. Joseph gathered for their annual retreat outside of Chicago, IL. The theme of the retreat this year was Divine Mercy.

HAZLETON, PA

- On Sunday, April 26, the annual Spring Formation Conference was held at Holy Annunciation Parish in Hazleton. Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J., spoke about understanding the connection between St. Joseph Marelllo and the priesthood. He also spoke about the seven pastoral letters written by St. Joseph Marelllo. The laity of both Pittston and Hazleton extend their gratitude to Fr. Greg not only for leading the conference but for sharing the words of St. Joseph Marelllo with those who attended. The day ended with Mass and a reception hosted by the Hazleton laity.

BAKERSFIELD, CA

- The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Copatroness of the Unborn began the *Embrace* ministry for parents who have lost children to miscarriage or stillbirth. With very short notice there was a heartfelt response to a meeting. Then at the memorial Mass the names of 94 deceased babies from 69 families were read. It will be an annual ministry after Mothers' Day. The parish is also beginning to plan a Memorial to the Unborn and their Copatrons on the Shrine property.

- For the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, in accord with *Vultus Misericordiae*, our Shrine has received the bishop's permission to construct a symbolic portal of Mercy at the Pavilion where the central mural behind the altar is of Divine Mercy.

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

- In conjunction with the Annual Pilgrimage to The Shrine of

St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer, Santa Cruz, CA on October 17, 2015, the Loomis SLIM chapter is also organizing an extended stay option which would allow pilgrims to stay the night in Santa Cruz to continue their visit through Sunday, October 18, 2015. For those in the Sacramento area who are interested in more information, please contact Karen Chapplear at karen@chappelear.com.

- The aspirants (men in formation) who completed the academic year in Loomis will continue on in various stages. One aspirant will remain in Loomis to continue formation, and others will move to the newly established house of formation for the Oblates outside of Philadelphia. Please continue to pray for the men in formation with the Holy Spouses Province.

- On June 15-19, 2015, The Oblates in Loomis hosted a week-long vocation retreat. Accompanying the retreatants were the seminarians of the Province. Following the vocation retreat, over one hundred youth from around California gathered in Loomis to celebrate the annual Oblate Youth Day on June 19-21, 2015.



Conceptual design of the portal of Mercy to be constructed at the Pavilion on the grounds of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bakersfield, CA.

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Preparing for Mercy

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

The Year of Mercy doesn't begin for another few months yet, but it's never too early to start reflecting on the place of mercy in our lives.

Right after Easter this year I was blessed to be able to go to Rome for a few weeks. The trip was mostly for "business": I was taking part in several gatherings for formators of candidates to the religious life. But I was also able to see some of Rome, visit with my brother Oblates there, and enjoy a visit to the heart of our Catholic Church.

One of the highlights of my trip was the opportunity to be present at St. Peter's for the Vespers service (Evening Prayer) on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday. At this particular celebration, presided over by Pope Francis, the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy was officially announced and declared to begin on December 8 of this year.

Ever since I heard about Pope Francis' plan for the Year of Mercy, I've been excited, for a variety of reasons: I wouldn't be an Oblate or a priest if it wasn't for God's mercy;

without recourse to sacramental confession and trust in God's merciful love, my life would be a disaster; and how much I love to experience God's mercy in the little ways that he makes himself present to us throughout the day. So my thought on the Year of Mercy was basically, "This is great, I can't wait to bask in God's mercy throughout this extraordinary year!"

It is a fine sentiment I think, and maybe you had a more or less similar reaction to the Pope's plan. Who can complain about the mercy God showers down upon us, especially when we need it most? And then I started reading *Vultus Misericordiae*, the Papal Bull that announces the Year of Mercy. Very quickly I realized that this upcoming Year of Mercy is about more than just the mercy God bestows upon me and you.

In fact, Pope Francis devotes almost the first half of that document not so much to the mercy that we *receive*, but to the mercy we're *called to share*. While he is certainly challenging us personally

to have recourse to God's mercy in a new and profound way, he's also challenging us to *share* that same mercy to those we meet: to put into practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, to give of our lives just as Christ gives his life to us, to be witnesses to others of the mercy we ourselves have received.

I hope you too are looking forward to this upcoming Year of Mercy. I hope you are excited to recall how merciful God has been with you in life, and to renew your trust in the Father's infinite merciful love for you. But let's not forget that this Year of Mercy means that we also need to be more merciful to each other, that we need to forgive others as our Father forgives us, and that we need to give of ourselves, just as the Lord has so generously given to us!

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 mspencer@osjusa.org.

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