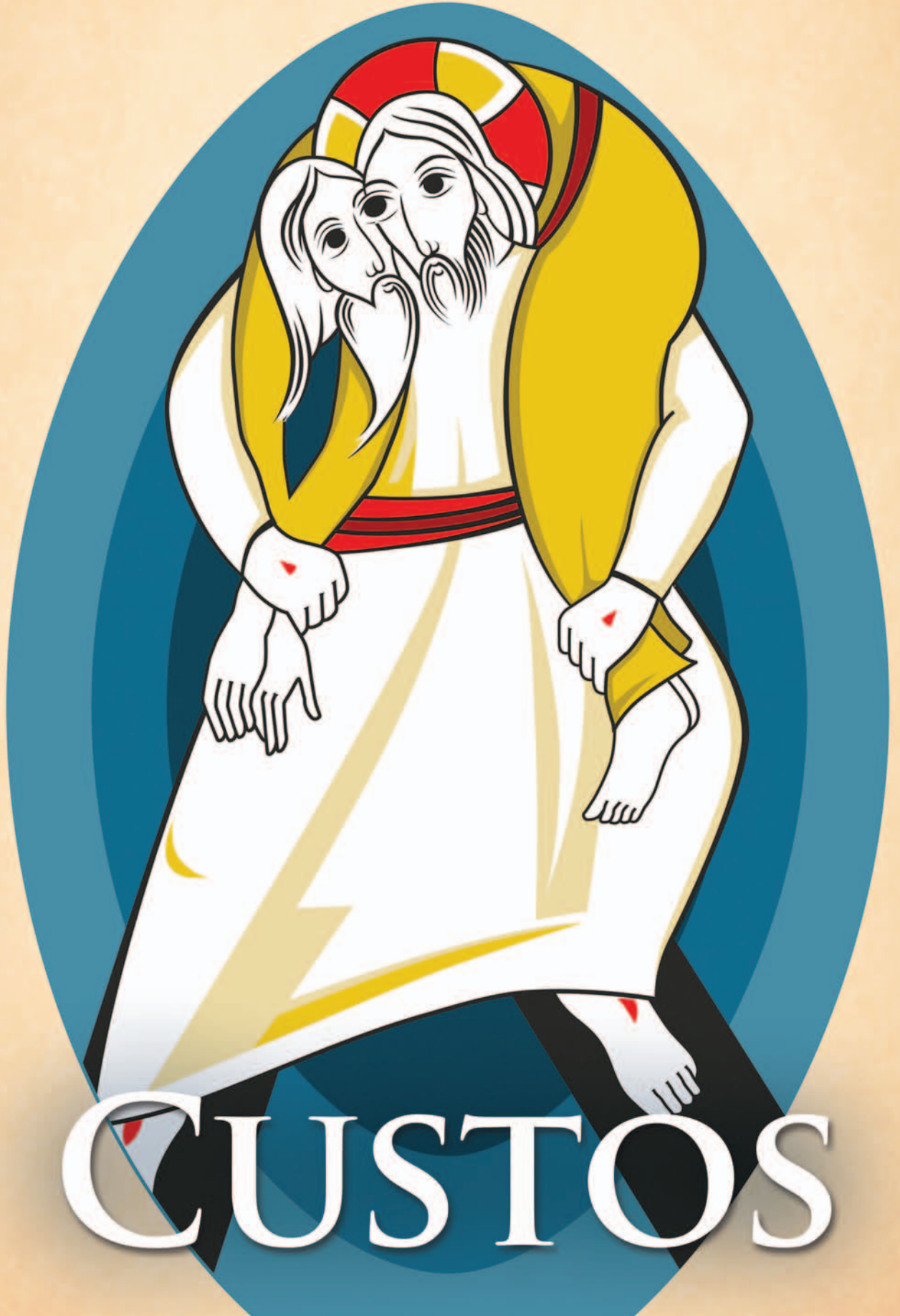


Winter 2015-2016

YEAR OF MERCY

December 8, 2015-November 20, 2016

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



CUSTOS

*"St. Joseph, since you
can do everything before
Jesus and Mary, show
us that your kindness is
as great as your power.
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 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.

*Executive Editor: Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J.
 email: custos@osjusa.org*

*Distribution & Circulation: Susan Vega
 email: custos-circulation@osjusa.org*

*Send correspondence and subscription inquiries to:
 Custos, 544 West Cliff Dr., Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 email: custos-circulation@osjusa.org
 phone: (831) 457-1868 • web: http://osjusa.org*

Front Cover: Official logo for the Year of Mercy.

Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).

DEAR FRIENDS OF St. Joseph,

It is the end of the day and a quiet night here in my Santa Cruz office and although it would seem logical to prepare for a night's rest, I feel drawn to write my column now for this issue of our province magazine as I offered Mass earlier in the evening for the prisoners of Rountree Medium Facility in Watsonville, CA (Santa Cruz County). It is always a rewarding experience to bring Jesus inside the prison walls and within the hearts of broken lives. Tonight's encounter with these prisoners helps me to focus on two main points of which I wish to share with you in



this message: gratitude and mercy. I sensed among these men an authentic sense of gratitude for my spending quality time with them in the company of a few faithful lay volunteers dedicated to prison ministry. In this particular setting, I realized how especially grateful we become when we lose our way in life or make poor choices that affect our lives in a personal way and the lives of others. In their gratitude they also spoke openly and contritely of their mistakes, sins and crimes, yet acknowledging how God was challenging them to change their lives through the humble acceptance of His Mercy.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is leading us into this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015-November 20, 2016) with the invitation to be exactly what these prisoners openly expressed tonight: gratitude for the love and compassion of God through His servants and trust in His infinite Mercy. One of the most moving moments of Pope Francis' time in the U.S.A. was his visit to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia,

where he met with inmates on Sunday morning, September 27th. In his speech to them he compassionately stated: "All of us have something we need to be cleansed of, or purified from. May the knowledge of that fact inspire us to live in solidarity, to support one another and to seek the best for others...let us look to Jesus for He comes to save us from the lie that says no one can change. He helps us to journey along the paths of life and fulfillment. May the power of His love and His resurrection always be a path leading you to new life." This is the hope we all hold on to, my dear friends, as we enter into this Year of Mercy with grateful hearts knowing that our God does not abandon or condemn us.

The teachings of Christ clearly calls us to embrace a new perspective of humankind: that we are brothers and sisters to one another; that we are called not to be judges or self-appointed executors of God's wrath on others but to be agents of His forgiveness and reconciliation; that we should find no satisfaction in the fall of sinners but should only be satisfied when we have done all we can to lift them up and restore them to hope.

May the exciting moments we are about to live through with our families and friends—the opening of the Year of Mercy, Christmas, the start of a new year—be all opportunities to celebrate with gratitude in our hearts the healing mercy of God that is manifested to us through the humility of the Christ Child and hopefully lived and shared everyday of our lives.

Blessings to you and your families at this holiday season and please accept my simple words of gratitude for how you are the "Living Christ" to me and my brother Oblates of Saint Joseph through your prayerful and loving support.

United in love with the Holy Family,

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

Provincial Superior, Holy Spouses Province

Introducing Shrine Coffee

SANTA CRUZ, CA, home to the Provincial headquarters of the Oblates of St. Joseph, is a unique and beautiful city, one that holds a special place within the rich heritage of the California Missions. The Guardian of the Redeemer Shrine, with its prime location along gorgeous West Cliff Drive, has a plan in place to renew and reinvigorate our unique missionary opportunity to witness to those hundreds of locals and tourists who daily pass by our doors. With the addition

of the Shrine Coffee House, the Oblate community seeks to “open wide the doors” to our neighbors, and thus to Christ Himself.

What is Shrine Coffee?

Shrine Coffee will be a non-profit, third wave community coffeehouse, operating as an extension of the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph shrine ministry. It is being established in the hopes of serving as a meeting place melding the ideas of wonder and welcome,

for all people, whatever stage they find themselves in the great pilgrimage of life. It will also seek to serve as a vital instrument for renewal during this time of “new evangelization” within the Church, hosting book clubs, study groups, and sponsoring guest speakers.

The vision of founding a missionary coffeehouse on the Shrine of St. Joseph location began in 2008 under the guidance of Fr. John Warburton, OSJ and with the blessing of Bishop Richard Garcia.



Above: Artist's rendering of the interior of the future Shrine Coffee. Facing page: Logo of Shrine Coffee. Right: View of the bay from the Shrine.

SHRINE COFFEE



Since that time, a talented team has assembled to develop that vision under the enthusiastic leadership of Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., a team poised now to see it through to completion, God willing, in 2016.

Why a Coffee House?

Since 1952, the Shrine of St. Joseph has been a place of pilgrimage and devotion, inviting Santa Cruz tourists and locals alike to enter ever more deeply into the prayer and sacramental life of the universal Church. But as central as the liturgical life is to our Shrine community, what is also needed now are welcoming spaces of relationship and encounter; in the imagery Pope Francis has been emphasizing, the Church is “a field hospital after battle”, needing “nearness, proximity.”

Spaces are sorely lacking where committed Catholic disciples of Christ can build relationship in community with both the un-churched as well as those, who

though having received some sacraments along the way, have been “de-churched”, who never heard the personal call to holiness through the noise and distractions of this world. While many do not feel comfortable going into a Catholic Church, these same people do not harbor such inhibitions in seeking a quiet place of refreshment. Harbors are needed from the mael-



strom and cacophony of modern life where the opportunity to have a nourishing and friendly encounter can reintroduce the disenfranchised to the true hospitality and grace of the Church.

The Coffee House as a Place of Encounter

The coffeehouse has emerged once again as the meeting place of choice for a diverse cross-section of humanity, and in particular has become so for many who are “afar off”. It was stumbling upon a missionary coffeehouse while an undergraduate student that began project manager Anne Breiling’s “reversion” to the Catholic faith, an unexpected encounter that ultimately changed the whole trajectory of her life. So over time, such spaces can facilitate real dialogue with the unchurched or de-churched in a way that more programmatic methods or media based evangelism cannot. Cateche-

sis, apologetics, even the primary proclamation of the gospel were all designed by Our Lord to take place in relationship, in community, in an environment of encounter.

Building Shrine Coffee

Through craft, hospitality, and fidelity, Shrine Coffee will seek to “promote [this] culture of encounter” Pope Francis continues to en-

“May our Christian communities really be places of hospitality, listening, and communion!”

—Pope Francis

courage, to provide an oasis from the false divide of mind and spirit, reason and faith, that modern man is accustomed to, and plagued by

– and to do so in a manner following in the Church’s great tradition of cultivating and promoting the beautiful and the good in service of the true.

The zoning permit from the Santa Cruz planning department has been secured (a small miracle in itself!), initial architectural plans have been drawn up—the concept being one of entering St. Joseph’s workshop—equipment and local suppliers chosen, business plan is being finalized, and most importantly, we continue to receive the blessing and enthusiastic support of our Bishop, the Most Reverend Richard Garcia. With this foundation laid, our prayers and work continue for a fruitful funding campaign, stretching from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) to the Feast of St. Joseph (March 19), which God willing will see us through to the beginning of construction and the opening of our doors.



The Corporal Works of Mercy

This Year of Mercy provides us a wonderful opportunity to be more diligent in sharing the love of Christ with others. Here we share some insights from the USCCB on how to put into practice the corporal works of mercy.

Feed the Hungry

There are many people in this world who go without food. When so much of our food goes to waste, consider how good stewardship practices of your own food habits can benefit others who do not have those same resources.

- Having delicious food at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner? Donate to a Thanksgiving or Christmas food drive so everyone can have something to eat.
- Research, identify and contribute financially to organizations that serve the hungry.

- The next time you make a recipe that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and donate one to your local food pantry or soup kitchen.

Give Drink to the Thirsty

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.

- We take it for granted that we have access to clean water. Donate to help build wells for water for those in need

Above: The Seven Works of Mercy by Frans II Francken, 1605.

GET INVOLVED

How Can I Help?



In addition to keeping this project in your prayers, you can follow project updates via our facebook page at facebook.com/shrinecoffee as well as share it with your friends. Tax-deductible online donations are accepted either at shrinecoffee.com or patreon.com/shrinecoffee, or checks may be made out to “Oblates of St. Joseph” with “Shrine Coffee” in the memo, and mailed to: **Shrine of St. Joseph, 544 W. Cliff Dr., Santa Cruz, CA 95060.**

Our gratitude in advance for any support, spiritual or financial, that you can lend to building Shrine Coffee, God bless you!

- Organize a group of children involved on a sports team (e.g. soccer) or a summer camp. Invite them to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families. If parents can be involved, ask them to accompany their children in delivering the water to the families.
- Make an effort not to waste water, especially in regions suffering from drought.

Shelter the Homeless

There are many circumstances that could lead to someone becoming a person without a home. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to the challenges they face.

- See if your parish or diocese is involved with a local homeless shelter and volunteer some time.
- Donate time or money to organizations that build homes for those who need shelter.
- Many homeless shelters need warm blankets for their beds. If you can knit or sew that would be an extra loving gift.

Visit the Sick

Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.

- Give blood
- Spend time volunteering at a nursing home – Get creative and make use of your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.)!
- Take time on a Saturday to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor.
- Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Give caregivers time off from their caregiving responsibilities so they can rest

- Next time you make a meal that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and give it to a family in your parish who has a sick loved one.

Visit the Prisoners

People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. No matter what someone has done, they deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ.

- See if your parish, or a nearby parish, has a prison ministry and if so, get involved.
- Volunteer to help out or donate to charities that give Christmas presents to children or prisoners.

Bury the Dead

Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Through our prayers and actions during these times we show our respect for life, which is always a gift from God, and comfort to those who mourn.

- Send a card to someone who has recently lost a loved one. Make your own card and use some of these prayers.
- Visit the cemetery and pray for those you have lost.
- Spend time planning your own funeral mass, read through the Order of Christian Funerals and find our hope in the Resurrection.

Give Alms to the Poor

Donate money to organizations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need. Do research and find organizations that put people in need first, rather than profit.

- Skip the morning latte and put that money in the collection basket at church.
- Find a charity that is meaningful to you and volunteer your time or donate.
- This Lent, give up eating out at restaurants. Pack your meals and donate the extra money to charities.

Memories of St. Joseph Mareello

Translated by Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J.

Editor's note: One of the early books in promoting devotion to the founder of the Oblates of St. Joseph was a short collection of anecdotes on the life of St. Joseph Mareello. Written by Fr. Mario Pascolo, O.S.J., the work was entitled Before the Traffic Signal, referring to the fact that each account would be short enough to read in the time it would take to wait at a traffic intersection. In years past, the Oblates of St. Joseph have published some of these recollections on the life of St. Joseph Mareello, and we are happy to resume sharing them in this and in subsequent issues.

“Love for Justice”

Fr. Joseph Mareello was always very careful about matters of justice. With respect to this virtue, we have this beautiful memory as told by Bro. Benedetto Coppa, one of the most congenial and joyful figures among the early Oblate lay brothers. It must be known that Bro. Benedetto was not only the tailor for the Santa Chiara Institute, but he was also the master of ceremonies and the chief sacristan of our chapel, which at that time was in need of many items. And thus it was that Bro. Benedetto took it upon himself to obtain whatever was necessary for the sacred ceremonies.

Because he was good friends with Mr. Ferraris, the sacristan of the Cathedral of Asti, he asked him one

day, “Listen, Mr. Ferraris, don’t you have a second-hand chalice you could lend me for use at the Santa Chiara Chapel?” Mr. Ferraris, who was used to serving the needs of Canon Mareello, thought for a moment and said, “For Santa Chiara I have everything. Come, come.” And he gave Brother a metal chalice which was no longer being used. “Take this,” he said. “It is not new, but it is still good. Here we have plenty of chalices and this one has been set aside. I am sure no one will miss it.”

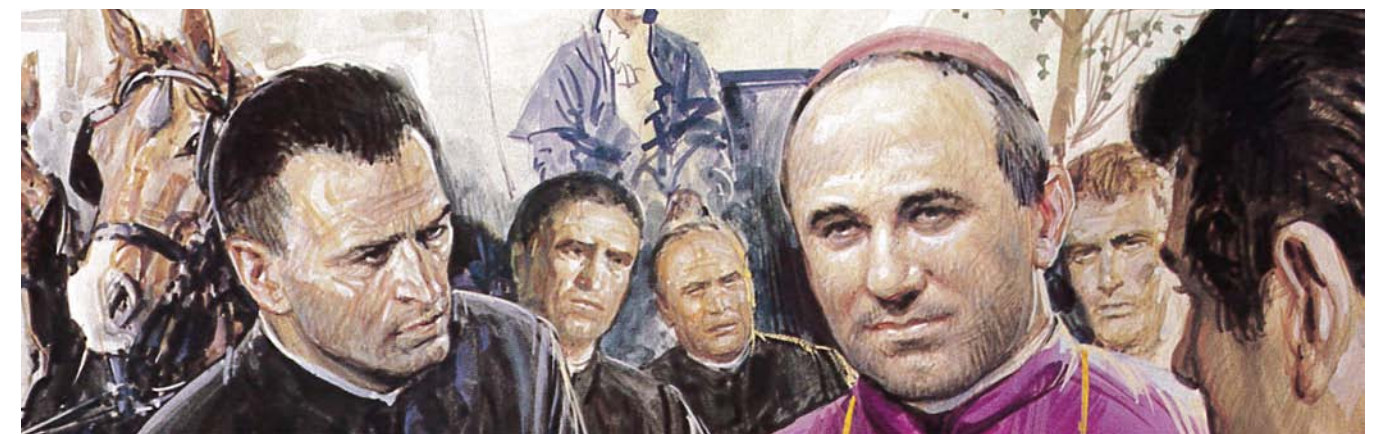
But Canon Mareello noticed it immediately when he saw the chalice in the sacristy at Santa Chiara. “Bro. Benedetto,” he said, “How did this come to be here? It seems to me that I have seen it in the sacristy of the Cathedral.”

“Father, it was given to me by Mr. Ferraris because there, they no longer needed it. I had asked him for—”

“Bro. Benedetto, this is not just. Mr. Ferraris is not authorized to give away items of this value. Now we will need to reimburse the Cathedral.”

And so it was done. Naturally, Fr. Mareello paid for it out of his own funds.

Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J., serves as pastor of St. Joachim parish in Madera, CA.



It's All about Mercy

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

"We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (Misericordiae Vultus, 2).

I SUPPOSE THERE ARE many ways to approach what is at the heart of the Christian Faith, many ways to try to envision God Himself, seeking to focus in one concept the very essence of it all. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, drawing upon the two thousand years of the Church's meditation on the God who made it and sustains it, has asked us to focus on "Mercy".

In it are to be tied everything else we might otherwise propose: Love, Holiness, Goodness, Power, Perfection, Goodness, Justice.... He says it "reveal the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity"- God in His ultimate Essence. This is not a whim on the part of the Pope, but the fruit of God's own Revelation through His inspired Scripture, the constant experience of His People as they seek Him and find Him and listen to Him. The Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is an outpouring of unending perfect love that gives Himself entirely and

overflows into a Creation that exists solely so that that unending perfect love might be lavished upon it and enjoy it - mercy! There is no greater reality than God Himself, and in His core, He is love in action, reaching out to share who He is with what He had made, just because His creatures are made happy, and are raised up by it. It is the fundamental law of all Creation, the ultimate and supreme act of God.

Now this is amazing in itself: that God has made all things simply so that He can express His mercy, bringing to creatures the greatness of Himself as a gift. However, this is the way the entire created universe is supposed to exist - based wholly on God's giving of Himself. Thus the entirety of Creation is to be that

place of love, wonder, perfection, goodness, holiness, justice.... that is a reflection of God Himself. Every intelligent being, from the Angels downwards should be able to see it. They should be able to rejoice in it. They

should find their happiness in it. They should find continuing inspiration and motivation for their lives in it.

However, at least with regards this little corner of creation and the beings who live here, that didn't go so well. We human beings turned from God and His outpouring of Himself and thought we could find happiness doing things our own way. The original sin. It has been a disaster ever since.

But what has been God's response? Only to be true to Himself, and continue to pour Himself upon

us, finding ways to continue to show mercy. He came Himself, the Son born in the flesh, and in a way that could only be the fruit of God being joined to man, by His Passion and Death, re-opened the connection with God and established a path through which mercy could flow. Now God's mercy forgives, rescues, redeems, restores, saves from the disaster of sin. His mercy leads Him to seek out those wounded by sin—in fact to seek out those most wounded and seemingly most distant—and with great love find ways to lead them back. His mercy leads Him to be a presence and strength for those looking to live in union with Him but still struggling in a world of sin and darkness. His mercy leads Him to never give up to win His children and help them finally be free so that they can enjoy His mercy without end in a heavenly life. Our salvation depends on His mercy, and it is something that is absolutely sure! For God cannot but be true to Himself—and thus have mercy on us! There is therefore hope for everyone one, even the greatest sinner, for what cannot be healed and put right by God's mercy? No matter how lost we may feel ourselves to be, or imagine someone else to be, that is not too great for God's mercy!

If this is the case, then mercy becomes the great principle of life: the life of God, the life of Creation, the life of the Saved. If God is its origin, and we are its recipients, then we must likewise be its reflections. Mercy is God's way of being and doing. It cannot but become our way of being and doing too.

Now this is one of our huge challenges as human beings, as children of God. It is a wonderful thing to

experience God showing us mercy, coming into our lives, helping us constantly, calling us to eternity. It is though, an immense effort, for us to then turn to one another and show the same kind of mercy. However, this is how it is supposed to be. In fact, it is God Himself who tells us that the condition of being open to receiving God's mercy, which is the way for us to experience it, can only be genuine if we are at the same time disposed to show it to those around it. It is to be for us the way we approach life and others: with the desire to show love that becomes both generosity and forgiveness. It is to be for us the way we conduct ourselves through all the moments that make up daily life: work, family, the life we live in our minds and hearts, our interactions with all our fellow human beings. It is to be for us the way we see each and every person we meet, no matter who they are, where they are from, or even what they have done. Mercy becomes the perspective, the attitude, the ultimate principle by which we go about our lives.

Our Holy Father, reflecting on all this, from the very first words of his Bull of Indiction, the official announcement of the Holy Year, has been inspired to call all of us in the Church to focus on Mercy. To be people who know it and embrace it from God. To be people who live it and express it. All of the life of the Church, in this upcoming Holy Year, through the activities that will take place, is to draw us back to that: mercy!

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

God has made all things simply so that He can express His mercy, bringing to creatures the greatness of Himself as a gift.



Reflections on Youth Ministry

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

THIS PAST AUGUST I travelled to the Philippines to participate in the 4th International Oblate Youth Ministry Congress. This Congress is assembled every 5 years to discuss how our Oblate Congregation is implementing our Josephite-Marellian spirituality in our youth ministry and sharing it among our youth and young adults. The theme for the Youth Ministry Congress was “Educating the Heart: a Right and a Duty.” It was with this theme in mind that we focused on three major areas in our Oblate Youth Ministry: on service in the manner

of St. Joseph Marelo, on educating the heart of our youth, and on the teaching role of the family. Tackling these important topics was a daunting task for the Oblate delegates from around the world, but the passion for serving our youth and young adults was our inspiration.

In reflecting on the first subject of our Congress, service in the style of St. Joseph Marelo, we started by first recalling his life and ministry as a priest and bishop. It is his life that becomes our model to follow in the way we relate

with and incorporate youth and young adults in their relationship with God. Throughout the life of St. Joseph Marelo, he dedicated portions of his time to serving his peers and other youth in their Christian formation, which included their human, spiritual, and academic dimensions. St. Joseph Marelo’s approach to the formation of youth was holistic and did not limit itself to only one aspect of the life of a young person. This is the same approach that Oblate youth ministers, either professed members or laypersons, are called

to engage the youth and young adults within our communities. It is not enough to focus only on the spiritual life of the young person, because we will lose their attention in their daily reality. It is also important not to focus solely on the temporal concerns of their lives, because we are pointing them to the heavenly reality of Jesus Christ. There must be a fine balance in ministering among the young people that allows the Oblate youth minister to be relatable and yet challenging. St. Marelo never backed down from a challenge, especially among young people, and this is exactly how our Josephite-Marellian spirituality needs to be implemented in our communities.

The best way to implement the Josephite-Marellian spirituality is by educating the heart of the individual. It is for this purpose that our Congregation was established: to look after the poor youth and those abandoned in society. The first step to educate the hearts of the young person is to acknowledge them and welcome them into the community. There are many youth who feel neglected or on the

peripheries and it is the role and duty of the Oblate to seek them out and bring them to Jesus. There must be a heart to heart connection between the young person, the Oblate youth minister, and most

The first step to educate the hearts of the young person is to acknowledge them and welcome them into the community. There are many youth who feel neglected or on the peripheries and it is the role and duty of the Oblate to seek them out and bring them to Jesus.

importantly, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When a young person is transformed by Christ, their new relationship begins to affect all of their other relationships.

The hope is that this domino effect in the youth’s lives will bring what they have experienced in Christ to their friends and their family. The role of the family in the life a young person is vital and can be a major distraction or a major asset. It is specifically the teaching role of the family that not only introduces the young person to Christ but fosters that aware-

ness in their soul. The identity of the family in the secular world is shifting and being distorted and for this reason the impact of the family in the life of the young person is essential. The Oblate youth minister needs to recognize the role of the family and attempt to involve the family in the life of their child. It is a difficult task, but it is one that St. Joseph Marelo would want his spiritual children to accept with open arms.

It is the joy and hope of the 4th International Oblate Youth Ministry Congress that every Oblate and youth minister will strive to

seek out those young people who are lost and abandoned. It is the desire of the Congress that every Oblate and youth minister bring excitement and authenticity to those who have a right to have an encounter with Christ and our duty to provide that opportunity. May the work and fruits of the Congress improve our Oblate youth ministry around the world and help young people get closer to Christ.

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



Participants of the Fourth International Oblate Youth Ministry Congress (Philippines, August 2015) assemble together for a photo.

The Beauty of the Call

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

Intro here

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE is one that focuses on the life of Christ and how the Christian is called to imitate that life. It is part of the universal call to holiness that Christians embrace the life of Christ and be one with him. The best way to know Christ and be united with him is by reading, studying and praying the scriptures, especially the Gospels. St. Jerome argued that “ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.” This means that Christians are encouraged, even demanded, to take up the scriptures and learn about Christ. While we learn about the life and teachings of Christ in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, some argue there is a “fifth gospel”: visiting the Holy Land, where Jesus walked, lived, prayed, and preached.

I have been reflecting on this in particular as I recently had the privilege to experience this “fifth gospel” of the Holy Land. It was an amazing trip to visit the various sites that were so intimately connected to our Lord and to the early Church.

One of the sites that was most impressive to me was visiting the Sea of Galilee where Jesus performed many miracles. This was also a special sight for me because it was the location where Jesus gave the first call to his apostles to follow him. Not only was I able to stand on the shore of that huge lake, but I also was able to

go “out into the deep” on a fisherman’s boat and swim in the water. I appreciate now the fear the apostles had being surrounded in such a huge and deep lake. I was also able to reflect on the importance of that first call that took place, and how that call of the Lord is still whispered to so many young men and women who are searching for meaning in their lives.

Although 2,000 years have passed since Jesus called his first apostles, Jesus is still calling many to give up everything and follow him. It is even more amazing when the “Good Shepherd” call those by name, to make sure that he knows who we are. There are many who are lost and confused about their purpose in life and Christ is always there to offer a path to holiness.

The call of Jesus Christ is one that is marked by beauty, yet can still cause trepidation because it is one that challenges and seeks to bring a person to their fullest potential. Many are afraid of answering the call due to their weaknesses, limitations, or

doubts, but Jesus looks beyond the surface and sees the reality of the person. When Christ called his apostles, he understood their limitations and their weaknesses, and yet he used it to build his kingdom of heaven on earth. The power of the call is too attractive to ignore and eventually one must give into it.

The call of Jesus Christ is one that is marked by beauty, yet can still cause trepidation because it is one that challenges and seeks to bring a person to their fullest potential.



An example of the power of the call is seen in the response of the apostles to Jesus. Jesus only had to say, “Come, follow me,” and the apostles followed him. There was no hesitation or concern on their part. It was the desire to follow the One who has something that we need and want in our lives. They truly show the essence of the Christian life, which is to know Jesus Christ and put him as the center of our lives. All are called to follow the Lord in one way or another, but some are called and chosen to give up everything and go wherever the Lord goes. It is in the beauty of this call that the consecrated life is realized and presented for all to appreciate and value.

Those in the consecrated life, who embrace of the evangelical counsels and vows of chastity, poverty, and

obedience, take their call to follow Christ to another level. This is not to say that those in the consecrated life are closer to Christ than those who are married or non-consecrated singles, but it is an example of the radical way of following the voice that calls all to holiness. It is the responsibility of all to follow the voice of Christ and to assist those who are not clear in discerning their consecration to the Lord. It is with hope that all can know Christ by looking to the scriptures, hearing the voice of the Lord, and appreciate the beauty of the call that brings many to holiness and happiness.

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

Council of the Congregation

Those called to leadership in the Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph gathered for an important meeting, referred to as the Council of the Congregation, from August 12-19, 2015 in the Philippines.

According to the Oblate Constitutions, the Council of the Congregation is “an advisory body having as its purpose to preserve and foster the

unity of the Congregation, to bring into focus, even in the framework of diversity, the characteristic traits of each Province and Delegation, and to animate our activities with the spirit of the Founder.” The week-long meeting started with a day of spiritual retreat in order to plant in the minds and hearts of the participants the proper spirit and attitude in dealing with various and challenging issues. An agenda

was prepared by the Superior General and his Council that addressed topics that affect all areas in the life of the Order such as formation, ministry among the youth and laity, spirituality, community life, missionary efforts, finances, development of publications and social media. The Council members not only utilized the hours established in the formal work sessions, but also fraternal moments in

between meals, social interaction and private conversations. All of this helped to create greater unity of ideas and goals for the welfare of the universal Oblate family. The problems or worries of each province or delegation became a concern for all, just as joy and holy pride were experienced by all when learning all that is being done for the sake of Jesus’ Kingdom by the spiritual sons of St. Joseph Marello on six of the seven world’s continents. This international meeting was purposely held in the Philippines as this particular OSJ province was in the midst of celebrating their 100th Anniversary of foundation. It was in August of 1915 that

the first Oblate missionaries arrived in the Philippines from Asti, Italy to begin their missionary work among the local people. It also marked the Centenary of the start of missionary activity within the Congregation, for after the Philippines the Oblates began to enter other missionary lands around the globe and continues until this very day with the recent opening of OSJ missions in Mozambique and Indonesia. The centennial celebrations were many and very well-planned, which included many ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries, along with countless supporters and benefactors of our OSJ Filipino priests and brothers. It was not just about remem-

bering the past 100 years, but a challenge for the future to move forward in gratitude and trust as the work of an Oblate of St. Joseph never ends or has any geographical bounds. The Council members left the Philippines with a renewed energy and a greater sense of fraternity as they use their role of leadership within the OSJ family as a means of service in the name of God to everyone who is part of our worldwide family. The next international meeting that will address the entire life of the Congregation will be the XVII General Chapter, scheduled to be held in Rome, Italy, in August 2018.



Seated, left to right, Fr. Brian Crawford, OSJ (General Councilor); Fr. John Attulli, OSJ (Vicar General); Very Rev. Fr. Michael Piscopo, OSJ (Superior General); Fr. Lino Mela, OSJ (former Superior General / 2000-2006); Fr. Guido Miglietta, OSJ (General Councilor). Standing, left to right, Fr. Paul McDonnell, OSJ (provincial of USA); Fr. Ailton Ferreira DeAlmeida, OSJ (provincial of Brazil); Fr. Luigi Testa, OSJ (provincial of Italy-North); Fr. Manuel Manrique, OSJ (provincial of Peru); Fr. Jan Pelczarski, OSJ (delegate of Bolivia); Fr. Epifanio Moreno, OSJ (provincial of Mexico); Fr. Noel Magtaas, OSJ (provincial of Philippines); Fr. Francesco Russo, OSJ (provincial of Italy-South); Fr. Michael Odubela, OSJ (delegate of Nigeria); Fr. Marek Maziarz, OSJ (provincial of Poland); Fr. Sunil Kallarakal, OSJ (provincial of India); Fr. Sebastian Meleth, OSJ (Treasurer General).

News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA

- A weekend conference on the Discernment of Spirits according to the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola was offered at the Shrine on October 24-25 by Father Timothy Gallagher, O.M.V. Participants came from throughout the Northern California area to learn more about this topic and share in this unique spiritual experience.
- The pastoral team, including the pastor and parochial vicars, of St. Patrick’s Parish, Watsonville, came to the Shrine on October 30th for a day of reflection and a talk offered by Father Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. They enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere of the shrine grounds located on the Monterey Bay and participated in the Eucharistic celebration of the day.

- All Saints/All Souls Day Masses were offered with great participation from the general public visiting the Santa Cruz area and by regular attendees of the Shrine.
- The Shrine of St. Joseph celebrated the 22nd anniversary of its dedication on November 3rd, with a special Mass presided by Father Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., provincial superior and shrine director. It was dedicated on this date in 1993 by the Most Reverend Sylvester Ryan, D.D., retired Bishop of Monterey, and officially declared a diocesan shrine dedicated to St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer.
- Plans are continuing to develop a Shrine Coffee House in the current Marello Conference Room, across from the shrine bookstore and gift shop. The general public are invited to offer their prayerful and financial support

2017
Trip!

Pilgrimage to Fatima, Santiago, and Madrid

MAY 17-26, 2017

Cost: \$2,999

Join the friends of the Oblates of St. Joseph from around the country for this special pilgrimage to visit holy sites throughout Portugal and Spain. Fr. Alvaro Joachim, O.S.J., will serve as spiritual director and lead the pilgrims to have a deeper appreciation for the richness of our Catholic faith and the vibrancy of the Church in these wonderful lands.

Itinerary

- Day 1: Depart the U.S.A.
- Day 2 and 3: Fatima
- Day 4: Fatima / Santiago de Compostela
- Day 5: Santiago / Salamanca
- Day 6: Salamanca / Alba de Tormes / Avila
- Day 7: Avila
- Day 8: Avila / Segovia / Madrid
- Day 9: Madrid / Toledo
- Day 10: Return to the U.S.A.



Included in the cost: Airfare from Newark, accommodations, airport-hotel group transfers, hotel tips and taxes, baggage handling at hotels, touring by private motor coach, tour escorts, local guides. Some restrictions apply.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Fr. Alvaro at 570-654-7542 / email: altvar70@gmail.com
Or Mr. Carl Angelella at 570-654-6459

Please note: Regretfully the last issue incorrectly printed that the pilgrimage will take place in 2016. In fact, the pilgrimage will be taking place in 2017. We apologize for the error and we hope it means you might be able to participate!

to the project. A grand opening and dedication is planned for some time in the Spring of 2016. Please see our feature on page 2 for more information.

- Saturday, November 21, an inaugural gathering of young adults from the area (college age & over) was held on the shrine grounds with an outdoor evening cookout. Plans are being made to form an organized young adult group based at the shrine.
- Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 26), a special Mass at 11:00am was celebrated for all visitors to the Shrine. Later in the day, a sumptuous dinner was served by volunteers in the Shrine hall to

the homeless of the Santa Cruz area. Prayers of blessing and gratitude were offered before the meal with the special guests and the Oblate religious community.

- The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy officially began with a solemn Mass on Tuesday, December 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Principal celebrant was Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., assisted by Fr. Jackson Pinhero, O.S.J., associate shrine director. A special "Door of Mercy" was blessed and will be used throughout the Year of Mercy for pilgrims to our shrine so that "anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles,

pardons and instills hope" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3).

PITTSSTON, PA

- On November 8, the Knights of Columbus Council #16071 hosted an evening soirée at St. Joseph Marelo Parish to raise funds for the Oblate house of studies in Bala Cynwyd, PA. Vendors and restaurants were present to share their goods with participants, and the Oblate formation community from Bala Cynwyd was present for the festivities.

BAKERSFIELD, CA

- The parish community hosted its annual novena to our Lady of Guadalupe beginning on December 3 and concluding with the feast day itself.
- For the first time in the shrine parish community, couples will be offering a bilingual novena of the Holy Spouses, January 14-22, covering one mystery per night. Couples themselves will offer reflections on the mysteries and pray the rosary together along with the closing prayers of the Holy Spouses Rosary.

Pittston Fall Formation Conference

THE OBLATES OF St. Joseph Pittston Laity hosted their fall formation conference on Saturday, November 7, 2015 from 2:00-4:00 PM in St. Joseph's Chapel on Highway 315, Pittston, PA.

Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J., formation director at the newly established St. Joseph Marelo House of Studies in Bala Cynwyd, PA, served as guest speaker for the conference. Fr. Mariusz opened his presentation with Pope Francis' first apostolic exhortation, entitled *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). Fr. Mariusz gave a summary of each aspect of Pope Francis' talks during his visit to the USA. He talked about St. Joseph, alluding to Pope Francis' talk when he visited the homeless in Washington, DC on September 24. Pope Francis compared St. Joseph to the poor and homeless. St. Joseph knew the Son of God came into this world as a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to start life without a roof over his head.

Fr. Mariusz ended his presentation by reminding the laity that "faith opens a window to little gestures which make

a difference in our lives." He encouraged the participants to say a kind word and smile at someone every day. Pope Francis said, "We must all have the spirit of gratitude and the spirit of hard work."

Following the formation conference, Mass was celebrated in the chapel, followed by a reception. The O.S.J. laity presented Fr. Mariusz and the seminarians with a monetary donation to help them get ready for the cold Pennsylvania winters!



- On December 13, the special “Mercy Door” constructed on the pavilion grounds will be blessed by the Bishop’s Vicar, Msgr. Perry Kavookjian. The Bishop of Fresno has designated the shrine pavilion as one of the chosen sites where pilgrims can receive the indulgence of the Year of Mercy by passing through the Mercy Door.

- After the blessing of the Mercy Door on December 13, the parish will host 24 hours of confessions for all people in the area who are seeking out God’s mercy.

HAZLETON, PA

- In November, Holy Annunciation Parish marked the 25th anniversary of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Countless people have been affected by this great blessing to the parish, and the parish recommits itself to continue with this important spiritual practice.

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

- On November 1, the twice annual Pancake Breakfast at Mount St. Joseph was another successful event. About three hundred guests came to share friendship, faith, and a full breakfast. Proceeds of the breakfast go to support formation of seminarians at Mount St. Joseph.

- In November, the Loomis community welcomed young men from around California who are interested in finding out more about the vocation to religious life and the priesthood. The men participated in a weekend vocation discernment retreat to better know God’s will for them. Please continue to pray for vocations to the Church, especially to the Oblates of St. Joseph.

- The Marello Youth Retreat Center plans to host its annual Advent Luncheon on Gaudete Sunday, December 13. The event is always a festive gathering of friends and benefactors of the Mount and of the Youth Center who gather to celebrate with joy the gift of faith we share.

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

SANTA CRUZ, CA

**Provincial House
Guardian of the Redeemer Shrine**
544 West Cliff Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95060-6147

phone: (831) 457-1868
fax: (831) 457-1317
web: <http://osjusa.org>

- Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. (Rector)
- Fr. Jackson Pinheiro, O.S.J.
- Fr. Aldo Grasso, O.S.J. (Los Banos)
- Bro. Marcello DiNardo, O.S.J.
- Bro. Mathew Chipp, O.S.J.

MADERA, CA

St. Joachim Church
401 West 5th Street
Madera, CA 93637-4406

phone: (559) 673-3290
fax: (559) 673-6471
web: <http://www.sjoachim.org>
email: church@sjoachim.org

- Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. James Catalano, O.S.J.
- Fr. Gustavo López, O.S.J.
- Fr. Shaji Athipozhi, O.S.J.

BAKERSFIELD, CA

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
601 East California Ave.
Bakersfield CA 93307-1143

phone: (661) 323-3148
fax: (661) 323-6016
web: <http://www.guadalupebakersfield.org>

- Fr. Larry Toschi, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. Chummar Chirayath, O.S.J.
- Fr. Steven Peterson, O.S.J.
- Fr. Victor García Padilla, O.S.J.

HAZLETON, PA

Holy Annunciation Parish
St. Gabriel Church
122 S. Wyoming Street
Hazleton, PA 18201

phone: (570) 454-0212
fax: (570) 459-5187
web: <http://www.holyannunciation.com/>
email: stgabes@ptd.net

- Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. Victor León, O.S.J.
- Fr. Daniel Schwes, O.S.J.

PITTSTON, PA

St. Joseph Marello Parish
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church
237 William Street
Pittston, PA 18640

phone: (570) 654-6902
fax: (570) 655-5448
web: <http://www.sjmparish.org/>
email: office@sjmparish.org

- Fr. Carlos Esquivel, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. Raymond Tabon, O.S.J.
- Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J.

Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary

1880 Highway 315
Pittston, PA 18640

phone: (570) 654-7542
fax: (570) 654-8621

- Fr. Joseph Sibilano, O.S.J. (Director)
- Fr. Alvaro de Oliveria Joachim, O.S.J.

LOOMIS & GRANITE BAY, CA

Mount St. Joseph Novitiate & Seminary
6530 Wells Ave. (Mail: PO Box 547)
Loomis, CA 95650

phone: (916) 652-6336
fax: (916) 652-0620
web: <http://www.mountstjoseph.org>

- Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J. (Rector)
- Fr. Philip Massetti, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J.
- Bro. David Pohorsky, O.S.J.

St. Joseph Marello Youth Retreat Center

phone: (916) 652-6155

fax: (916) 652-0179

web: <http://www.marelloyrc.org>

St. Joseph Marello Church

7200 Auburn Folsom Road
Granite Bay, CA 95746

phone: (916) 786-5001

web: <http://www.stjosephmarello.org/>

email: sjmarelloparish@yahoo.com

PHILADELPHIA, PA

St. Joseph Marello House of Studies

108 Highland Ave.

Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

- Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J. (Rector)
- Bro. Stephen Spencer, O.S.J.

Mercy and the Holy Family

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

IN THE FORMATION of an individual in the religious life, the candidate, whether male or female, will live a very special period called a novitiate, a one to two year time-frame in which the novice will be immersed in the life of the community and learn the theoretical and practical aspects of total consecration to God.



It is truly a blessed time for the person trying to follow God completely, and my novitiate was no different. And while I remember the many blessings, the many penances, and the many fruits of that experience, one memory in particular of that novitiate year has been on my mind in recent months: that novitiate year was the first time I read from cover to cover the diary of the great apostle of mercy, St. Maria Faustina Kowalska.

It is a book that had a profound effect on my spiritual life, though not for the reason many might imagine. While it contains beautiful reflections on the love of God for us, while it so powerfully medi-

tates on the unfathomable depths of God's mercy, while it elucidates so well the triumph of grace over sin, what always remains etched on my mind is how St. Joseph appears in apparitions to St. Faustina and how she describes her relationship to the carpenter from Nazareth who is the paradigm of the spiritual life of the Oblate of St. Joseph.

It's not that St. Joseph is on every page of her diary. In fact, he is mentioned probably only a handful of times. But he is there at these very intimate moments of St. Faustina's life, and often his appearance follows the same pattern: he usually appears with Mary and with the Infant Jesus. Mary will place the child in St. Faustina's arms, and then both Mary and Joseph will disappear. This vision occurs to St. Faustina in similar ways at different events in her life.

Always with St. Faustina, the presence of St. Joseph is one that accompanies Mary and that leads St. Faustina to Jesus and to the merciful love of God. As she says in her own words, "St. Joseph looked at me with great kindness and gave me to know how much he

is supporting this work of mercy" (*Diary* 1203).

If you're reading this issue from front to back, you've probably noticed that mercy has been a recurring theme throughout. As we begin the Year of Mercy, many of the contributions to the **CUSTOS** magazine throughout this coming year will reflect on this special time of grace. And this is as it should be, because as devotees of St. Joseph, our love for Joseph is one that leads us to know Mary, and in turn to embrace the child Jesus, Mercy Incarnate, in our own arms.

May this Year of Mercy be a time of renewal and grace in your own life. Especially in this time of Christmas, may St. Joseph lead you, through Mary, to a deeper relationship with the child Jesus, born in a manger so that we might come to know the merciful love of God the Father.

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.

Thank you to our contributors who generously donated to the Custos between August 27 and November 15, 2015:

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Christmas*
**TO ALL OF OUR FRIENDS
AND BENEFACTORS!**

*May the Lord bless you abundantly this
Christmas and into the New Year!*

