

Spring 2014

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



*"St. Joseph the Worker,
guide our hands to
always cooperate with
God's plan for our
joy and our salvation."*

CUSTOS



I EXTEND TO YOU prayers and greetings of my confreres during this sacred time of the year as we remember and celebrate the Lord's passion, death and resurrection that brought us salvation and eternal life. Re-living these moments in the life of our Lord helps us in our own "dying and rising" as we face our daily challenges and crosses.

Through God's infinite goodness, we have completed our first year as the Holy Spouses Province. Much has already been accomplished because of your prayerful support as we continue to dream,



hope and plan for the future. As the life of the Holy Spouses had its twists and turns, so it does for us as we recognize God's holy will unfolding before us. Our Founder, St. Joseph Marelo, desired that his spiritual sons be open to Divine Providence in a spirit of humility and

obedience. Too often we seek to personally shape the events of daily life and then label it "God's Will," but the reverse is true, provided we are docile in being led by the Spirit.

As we passed through the first year of our existence as a province, I sought to organize, with the guidance of my provincial council, the O.S.J. brothers and priests with a change in assignments that would be most beneficial to the confreres and the places where we serve. I was greatly impressed by their openness to serve anywhere, offering no resistance with a change of place and assignment, in some cases on the opposite side of the country. This gave living witness to the spirit of St. Joseph that we desire to have as Oblates to move, change or alter our own plans in order to serve the interests of Jesus.

Now in this year of 2014, it is my intention to better serve you, our dear lay people. You also make up a very important part of our Oblates of St. Joseph family. We are in daily contact with you through the six parishes that we serve in the Dioceses of Fresno, Sacramento, Monterey & Scranton, as well as within our seminary communities. Your support is also manifested in those who are members of our Josephite-Marellian Lay Society (SLJM) on both coasts; and in a very particular way, those who have assumed the life and the spirituality of the Oblates of St. Joseph Congregation by becoming Lay Associates (similar to a Third Order), which involves a structured formation program for approximately two years followed by the making of promises that binds the individual to our religious family in a very particular and juridical manner. We Oblate brothers and priests value your presence, holy example, prayers and financial support as together we live St. Joseph Marelo's vision of how we are to serve Christ and His holy Church. As we seek to organize ourselves better over this year, may we be granted the grace to have more people be drawn closer to God by living the virtues of St. Joseph and his sinless spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

May God bless our efforts to grow in our love for God and for each other, for we are all on the same road to sanctity that leads us to our "Father's House," a journey that is now enriched with the heavenly blessing of our two most recently and beloved canonized saints: St. John Paul II and St. John XXIII, dear to Christ's Church and our Oblate family.

United in Christ, our Risen Lord,

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

Provincial Superior, Holy Spouses Province

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

CUSTOS

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

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

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*Front Cover: Mosaic of St. Joseph the Worker and Jesus from the Oblate parish of Espíritu Santo, Monterrey, Nuevo León, México.
 Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).*

John Paul II and the Oblates of St. Joseph

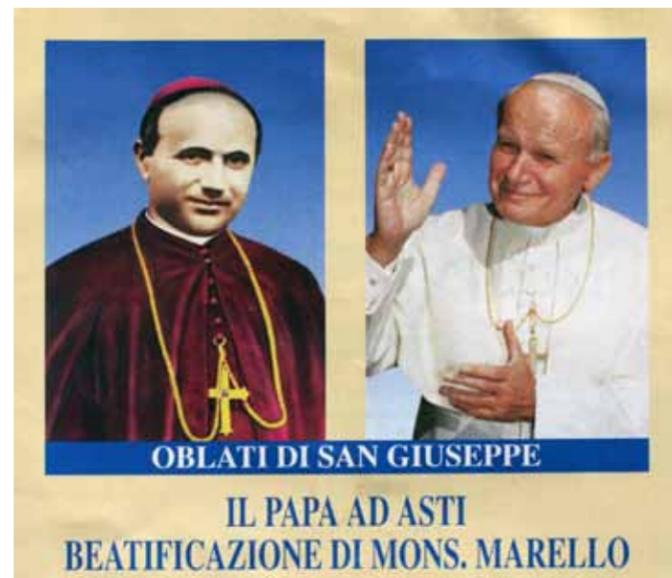
On Divine Mercy Sunday of April 27, 2014, John Paul II and John XXIII will be canonized at the Vatican. Catholics around the world are already rejoicing at this wonderful news for the Church, and the Oblates of St. Joseph join together with the faithful to give thanks to God for the powerful witness of these two Popes of recent memory.

WHILE BOTH POPES are beloved by the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph, we have a special affection for John Paul II who had such a profound influence on the Oblates of St. Joseph. Not only did he extend his hospitality to the Oblates for several of our General Chapters which took place during his pontificate, he also made one of his first pastoral visits as bishop to our Oblate parish and General House in Rome. Later, it was John Paul II who both beatified and canonized our founder, St. Joseph Mareello. In honor of these most recent canonizations, we remember especially in the next three pages some of those moments that John Paul II shared with the Oblates of St. Joseph. May God continue to bless us all through the intercession of St. John XXIII, St. John Paul II, and St. Joseph Mareello!

Right: John Paul II prays at the tomb of St. Joseph Mareello at the Shrine of St. Joseph in Asti, Italy, during his visit to beatify Joseph Mareello.

Below, left: Fr. Larry Toschi, member of the Holy Spouses Province and pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Bakersfield, CA, meets with John Paul II in 1994. He is introduced by then Superior General of the Oblates of St. Joseph, Fr. Vito Calabrese.

Below, right: Publication from the beatification ceremony of St. Joseph Mareello in 1993 in Asti, Italy. The text reads: "Oblates of St. Joseph; The Pope in Asti for the Beatification of Bishop Mareello."





Above: devotees of St. Joseph Marelllo gather in Rome in honor of his canonization in 2001.

Right: The front cover of the Vatican's official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, features the canonization of St. Joseph Marelllo and four other saints that took place on the feast of Christ the King, Sunday, November 25, 2001.

Below: Fr. Philip Massetti greets Pope John Paul II at the General Chapter of the Oblates of St. Joseph in the Jubilee year of 2000. With them is former Superior General of the Oblates of St. Joseph, Fr. Lino Mela.



L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO
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Kingdom of Christ is the glory of saints
The communion of saints gives foretaste of Kingdom of heaven and inspires us to build it in the world

On Sunday, 25 November, in St Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father canonized three religious and a bishop, presenting them as models for the Church of the new millennium in what they said and did. St Joseph Marelllo, apostle of youth and those on the margins of society, and his recognition, "the extraordinary in ordinary things". The Pope mentioned St Paula Minerva Furlan when he said:

1. "There was an inscription over his head: 'This is the King of the Jews' (Mt 27:38). This inscription, which Place had placed on the cross (cf. Mt 27:38), contains the motto of the condemnation and the truth about the person of Christ, Jesus the King... he affirmed it for his kingdom is not of this world (cf. Jn 18:36-37). Before his humanity is divided into two parts: those who reject him on account of his apparent failure, and those who recognize him as the Christ, 'the image of the invisible God, begotten before all creation' (Col 1:15), according to the expression of the Apostle Paul in the Letter to the Colossians, that we have heard."

Before the Cross of Christ, the great scene of the world is opened up and the drama of our personal and collective history takes place. Under the gaze of God, who in his Only Begotten Son incarnated for us, has become the measure of every person, institution, and civilization, each one is called to decide for or against Christ.

2. Those who were just proclaimed saints: Joseph Marelllo, Paula Minerva Furlan, the San Juan de Calanca, Lucia Francisca de Sales Avila and Maria Cerasanta Hinojosa before the crucified Christ King. Each of them entrusted himself/herself to his mysterious kingship, profecting with their entire life: "Remember me when you enter into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). And in an absolutely personal way, each received the reply from the heavenly King: "Today, I say to you, you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43).

Today, "today" belongs to the time of God, to the plan of salvation, of which St Paul speaks in the Letter to the Romans: "Those whom he foreknew he also predestined... he also called... justified... glorified" (Rom 8:29-30). That "today" contains the historical moment of today's communion, in which

educational charism of promoting women and the family "is a source of inspiration in the formation of the generations of the third Christian millennium".

St Louise Avila who also dedicated herself to the education of young women is a call to "to go against the current of opinion and many pleasures, and to open ourselves to the social and spiritual needs of our time".

The Pope highlighted St Maria Cerasanta Hinojosa, of the Third Order Regular of St Francis, who lived an intensely mystical life for 80 years and was even advisor to the Archbishop of Cologne. "She endured the insignias of her own consecration, without ever doubting her own vocation". Here is a translation of the Holy Father's homily given in Italian, Spanish, French and German.

Three Keys to Manhood

by Archbishop William E. Lori

St. Joseph's quiet strength, integrity and fidelity unlock the meaning of man's Christian mission in the world.

This article appeared in the December 2013 issue of Columbia magazine and is reprinted with permission of the Knights of Columbus, New Haven, Conn.

THIS MONTH, WE turn the subject of this column to St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. Joseph's life and example hold special meaning for every husband and father seeking to be true to his vocation; for every priest who wants to be a good pastor to his parish family; and for every deacon who wants to serve the Church in humble charity. Indeed, St. Joseph is a model for every Knight of Columbus who seeks to grow in the likeness of Christ and live the principles of the Order.

When Pope Francis greeted members of the Order's board of directors and their families this past October, he referred to St. Joseph as "an admirable model of those many virtues of quiet strength, integrity and fidelity which the Knights of Columbus are committed to preserving, cultivating and passing on to future generations of Catholic men." In doing so, the pope outlined the essential qualities that marked the life of St. Joseph—the same virtues that should be evident in our lives.

Strength that Listens

St. Joseph was certainly a man of "quiet strength." In fact, Scripture attributes no words to St. Joseph at all.

But as the story of the Incarnation and birth of Jesus unfolds, Joseph remains a tower of stability.

After the Annunciation, when Mary discovered that she was with child through the Holy Spirit, Joseph experienced inner turmoil. As Blessed John Paul II observed, "[Joseph] did not know how to deal with Mary's 'astounding' pregnancy" (Redemptoris Custos, 3). After an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream (as related in Mt 1:20-21), Joseph immediately obeyed the angel's command to take Mary into his home, demonstrating his faith and readiness to cooperate with the plan of God.



The story of how Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem to comply with the census of Caesar Augustus is well-known. Joseph searched for shelter for mother and child, and though only a stable could be found, he remained utterly attentive to the needs of Mary and the newborn Savior.

When an angel again instructed him in a dream, St. Joseph swiftly ushered Mary and the Child Jesus into

Egypt to escape the bloody clutches of Herod (cf. Mt 2:13-14). Again, no words, just quiet strength.

In our noisy world where people constantly tout themselves, their opinions and their products, strength is often equated with getting people's attention, winning their approval and getting ahead, even to the point of conquering others.

But think about the really strong people you know. Often, they speak few words; they have no need to boast about their accomplishments because their convictions and their deeds speak for themselves. These are people who know how to face life's problems and tragedies with the strength that comes from faith in God. They are secure in an insecure world.

Integrity and Fidelity

A second virtue of St. Joseph is integrity. Integrity does not mean being stubborn or inflexible, but rather whole or complete.

At one level, it has to do with soundness in mind and body. But it also has to do with consistently adhering to sound principles and becoming the person that God has intended you to be.

St. Joseph demonstrated each of these traits. Tradition tells us that he was a hard worker and a good provider for the Holy Family. Scripture depicts a man who was steadfast in his faith and resolute in purpose, even as he faced situations that he never could have imagined. Joseph was ultimately a man of integrity because of his unstinting cooperation with God's saving plan.

Integrity is often in short supply today, and it is easy to go along with the crowd. Lacking a sound faith in God and firm principles, many accept as true whatever

the prevailing trend happens to be. As a result, right and wrong, truth and error become relative. Virtue is passé. Mere appearance is seen as more compelling than who a person really is. By contrast, integrity includes taking care of ourselves physically, psychologically and spiritually. It involves asking for the grace of a firm faith and the sound moral principles that light our path. This means having the virtue to withstand temptation, upholding human dignity and doing the right thing for the right reason, even when such decisions aren't popular.

Finally, Pope Francis pointed to St. Joseph's fidelity. Joseph remained faithful to the end—to Mary, to Jesus and to the mystery of salvation that had been entrusted to him. He was faithful not only in the crucial events surrounding Jesus' birth, but also in the everyday demands of home and work in Nazareth. Fidelity is faith in action in all the events of daily life, big

and small. For husbands, it means loving one's spouse and family to the end. For priests, it means staying true to the priesthood and all it requires. For everyone, it means service given without notice or reward.

When Venerable Michael McGivney founded the Knight of Columbus, he envisioned men of quiet strength, integrity and fidelity. In these days when we celebrate the Lord's Incarnation and birth, let us ask St. Joseph for the grace to grow in these virtues and for the wisdom to pass them along to a new generation of Knights.

Archbishop Lori serves as the Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus.

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TEN DAY CALIFORNIA CLASSIC

Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. along with the Josephite-Marellian Laity of the East Coast invite you to join them for ten fabulous days in sunny California.

OCTOBER 20-29, 2014

WE WILL TRAVEL together for ten wonderful days of sightseeing and visiting members of the California Oblate communities and parishes. We will have the opportunity to visit, share fellowship and enjoy hosted dinners with them. We will also have plenty of time to tour many of the famous California sights along the way.

Included Tours

- Morning tour of Alcatraz Prison
- Guided four hour afternoon tour of San Francisco
- Full day tour of Sonoma and Napa with wine tastings
- Guided tour of the Sacramento Capitol Building and Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
- Full day tour including Monterey, Pebble Beach Golf Course & 17 mile drive, Carmel by the Sea and Carmel Mission
- Monterey Mission & Cathedral of San Carlos Borromeo
- Guided Tour of Ronald Reagan Library (Simi Valley)
- Guided four hour tour of Los Angeles
- Private Touring Coach to destinations

Sixteen Meals Included

- 8 Breakfasts 1 Brunch 1 Lunch 6 Dinners
- Dinners include: a gourmet welcome dinner San Francisco, dinner in Napa, hosted dinners at various parishes and a farewell dinner in Los Angeles

Accommodations Included

- 2 nights at the Grand Hyatt Union Square, San Francisco
- 2 nights at the Hyatt Place, Roseville
- 2 Nights at the Dream Inn, Santa Cruz (beach front)
- 1 night at the Hampton Inn & Suites, Madera
- 2 nights at the Beverly Hilton, Los Angeles

\$2,999 per person (based on double occupancy)

A non-refundable deposit of \$400 is required in order to confirm your reservation. Final payment is due August 20, 2014. Single and Triple rates are available upon request. Optional trip cancellation insurance is available.

Please contact Susan Gorham of TRAVELWORLD to make your reservation: (570) 288-9311

“The Gospel of Joy”

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

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

Since our Holy Father published his Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* he has drawn us to reflect deeply on how to live and proclaim the wonder of Christ with joy. If there is no joy in it, why should any of us do it? And why would anyone want to join us? Again and again, he draws us back to a genuine personal experience of union with God as the source of it all. If we truly open our hearts with faith and trust, we cannot help but be moved to joy by the reality of God’s love that comes to us, and be further moved to invite others to receive the same. Everything about our Catholic faith derives from this incredibly joyous sharing in God’s life. We call it the life of grace.

We Catholics are sometimes accused of being so obsessed with doctrines and principles. At least the media with its journalists and commentators certainly think so, and so do many who follow them. It makes it sound as if our whole faith was merely the fruit of a bunch of legal experts writing a particu-

larly complicated set of laws just to make life revolve around them. And sometimes the way we see and live and present our faith, makes that seem like it must be true. Instead our Holy Father tells us: “(we are) not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. The message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.” That is to say, we need to focus on the fundamentals!

Yes, our Faith has teachings and moral principles. However, the reason is that they are founded on the reality of God Himself, God who is Goodness, God who is Life, God who is Love. Out of sheer love that same God made all of Creation, and more specifically, us! That same God, again for pure love, came to this earth and was born in human flesh. Jesus opened our eyes like never before to the wonder, beauty, greatness and love of God by introducing God as a Person; in fact as Three Persons (Father, Son and Spir-

it)! That God’s love for us personally and individually is so great He offered Himself to ransom us from the consequences of sin by dying on the Cross, and restored us to our full and rightful life by bestowing His Spirit. By His Resurrection He opened the path for us to join Him in an eternal loving existence that we call Heaven. This is the essence of our faith. All other teachings and the way of living that harmonizes with this comes from this.

Of course, many of us know this and rejoice in it. In fact we know this so well, we seem not to dwell much on it, and instead focus on the applications and consequences. These certainly are important, but if we simply focus there, we often distance ourselves from where they come from, and anyone getting to know us will be clueless as to what this is all about and why we do it. Here is where the media and outside observers have a field day with us. The Holy Father zeroes in on this when he says: “In today’s world of instant communication and occasionally biased media coverage, the message we preach runs a greater risk of being distorted or reduced to some of its secondary aspects. In

this way certain issues which are part of the Church’s moral teaching are taken out of the context which gives them their meaning. The biggest problem is when the message we preach then seems identified with those secondary aspects which, important as they are, do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ’s message. We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness.”

As an example we can look at the topic of artificial contraception. Most people have kind of understood that the Catholic Church is against this—and they laugh that we seem so out of touch, and they are resentful that we are intrusive in what surely is part of the private and intimate life of a couple. The world continues to pile on the ridicule when elderly Church leaders continue to insist on this despite all the popular press reporting that not even Catholics seem to listen. This is an example of what the Holy Father calls “secondary aspects”—a principle for life, derived from that which is even deeper and more essential. If everyone is laughing and no one is following, does that make the teaching less valid? No! Does

the fact that this is derived from something more important make this teaching less important to live out? Again, no! But it does mean we need to do a better job of showing how firmly connected this is to the truest, most beautiful, joyful and life giving realities of our faith. Our Holy Father wants us to start there, for if we can convey the essence, the “secondary aspects” will make clear sense and be seen for something likewise true, beautiful, joyful and life giving. The root of the Gospel is that God is the God of life and love, and all that He does to share that life and love is at the same time the source of beauty and joy, but also the source of its sacredness to which is due our utmost respect.

God creates life for pure love. In us humans, He creates life in cooperation with a man and woman who through their deepest shared intimacy establish the conditions for which it can be done. This is wonderful, beautiful, joyful—and sacred. For humans to intervene and attempt to control, interfere, block or somehow manipulate this by means of devices is disrespecting the sacredness of what God created. Whether we realize or not, we have changed something God created to work a certain way, to respond more to our ego and our needs than to the purpose of life and love God intended. Can that be a good idea?

Thus when we dig deeper and get to more fundamental things, we can see that our Catholic faith is one that seeks the fullest possible experience of goodness, life, love and joy, precisely because it seeks to honor the God from whom it comes. If you believe in God at all, who could argue with that? That is why our Holy Father, following his own recommendations, constantly directs our attention to the personal connection with Christ, to the whole genuine experience of God, and spends far less time dwelling on “secondary aspects” which are already known and established. If we focus on the fundamentals, everything else will follow!

This is a joyful, uplifting approach to our Catholic faith. The doctrines and principles now become pathways to meet the greatness of the living God and establish the deepest most comforting relationship with Him. Our faith lives are no longer about just keeping rules or affirming barely understood ancient ideas. We get to rise to enter into the one true God, the Father, Son and Spirit, and live in harmony with Him: a life, which, while at times demanding, is one of fulfillment...and joy!

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

Poor in Spirit

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

Our Holy Father never ceases to invite youth to deepen their love for Christ and to follow him more closely.

Last summer, Pope Francis surprised, energized, and commissioned over 3.5 million young people at the international gathering of World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro. It was at this gathering that Pope Francis reminded every baptized person, young and old, of the call to be disciples and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was his words that challenged the youth to become “revolutionaries” for Christ and to break free from the mundane secular society. He expressed the necessity of young people in the Church: “The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you.”

The Oblates of St. Joseph couldn’t agree more with our spiritual Father. While the primary charism of the Oblate of St. Joseph is “to serve the interest of Jesus in imitation of St. Joseph,” one of our primary ministries is to be actively assisting youth and young adults in their spiritual growth. The importance of youth ministry dates back

to the writings and actions of our holy founder, St. Joseph Marello, as well as to his first followers and the first Oblates. This emphasis continues to the present day, especially through the General Chapter of our Congregation and the leader-

The Beatitudes are a model of happiness contrary to what is usually communicated by the media and by the prevailing wisdom.

ship of our Superior General. Realizing the importance of serving our youth in the Church today, we must be able to “serve the interests of Jesus” by working in and with the Church, so it is exciting to see that Pope Francis has the same zeal for youth around the world. In fact, Pope Francis has chosen the spe-

cific the theme for the World Youth Day message for 2014 from the first beatitude of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3).

This theme helps us to understand what Pope Francis means when he challenges youth to be “revolutionaries.” The revolution that our Holy Father is inviting young people to be a part of is one based on the Beatitudes. He writes that the Beatitudes are not old teachings but ones that are “new and revolutionary” and are “a model of happiness contrary to what is usually communicated by the media and by the prevailing wisdom.” Being poor in spirit allows one to experience true happiness that is found only in Jesus Christ. It is placing our complete trust in Christ that one is able to move beyond him/herself and seek the kingdom of heaven that is waiting. Pope Francis highlights that Christ is the ultimate example of being poor in spirit, since he became one

among us in the flesh. This sense of true humiliation can be experienced and shared with all once we deny ourselves and allow Christ to reign supreme in our lives. Pope Francis points out that to the secular world this may appear to be embracing the role of a “loser,” however, this act of humility leads one to holiness and happiness.

It is in this happiness that young people must “swim against the tide” and be courageous to be happy in the Lord. To be blessed is to be happy, yet young people cannot find true happiness in wealth, material items, or power,

but in choosing Christ who makes them strong, because, as the Holy Father writes, “they are fed by his word and they do not need to ‘stuff themselves’ with other things!” It is with this belief that Pope Francis encourages young people to be poor in spirit in three ways: to be free with regard to material things, a conversion in the way we see the poor, and to accept what the poor offer and teach us in wisdom. Once a young person is able to detach themselves from the material things of the world and embrace their poor brothers and sisters in Christ in their entirety, then they

will be able to have a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

It is with this message of living out the Beatitudes under the patronal protection of St. John Paul II that young people are able to experience a radical form of joy and happiness. It is the Oblates’ mission to assist young people on this journey of faith and become united with Christ alongside the poor and the “poor in spirit.”

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



Vocations: Witness to the Truth

by Pope Francis

What follows is Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, given in January of 2014.

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

The Gospel says that “Jesus went about all the cities and villages... When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest” (Mt 9:35-38). These words surprise us, because we all know that it is necessary first to plow, sow and cultivate, then, in due time, reap an abundant harvest. Jesus says instead that “the harvest is plentiful.” But who did the work to bring about these results? There is only one answer: God. Clearly the field of which Jesus is speaking is humanity, us. And the efficacious action which has borne “much fruit” is the grace of God, that is, communion with Him (cf. Jn 15:5). The prayer which Jesus asks of the Church therefore concerns the need to increase the number of those who serve his Kingdom. Saint Paul, who was one of “God’s fellow workers,” tirelessly dedicated himself to the cause of the Gospel and the Church. The Apostle, with the awareness of one who has personally experienced how mysterious God’s saving will is, and how the initiative of grace is the origin of every vocation, reminds the Christians of Corinth: “You are God’s field” (1 Cor 3:9). That is why wonder first arises in our hearts over the plentiful harvest which God alone can bestow; then gratitude for a love that always goes before us; and lastly, adoration for the work that he has

accomplished, which requires our free consent in acting with him and for him...

Everything comes from God and is his gift: the world, life, death, the present, the future, but—the Apostle assures us—“you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:23). Hence the way of belonging to God is explained: it comes about through a unique

“Every vocation, even within the variety of paths, always requires an exodus from oneself in order to center one’s life on Christ and on his Gospel.”

and personal relationship with Jesus, which Baptism confers on us from the beginning of our rebirth to new life. It is Christ, therefore, who continually summons us by his word to place our trust in him, loving him “with all the heart, with all understanding, and with all strength” (Mk 12:33). Therefore every vocation, even within the variety of paths, always requires an exodus from oneself in order to center one’s life on Christ and on his Gospel. Both in married life and in the forms of religious consecration, as well as in priestly life, we must surmount the ways of thinking and acting that do not conform to the will of God. It is an “exodus that leads us on a journey of adoration of the Lord and of service to him in our brothers and sisters” (“Address to the International Union of Superiors General”, 8 May 2013). Therefore, we are all called to adore Christ in

our hearts (1 Pet 3:15) in order to allow ourselves to be touched by the impulse of grace contained in the seed of the word, which must grow in us and be transformed into concrete service to our neighbour. We need not be afraid: God follows the work of his hands with passion and skill in every phase of life. He never abandons us! He has the fulfilment of his plan for us at heart, and yet he wishes to achieve it with our consent and cooperation.

Today too, Jesus lives and walks along the paths of ordinary life in order to draw near to everyone, beginning with the least, and to heal us of our infirmities and illnesses. I turn now to those who are well disposed to listen to the voice of Christ that rings out in the Church and to understand what their own vocation is. I invite you to listen to and follow Jesus, and to allow yourselves to be transformed interiorly by his words, which “are spirit and life” (Jn 6:62). Mary, the Mother of Jesus and ours, also says to us: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). It will help you to participate in a communal journey that is able to release the best energies in you and around you. A vocation is a fruit that ripens in a well cultivated field of mutual love that becomes mutual service, in the context of an authentic ecclesial life. No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people, in the experience of fraternal love. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35)?

Dear brothers and sisters, this “high standard of ordinary Christian living” (cf. John Paul II, “Novo Millennio Ineunte”, 31) means sometimes going against the tide and also encountering obstacles, outside ourselves and within ourselves. Jesus himself warns us: the good seed of God’s word is often snatched away by the Evil one, blocked by tribulation, and choked by worldly cares and temptation (cf Mt 13:19-22). All of these difficulties could discourage us, making us fall



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back on seemingly more comfortable paths. However, the true joy of those who are called consists in believing and experiencing that he, the Lord, is faithful, and that with him we can walk, be disciples and witnesses of God’s love, open our hearts to great ideals, to great things. “We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for small things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals!” (“Homily at Holy Mass and the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation”, 28 April 2013). I ask you bishops, priests, religious, Christian communities and families to orient vocational pastoral planning in this direction, by accompanying young people on pathways of holiness which, because they are personal, “call for a genuine ‘training in holiness’ capable of being adapted to every person’s need. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church” (“Novo Millennio Ineunte”, 31).

Let us dispose our hearts therefore to being “good soil,” by listening, receiving and living out the word, and thus bearing fruit. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus through prayer, Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the Sacraments celebrated and lived in the Church and in fraternity, the more there will grow in us the joy of cooperating with God in the service of the Kingdom of mercy and truth, of justice and peace. And the harvest will be plentiful, proportionate to the grace we have meekly welcomed into our lives. With this wish, and asking you to pray for me, I cordially impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing.

What a destiny!

by Ron Sala

The life of St. Joseph is a subtle reminder to us of why we were created and what things God has in store for us. As we reflect on the person of St. Joseph, we might ask ourselves: “What is the destiny God has in mind for me?”

I have always been inspired by a very inconspicuous picture hanging in our dining room. It's a simple print depicting a young vibrant father laboring in his workshop, hammering a nail into something laid before him on his worktable. There at his feet is a child playing on the floor with three large spikes, and the shadow cast from the child onto the floor is that of a cross. There is a caption at the bottom of my picture that says, “Most of us spend our lives seeking our destiny. One Man created His own. It began in a manger and led to a cross, and it included you. You too have a destiny and someday, someday soon your destiny will cross with His.” The artist and author of this picture are unknown to me. The young tradesman depicted in the picture is also both an artist and an unknown, yet he was elected—destined—to become the “Guardian of the Redeemer.”

Have you ever considered what your destiny, your heart's utmost

desire, might be? Maybe it's hoping to get your college education out of the way. How about that stellar profession everyone holds in such high esteem? Maybe you're a young single person hoping to someday have that idyllic family. I know a senior citizen who has done all of the aforementioned and is planning for a cruise of a lifetime. The wish list is endless. Or is it?

We can have many wishes and desires in life, but there is one desire that must be deeper than all the others. Our life should be a direct reflection of our heart's greatest desire, and our heavenly Father's greatest desire for our lives is for us to have an intimate relationship with Him. It's not important if we are unknown as Joseph might look in this image. What is important is that our heavenly Father knew us before the foundations of the world were established and has placed within our hearts the ability to love, to hope, and to trust. His gifts are

eternal. Just as the caption stated, “Very soon your destiny will cross with His.” And when that moment arrives, “you will see Him face to face and will be allowed to know in full, this God we call Father.”

I think St. John can sum up our destiny and goal better than I can: “Let what you heard from the beginning remain in your hearts. If what you heard from the beginning does remain in your hearts, then you in turn will remain in the Son and in the Father. He Himself made us a promise and the promise is no less than this: eternal life” (1 John 2:24-25). Our destiny is not to dwell on material things, but to live eternally with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. What a promise! What a God! What a destiny!

Ron Sala serves as president of the SLIM chapter in Loomis & Granite Bay, CA.



News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA

▪ The shrine held its first-ever “Crab Fest” on Sunday, March 2nd, that welcomed over 100 people who purchased tickets for the dinner. Special thanks to the shrine volunteers and the men from the “Sons of Italy” local chapter as well as the Knights of Columbus, Santa Cruz Council #971. Everyone enjoyed the sumptuous dinner and fellowship before the start of the Lenten season.

▪ Monday, March 3rd, the shrine facility welcomed Pro-Life volunteers from the Santa Cruz & Watsonville area to organize themselves in their efforts to stop abortions within the local community. Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., provincial & shrine director, was invited to speak to the participants and encourage them in their vital ministry to protect the unborn.

▪ Lenten season began on March 5th with Ash Wednesday Masses and the praying of the Stations of the Cross every Friday following the 11:00am Mass and again at 6:30pm, followed by Mass.

▪ Annual Novena to St. Joseph was conducted from March 10 – 18 with two Masses daily followed by the praying of devotions. The novena culminated on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19th, with a solemn Mass celebrated by Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia, D.D., Bishop of Monterey.

▪ The Oblates of St. Joseph serving in California gathered at the shrine on March 21st for their own religious community celebration honoring their patron, St. Joseph. They participated at the regularly scheduled 11:00am

shrine Mass, followed by a fraternal gathering and luncheon.

▪ A vocation weekend was held on March 21-23. Eight men participated who expressed an interest in becoming an O.S.J. brother or priest. They were guided by our province vocation directors, Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J. & Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J., assisted by the confreres of the Santa Cruz community.



▪ Fr. Aldo Grasso, O.S.J., a longtime member of the Oblate community in Santa Cruz and one of the eldest members of the Congregation worldwide, has moved to New Bethany Residential Care in Los Banos, CA. He will be missed greatly in Santa Cruz, but will be able to receive the care he needs for his fragile health, all in the context of a Catholic assisted living home. Please pray for our beloved Fr. Grasso during this transition.

▪ A youth retreat for high school teenagers from St. Joseph Mareello Parish, Granite Bay, was hosted at our shrine facility on April 5-6. The young adults spent time in prayer, reflection and enjoying the ocean’s beauty on the Santa Cruz bay.

▪ Holy Week services were celebrated at the shrine that welcomed the many visitors to the tourist area.

PITTSTON, PA

▪ On January 22, 2014, Fr. Carlos Esquivel, O.S.J., and Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J., along with members of St. Joseph Mareello Parish braved the inclement weather to stand up for life at the March for Life 2014 in Washington, D.C.



▪ The seminary community hosted the annual novena and celebration in honor of St. Joseph. The seminary was happy to welcome Bishop Bambara of the diocese of Scranton as the principal celebrant, as well as all of the Oblates on the East Coast, many of the local diocesan clergy, and of course, the faithful friends of the Oblates and devotees of St. Joseph.

▪ Laity from Pittston, Hazleton, and the entire East Coast are organizing themselves to participate in the Ten Day California Classic trip to see many of the sites of California. Please see page 7 for more information.

MADERA, CA

▪ On March 19th, the Feast of St. Joseph, Hector Uribe of St. Joachim Parish made his promises as a Lay Associate at St. Joachim Parish. (Ed: Our next issue will feature more in-depth information about this event and other aspects of our Lay Associate program.)

▪ St. Joachim parish recently held another Life Giving Love retreat, a weekend workshop

designed to educate couples on the dangers to marriage in our society and to encourage them to use the tools that God provides to maintain strong marriages and healthy families.

▪ For their Theology of the Body retreats (TOB) this spring the parish had a wonderful turnout of youth participants, numbering over sixty candidates in English and sixty candidates in Spanish. Please continue to pray for our youth of every Oblate community as they face the many challenges the world presents to them.

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

HAZLETON, PA

▪ The Mareello Action Spirit Squad (M.A.S.S.) high school youth group of Holy Annunciation parish organized a trip to attend the March for Life 2014 in Washington, D.C. Led by Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J., 48 students and 7 chaperones marched in support of life.



LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

▪ A special retreat for the Lay Associates of the Holy Spouses Province was hosted in Loomis on March 14-16. Lay Associates and those in formation gathered for several days of prayer, recollection, and reflection on the charism and ministries of the Oblates of St. Joseph.



▪ The community in Loomis has begun extensive renovations to repair and beautify the seminary chapel. Many friends and benefactors have pitched in to assist in the project to make the chapel an even more inviting and prayerful place.

▪ The parish community of St. Joseph Marelo in Granite Bay is preparing for a capital campaign to construct new catechesis and ministry facilities. The campaign will also serve to help eliminate the debt from the existing church facility, and to support the diocese in its youth and evangelization efforts.

▪ Mount St. Joseph celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding this fall. The Oblates in Loomis are preparing two days of celebration scheduled for September 12th and 13th. Festivities will include a solemn Thanksgiving Mass, an evening social, historical displays of the Oblates' work at Mount St. Joseph, an open house, and a picnic luncheon. More details to come.

ITALY

▪ In February Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., Superior General of the Oblates of St. Joseph completed his canonical visit of the Holy Family Province in southern Italy. There are 26 Oblates working in the Holy Family Province, including 21 priests, 2 brothers, and 3 temporary professed students. Like the United States, the culture in Italy does not encourage religious and priestly vocations, so please remember to pray for Oblate vocations around the world.

EL SALVADOR

▪ In the new mission of the Oblates of St. Joseph in San Salvador, El Salvador, auxiliary bishop Msgr. Gregorio Rosa Chávez accompanied the Oblates of St. Joseph in a solemn Mass for their patronal feast on March 19 and to encourage the faithful entrusted to the Oblates in their walk with Christ.



Msgr. Gregorio Rosa Chávez preaches at the Mass on the feast of St. Joseph at the Oblate parish community of San José in San Salvador, El Salvador.

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From us to you

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

A brief explanation of the subscription model of the **CUSTOS** magazine

Did you receive an issue of Custos magazine in the mail and begin to wonder how it made it to your inbox at all? Are you wondering how many issues you might receive? We here at the Custos offices want to take this opportunity to let you know how our subscription model works.

As the official magazine of the Holy Spouses Province of the Oblates of St. Joseph in the U.S.A., our primary motive in publishing this humble magazine is to share our spirituality with those who want to serve Jesus in imitation of



St. Joseph. In addition, we hope to keep you abreast of Oblate events and news so that you know what is going on in our Province. To these ends, at the start of our magazine we combined our mailing list for the previous *Guardian of the Redeemer* magazine as well as the previous *JOSEPH* magazine. What's more, many of our Oblate parishes gave all of their registered parishioners

a complimentary Custos subscription.

We do not charge when people ask to be signed up for the Custos, because we truly want all to share in the great gifts the Spirit has given the Church through St. Joseph and St. Joseph Marelllo. At the same time, it is not cheap to publish a full color national quarterly publication. So our compromise is this: if we hear from you via email or letter—with or without a donation—then we will happily renew your subscription for another year. If we do not hear from you after a year, we will remove your address from our list and you will stop receiving the Custos. So by sending in a donation or simply by letting us know that you enjoy receiving the Custos magazine, we will keep them coming to you!

We have also received many inquiries about what an appropriate donation might be. If you wish to simply cover the cost of the magazine, then \$10/year would do it. If you prefer to go beyond that and support Oblate ministries in the U.S.A., then of course you are free to give more and your donations would be most appreciated.

I might also mention here that some people have asked where the money will actually go. Does it stay in Santa Cruz where the return address envelope is sent? Or will it help my local Oblate community? The fact is that for now, all income is going directly to pay for the publication of the magazine (we are not in the black yet unfortunately!). Eventually we hope to cover all of our costs plus some by donations to the magazine, but for now any donations given to the Custos magazine project are simply used to pay our bills!

We have received so much positive feedback about our first issue that we are excited to continue providing you with the best content and material we can. We hope that you will enjoy every page of every issue. May God bless you abundantly, and may the Holy Family watch over you always!

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

Calling

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

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

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

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

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

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

For more information, please contact the Provincial headquarters:

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