

Winter 2014-2015

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



*"May the Holy
Family guide and protect
us always in this life, and
lead us to safe shores in
the next."*

CUSTOS



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

CUSTOS

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

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

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*Front Cover: The Panciatichi Holy Family by Agnolo Bronzino.
Above: The Oblates of St. Joseph of the Holy Spouses Province (U.S.A.).*

DEAR FRIENDS OF St. Joseph,

I am expressing these personal thoughts of mine in the midst of busy preparations for the Christmas season. The anticipation and waiting can be stressful, just like the gentleman who was ahead of me in line one particular morning at a local coffee shop and in desperation shouted: "I have no more time for this!



I can't wait anymore!" Hearing his cry of frustration made me ponder the Advent of our lives. We are not accustomed to waiting, especially here within the American culture. We expect everything within seconds, from our coffee to our internet hook-up.

We have not only lost the virtue of patience, but we have lost the ability to recognize God's presence in those waiting moments of our lives.

When we examine the Gospels about the lives of the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph, we see outstanding examples of holy patience as the Divine Will gradually unfolds before them. Probably the most challenging and noteworthy is the period we know the least about: the hidden years of the Holy Family in Nazareth before Jesus begins His public ministry. The joy of the Christmas season is the fulfillment of God's plan after centuries of waiting in the Incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ. Now that's well worth the wait!

We need to acknowledge in our lives that God's "epiphany" is a daily occurrence that will lead us to the greatest encounter of all with Him at the end of our earthly journey. I invite you to look back on 2014 and recognize those Emmanuel moments in your personal life. Mary and Joseph saw them in their joys and sorrows, their challenges and the successes, and so can we. Their recognition of God came in a cave, a lowly manger, surrounded by the smell and waste

of animals. Yes, Christ and His peace is found in the most unimaginable places of our lives. During this holy season and into the new year take a moment and stop in the quiet of your lives and give thanks for the many ways God makes Himself known. Embrace and be embraced by His love that heals your brokenness and restores your hope.

This New Year of 2015 will afford us many more opportunities to experience God's infinite presence and love. In the Oblates of St. Joseph family we have much to look forward to in this New Year, with the main event being the one hundredth anniversary of our first foreign mission outside of Italy since the founding of our religious congregation in 1878 by St. Joseph Marello. The first Oblate missionaries arrived in the Philippine Islands in 1915 and for 100 years have humbly and faithfully brought the gospel to God's people in the spirit of St. Joseph as taught to us by our Holy Founder. This New Year will also hold the World Meeting of Families from Sept. 22-27 in Philadelphia, PA, which will also welcome our Holy Father, Pope Francis, with his first papal visit to the United States. We are planning a sizable and meaningful participation among the members of our O.S.J. family at this world conference.

The year will also allow us other moments to celebrate anniversaries and milestones, but let us remind ourselves that we come to encounter God primarily in the ordinary and routine of daily life. In this New Year, may our daily living become a form of prayer in which we come to realize that Christ dawns in all our days and nights, and allow those moments to transform us, treasuring the presence of God's holiness in our hearts.

Blessings to you and your family in the New Year!

United to you through the Holy Family,

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

Year of Consecrated Life

Beginning with the First Sunday of Advent in 2014, Pope Francis inaugurated the Year of Consecrated Life. Our Church invites us to reflect in a deeper way on the vocation to serve God in the religious and consecrated life, all the way through the final day of this special year which concludes on the World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2016.

Throughout this coming year, we look forward to sharing thoughts and reflections on the consecrated life and how it ties in with our own charism as Oblates of St. Joseph. As a way to introduce us to the year, we would like to share with you the text from Pope Francis' angelus reflection from last year, February 2, 2014. It is a fitting way to introduce the year, since it was moment he used to announce this special year dedicated to praying for and renewing consecrated life throughout the Church. During this year, we invite you to pray in a special way for us Oblates of St. Joseph, and consecrated men and women throughout the world. Pray that we all might remain faithful to our charism, that we live a prophetic witness to Christ in the world today, and that more men and women will respond to God's call to offer their life to Him with an undivided heart in the consecrated life. Now, Pope Francis:

WE ARE ALL called to offer ourselves to

the Father with Jesus and like Jesus, making a generous gift of our life, in the family, at work, in service to the Church, in works of mercy. However, this consecration is lived in a special way by religious, by monks and nuns and by consecrated lay people, who by the profession of their vows belong to God in a full and exclusive way. This belonging to the Lord allows those who live it authentically to offer a special kind of witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of



The Oblates of St. Joseph and the Oblate Sisters of St. Joseph gather for the Eucharist to conclude the First Assembly of the Oblate Sisters in Rome on September 19, 2014.

God. Totally consecrated to God, they are totally given to their brothers, to bring the light of Christ wherever the shadows are darkest in order to spread his hope to discouraged hearts.

The consecrated are a sign of God in the different areas of life, they are leaven for the growth of a more just and fraternal society, they are the prophecy of sharing with the least and the poor. Thus understood and lived, consecrated life appears as what it really is: a gift from God, a gift of God to the Church, a gift of God to his People! Every consecrated person is a gift for the People of God on its journey. There is a great need for their presence, which strengthens and renews commitment to: spreading the Gospel, Christian education, love for the needy, contemplative prayer; commitment to human formation, the spiritual formation of young people, and families; commitment to justice and peace in the human family. But let us think a little about what would happen if there were no sisters in hospitals, no sisters in missions, no sisters in schools. Think about a Church without sisters! It is unthinkable: they are this gift, this leaven that carries forward the People of God. These women who consecrate their life to God, who carry forward Jesus' message, are great.

The Church and the world need this testimony of the love and mercy of God. The consecrated, men and women religious, are the testimony that God is good and merciful. Thus it is necessary to appreciate with gratitude the experiences of consecrated life and to deepen our understanding of the different charisms and spiritualities. Prayer is needed so that many young people may answer "yes" to the Lord who is calling them to consecrate themselves totally to him for selfless service to their brothers and sisters; to consecrate one's life in order to serve God and the brethren.



For all these reasons, as was already announced, next year [Ed: November 30, 2014-February 2, 2015] will be dedicated in a special way to consecrated life. Let us entrust as of now this initiative to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, who, as the parents of Jesus, were the first to be consecrated by him and to consecrate their life to him.

We invite you to peruse the wonderful timeline of consecrated life on the next two pages to familiarize yourself more with the history of religious and consecrated life.



The Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, visit the Oblates of St. Joseph in Loomis, CA.

CONSECRATED LIFE THROUGH THE CENTURIES

A.D. 50-65

Letters of Saint Paul refer to distinct groupings in the early church, including groups of celibate women dedicated to prayer and charity.



50-313

Persecution of Christians. In 313 Roman Emperor Constantine issues the "Edict of Toleration." Christians seek ways other than martyrdom to give themselves completely to the faith.

251-356


Saint Anthony the Great heeds the gospel call to sell all he has, serve the poor, and live a life of asceticism. He eventually takes up residence in the desert to live in solitude and prayer. His story is recorded by Saint Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria and becomes a fourth-century "bestseller," which inspires other men and women to live as hermits.

I saw the snakes that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, "What can get through from such snares?" Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Humility." —SAINT ANTHONY

313-400

Houses of monks and nuns are established in the Egyptian desert.

Pachomius, a contemporary of Saint Anthony the Great



350-370

Saint Basil establishes large communities of monks in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). As bishop of Caesarea, Basil has his monks engage in the apostolic work of teaching and pastoral care.



386

Saint Jerome, scholar and Bible translator, moves to Bethlehem where he sets up and lives in a monastery.

What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like. —SAINT AUGUSTINE

400

Saint Augustine writes rules for monks and nuns during his early years as a bishop in North Africa. He also founds monasteries.



400-500

Surge of monastic communities in the Eastern and Western church. In 470, **Saint Brigid** establishes Kildare Abbey in Ireland, a double monastery for monks and nuns.

500-600

Common life (or community) becomes more dominant than the hermit's way of life and spreads to France, Germany, and Italy.

FROM THE RULE OF BENEDICT: *Of the Reception of Guests—Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ, because He will say: "I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Matt 25:35).*

Saint Benedict of Nursia (480-547) founds monasteries and writes a rule for monks, modest in size and moderate in tone compared to other rules for monks of the time. It soon becomes the standard for European monasticism and is still used today by Benedictines throughout the world. Benedict's twin sister, **Saint Scholastica**, heads a community of women near Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino. She later is named the patron saint of nuns.

600-1000

Monasteries in Europe maintain the literature of the ancient world, and Christian scripture is preserved and copied. Larger monasteries are centers of

cultural and economic activity, harboring schools, hospitals, guest houses, and farms. Meanwhile, Europe is ravaged by war and instability.



910

Benedictine Abbey of Cluny in central France spearheads reform of the medieval church and produces leaders, including monks who become bishops and even popes.

1050-1150

Camaldolese and Carthusian hermit and contemplative monks are founded by Saint Romuald (in Italy) and Saint Bruno (in the French Alps). Both continue to this day.

1098-1105

Cistercian order (Trappists) greatly increases in number and influence with the help of **Saint Bernard of Clairvaux**.

He who prays and labors lifts his heart to God with his hands. —SAINT BERNARD

1121

Saint Norbert combines a monastic regimen with parish work, foreshadowing the coming of the mendicant, or "begging," orders and their service in cities.



The first "lay association" or "third order" of laity affiliated with a religious order is founded with the establishment of the Norbertine Third Order (often referred to as associates, tertiaries, lay associates, or secular tertiaries). Such associations continue to link laity and religious today.

1150-1300

Mendicant religious orders emerge as towns and cities develop. In contrast with the previous emphasis on contemplative life, these new religious orders preach the gospel and respond to the needs of the poor. The four major mendicant religious orders are the Carmelites (founded in 1150), Franciscans (founded in 1209), Dominicans (founded in 1214), and Augustinians (founded in 1256).

Saint Thomas Aquinas joins the Dominicans in 1242. Among the church's greatest theologians, Canon Law deems him the guide to be followed for those studying for the priesthood.

1206-1214

Carmelites establish a "rule," actually a set of rules meant to guide a daily life of prayer and contemplation. As the Carmelite order grows, it combines contemplative life with apostolic activity.

Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words. —SAINT FRANCIS

1209

Saint Francis of Assisi founds the Franciscan order. Over the centuries various branches of Franciscan men's and women's communities emerge, with members exercising influence as teachers. Franciscans also promote popular piety practices, such as the Christmas crib and stations of the cross.



1517

Martin Luther proposes 95 "theses" in Wittenberg, Germany, symbolically beginning the Protestant Reformation and its accompanying social and religious upheaval.



1534-1585

Saint Teresa of Avila and **Saint John of the Cross** are Carmelite mystics, writers, and reformers in Spain whose writings continue to influence Catholic spirituality.

Prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God. —SAINT TERESA

1540

Jesuits are founded by Ignatius of Loyola. Their efforts in education and mission continue to wield influence in the church and world.

IGNATIUS SPIRITUALITY: *Every way of preparing... to find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul is called a Spiritual Exercise.*

1545-1563

Council of Trent encourages renewal of religious orders and new forms of religious life.

1540-1900

Apostolic religious orders of men and women are established. These new communities emphasize serving the needs of the poor, especially through education and medical care. With **Saint Vincent de Paul**, **Saint Louise de Marillac** forms the first community of non-cloistered sisters. Many religious orders are founded in Europe to meet social needs in the wake of the French Revolution. **Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton** founds the first apostolic community of women in the U.S.



1947

Pope Pius XII encourages the formation of secular institutes, a distinct form of consecrated life. These groups

1950-1965

Peak growth years for U.S. religious communities. Religious women in the U.S. reach their highest number of 179,954 in 1965. They continue to outnumber men in religious life 4 to 1.



1962-1965

Second Vatican Council. Among many other reforms meant to modernize the church, this worldwide council (for gathering of bishops) calls for renewal of religious communities. Communities are urged to return to their roots and original charism, as well as to respond to the needs of the times. Religious communities experience change and upheaval.

FROM PERFECTAE CARITATIS (Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life): *Religious should remember there is no better way than their own example to commend their institutes and gain candidates for the religious life.*

1965-2009

People continue to found new religious communities in response to God's call. Religious life continues to evolve and begins to experience new growth.

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The Christian Education of Youth

In this issue and the next, we will be sharing the wonderful insight of St. Joseph Marello on how parents can work to educate and form their children in the Catholic faith. These thoughts come directly from his Pastoral Letter written February 4, 1892 as the Bishop of Acqui, Italy.

GIUSEPPE MARELLO
Bishop of Acqui

To the Venerable Clergy and the Beloved People
of the City and the Diocese
GREETINGS AND BLESSINGS IN THE LORD

VENERABLE BROTHERS AND Beloved Children in Christ,
Perhaps never so much as in our time has so much been spoken and written about the care of the young. The thoughts of many are turned to it, to it are addressed the most assiduous cares and lively solicitude as to an object of great and serious concern and no less hope. That explains the great zeal on all sides to establish new schools where children receive that instruction that in time develops their minds. Whether, along with the instruction, at the same time we think also of and provide for an education of the heart, we will not discuss here. What cannot be denied is that cultivating the intellect alone does not suffice and is often harmful if the heart is not also educated in a Christian manner. Even if schools are being multiplied, that does not dispense Christian fathers and mothers from thinking about the teachers to whom they entrust their children on the one hand, and on the other from being the first to do what they must and can do with regard to the good instruction and correct education of their children. It is precisely on this domestic instruc-

tion and education and on the manner of understanding and practicing it that we want to call your attention, Venerable Brothers and Beloved Children, now that we are drawing close to the days when the Church, with the voice of its saintly Pastors, invites the faithful to a greater recollection of spirit and to a more profound consideration of their Christian duties.

That is why our words are addressed more particularly to you, Christian parents, who were called by God to the great, and at the same time formidable, task of raising a family; but not only to you. We would like them to be received also by the many who in some way participate in your task, especially those who can help you directly or indirectly (and who cannot do so?) in the happy accomplishment of a work for the common good in time and in eternity.

First of all we give thanks to the Lord that in our Diocese there are still a good number of families in which the ministry of the Christian education of children is carried out worthily. We would be in great trouble today if our young people had not found in the affectionate care, the teachings and useful and salutary correction, and even more in the excellent examples of those who governed them, either the preventions or remedies against the seductions of vice and the poisons of the false maxims which are being multiplied a thousand ways today especially in the press.

We rejoice also that young couples, whom the Lord calls to found new families, are learning from their elders to avail themselves of the graces received

in the nuptial blessing and to accomplish faithfully the duties of their state. O Christian spouses, always remember that your children are a sacred trust from God, of which he will ask you a strict accounting one day. From their birth, children have a right to be surrounded by the most solicitous care, and you have the duty of giving them everything that is necessary for the preservation and development of their strength: not only of body, but also and especially of spirit, since to the body is joined a soul which lives its own immortal life, and which develops and grows, so to speak, by the nourishment of truth and virtue, and has an elevated end that far surpasses all the passing pleasures and happiness of this earth.

To care for the body by not letting it lack food and whatever may be useful to maintain it healthy and strong is something that animals do, even the most ferocious, for their newborns; but to educate a soul, that is, to enlighten it with the light of truth, warm it with the fire of divine love, and guide it on the paths of good to its eternal salvation: oh! this is the noble and holy task of men and Christians, the great ministry that raises educators to being representatives of the Heavenly Father, even cooperators with him.

Therefore, you owe your children the instruction that places them on the right path and makes them virtuous Christians and excellent citizens. Here we are not speaking of the human instruction that the civil laws oblige you to give them by sending them to the public schools, nor of that higher religious instruction that

you make them receive from God's ministers through catechism lessons and sermons, and to which you are strictly obliged, if not by the laws of men, by that from which you could not avoid without guilt: the law imposed on you by God. We mention only that instruction which is the foundation of all others, and which by natural and divine law you, fathers and mothers, must impart to your children from their most tender age.

In the Sacred Scriptures, great praise is given to old Tobias because he instructed his son, from his earliest



St. Joseph Marello, founder of the Oblates of St. Joseph.

childhood, to fear God and flee sin: *ab infantia timere Deum docuit et abstinere ab omni peccato*; and it follows that Christian parents should do the same. that is, with the guidance of that golden book which is the Catholic Catechism, to instruct very early their children in the first truths and the principal mysteries of our Holy Faith; to teach them to love God above all else; and not only through fear of his punishments but because of the love and gratitude he expects from us for his great and innumerable blessings, to impel them to observe his holy law.

Let no one say that the children will learn these and other truths later; in school, for example, or in Church.

Even supposing (and may God will it) that in all the different schools your children might be directed to Christian truths and in the practice of virtue, and that by your zeal in sending them, even in leading them, to catechism or in assuring that they might receive from

the priests that teaching which only they can dispense with authority, yet you must never forget, O Christian parents, that it is to you that God has primarily entrusted the care of your offspring precisely because they are your offspring. All the preachers and all the teachers will never be as useful to them as you, fathers and mothers, if you begin to instruct them at an early age, when they are not yet able to go to church or to school, pursuing that instruction zealously with daily solicitude, because you have a much greater and much more intimate influence on your children than anyone else. That is why your words penetrate more deeply into their souls and make a greater impression.

Besides instruction, you also have the obligation to give your children the edification of good works and a good example. The way of the precepts is long; that of examples is short and efficacious. This is an ancient

maxim, but it is still valid and should be remembered by everyone; and if it is true for others, how much more is it so for inexperienced children who instinctively tend to imitation. Your children live around you, and look especially to you, O fathers and mothers; therefore the purest examples must start with you because all your actions and all your steps, even the most insignificant, in the eyes of your children take on a character of venerable and sacred authority.

Therefore, may your life always be a book open before them, in which they learn their first duties even without the help of longer studies. They know that you do not teach a truth of which you are not convinced nor impose upon them any obligation or sacrifice that you do not make easy and mild with your own example.

Do not deceive yourselves in that by words alone you can instill in their soul a teaching that your example does not practice. Otherwise they would say in the secret of their heart - and perhaps also openly - O father, O mother, how can you teach us to love God, to invoke him in prayer, to observe his holy law, and to be resigned to his holy will, while you yourselves offend him in so many ways and so seriously? You urge us to be respectful, obedient, meek, and temperate, while you only give us examples of scandal, pride, anger, intemperance and hatred against your neighbor. Of course children are wrong in following the bad example of their parents, because the sins of the ones do not excuse those of the others, but does not the greater guilt belong to those who give scandal? "For him who scandalizes one of these little ones who believes in me, it would be better if he were thrown into the depths of the sea." Therefore your children need to receive from you a continuous good example; and no less important is your vigilance so that they may not find a stumbling block in the bad example of others.

St. Augustine says that if it is good for children to know good, it is also important that they ignore evil: *Pu-*

eris non tam prodest cognitio boni quam ignorantia mali. Weighty words that should never be forgotten by parents and those who take their place in the difficult ministry of education. Those who meditate on these words will feel the gravity of the obligation that is incumbent upon them to be always vigilant on behalf of the innocent, and to be convinced—before learning it through bitter experience and with irreparable damage—that a child can get his first idea of vice by looking at an object or hearing a word that strikes his imagination, and that object or that word could be the fatal impulse to awaken a passion that ruins both soul and body. Therefore, O parents, be always vigilant over yourselves and over your children; and do not limit your attention to the enclosure of your family's walls. Your vigilance should follow your children in all their steps outside the home, because it may happen, unfortunately, that a child surrounded by a thousand cares within the family may fall victim to the seductions of a bad companion and lose its innocence miserably because of a lack of vigilance outside the home.

It is true that in spite of all your vigilance, you will not always succeed in rescuing your dear children from every danger, and even if you were to succeed, that innate inclination to evil which is the effect of original sin and common to all the children of Adam, would be enough to put them in danger of some fault, or make them yield to evil tendencies and dispose them to bad habits. For you therefore, dear parents, there begins another duty to be accomplished with every care: that of timely correction.

Here ends the first half of Marello's Pastoral Letter on the Christian Education of Youth. In our Spring issue we will share the second half of his letter, in which he discusses the proper use of discipline and an encouragement to family prayer. Join us in our next issue as we look to the wisdom of St. Joseph Marello!



Left: A young St. Joseph Marello teaches catechism to the youth of Asti.

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

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

In this second part of our reflection on the Oblates' guiding youth ministry document, *Step by Step*, we are reminded that Oblates are called to help youth on the way to holiness "with" and "in" the Church.

As our Superior General, Fr. Michele Piscopo, O.S.J., frequently says, "Youth ministry is the number one apostolate of the Oblates of St. Joseph." It is by being faithful to this ministry that the Oblates are being faithful to the Church. It has been part of the spiritual patrimony of the Oblates of St. Joseph to always be at the service of the Church, always faithful to our Josephite spirituality as we reflect the dedication and service of St. Joseph to Jesus and Mary.

St. Joseph never had secret motives or was in competition with Jesus or Mary. On the contrary, St. Joseph was always in union with them. Just as St. Joseph was at the service of the Holy Family—the greatest example of the domestic church—we as Oblates are to be at the service of the Church and her young members. The Oblate is not to have any personal agendas, com-

petition against the local church, or any duplicity in ministry among the young people. It is precisely

The goal of the Oblate is not to create a different, parallel path for youth to choose, but to be an active promoter of the path and mission of the Church.

the role of the Oblate to lead youth closer to Christ alongside the universal and local Church.

St. John Paul II in his address to the Oblates of St. Joseph in February 2000 stated: "Your work puts you in the heart of the Church. The charism of the Oblates of St.

Joseph, in fact, requires you to reproduce in your life and apostolate the ideal of service that was lived by the Guardian of the Redeemer." It is with this re-approval from the magisterium of the Church that the Oblates are placed at the center of the Church's ministry and works within the entire body of Christ. It is with this as our foundation that the Oblates are to assist the local Church in her relationship with youth to bring attention to the family, where much has been neglected or overlooked. The Oblate can be a bridge of healing and peace by being in communication and involved in the life of the family. Not only does the impact of the family assist young people to have a better understanding of who they are, but the family allows the light of Christ to shine on many other aspects of our youth's lives. Attention to areas of education, vocation,

fellowship, and social outreach allows the Oblate to enter into the world of young people and be the representative of the Church. Once again, the Oblate is always to be at the service of the Church in order to be the hand extended to the young person in their connection with the mystical Body of Christ.

The goal of the Oblate is not to create a different, parallel path for youth to choose, but to be an active promoter of the path and mission of the Church. For example, one of the major connections for Oblate youth ministry and the greater Church is our participation in World Youth Days and Diocesan Youth Days. It is vital for Oblate youth ministry to not only participate but to play an active role in the life of the Church. This active involvement allows the Oblate Youth to understand their relationship with the wider Church and also their conscious participation in the Church's ministry. The youth are not only called to be present but to realize their potential of being servant-leaders within the Church. This is how the Oblates' relation-

ship with the Church allows our youth ministry to flourish and be strengthened with zeal and grace.

As stated by our youth ministry document, *Step by Step*, the

not alone and that they belong to a bigger family in the Church helps give them a sense of peace and security. Once our young people are able to achieve this, then we

as Oblates can help them find their voices and be able to proclaim the gospel in their lives.

As people of faith, it is our goal to make Jesus and his message known throughout the world. Through ongoing formation of young people and accompaniment, the Oblates are able to form disciples for the Church and prepare the next generation of the faithful to take their spiritual lives to a new level and into a new world. The Church is always in need of missionaries and evangelists, and it is our role as Oblates of St. Joseph to form those young individuals who will answer the call of the Church and proclaim her message throughout the

world. This is the way of faith and it can only be done "step by step."

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.



Oblates of St. Joseph are called to walk with our youth "step by step" on the way to holiness. It is by accompanying the youth "with" and "in" the Church that our youth's identities and purposes are clarified and appreciated. Helping the young person realize that they are

Vocations and the Family

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

Vocations to the consecrated life don't "magically" appear out of nowhere. It takes years of cultivating hearts for Christ, a process which begins in the home.

I HAVE BEEN BLESSED with several opportunities these past few months to visit some of the local Catholic Schools here in the Greater Pittston Area. Celebrating Mass for the opening of the school year, the blessings

of the annual sports program and hearing the students' confessions are beautiful moments of grace when the Lord reaches out to His children. The Lord also reaches out through moments of teaching, as I was blessed to



Fr. John and Fr. Sergio together with young men who attended the last vocation retreat for the Holy Spouses Province of the Oblates of St. Joseph in November 2014. Please pray for these young men and for all who are striving to know God's will for them!

experience when I spent one morning going to each classroom for a question and answer session on vocations.

Visiting Kindergarten and the lower grades is always a lot of fun, especially with some of the questions and responses one may hear! Through these simple visits I learned that even if a child cannot grasp the full meaning of vocation, it is so important to begin to get the message across very early on in life: "God created you, God loves you and He has a very special plan for your life!" What really became apparent to me as I spoke with these little ones is how they absorb everything like a sponge! In the context of vocation awareness ministry it became even clearer that the general call to serve the Lord with a life of holiness, and the particular call to serve Him in the Consecrated Life and the priesthood, begins from their first moments life at home with the family. As religious and priests, we only have a short time with the students to teach them and pray with them, but there are many more hours in the day! When it comes to creating a culture of vocational awareness, the family's role is primary and indispensable.

Within a loving and supportive family, the Lord Jesus began his life here on Earth. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*, St. John Paul II highlights the words of Pope Paul VI, "Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Savior began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested his all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family—that sanctuary of love and cradle of life" (see §7). In other words, just as Jesus' vocation to save all mankind began in the loving arms of Joseph and Mary, our personal vocations, which are God given, are nurtured and supported by a loving, supportive and holy family life.

The Lord Jesus calls out to those whom He has chosen to be united to Him and serve Him and His Church in the Consecrated Life and Priesthood. When



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a child is raised in a home where Jesus is at the center of family life and where prayer, mutual love and openness to God's will are nurtured from an early age, it will be so much easier for that child to hear and answer the call! "The family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God's love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his bride" (St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, §7). In the family, this love begins with the parents. By being examples of true love and fidelity, you show your children how to be faithful and remain committed to the Lord's call for your lives. Your witness to the holiness of matrimony and the sanctity of family life will enable your children to answer the Lord's call for their lives with courage. Thank you for saying "yes" to your vocation!

As Oblates of St. Joseph, we are committed praying for your families so that they may be Christ-centered, loving, supportive holy families. And together as one Christian family we continue to ask our Heavenly Father for an increase of holy vocations to the Consecrated Life and the priesthood.

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



The Oblate Spirit of Family

by Elaine Fisher

IN OCTOBER, SOME of our laity and community members from Pennsylvania visited California as part of a spiritual endeavor. We sought to increase the unity between the Oblate laity on the East and West coasts. There was an immediate connection as our laity members welcomed the surrounding community to the group. In the true Oblate spirit, we experienced the unity and connection of family as we visited all of our Oblate Parishes in Granite Bay, Madera and Bakersfield, Mt. St. Joseph Seminary in Loomis, and The Provincial Headquarters at the Shrine in Santa Cruz. The hospitality exhibited far exceeded anything we could have expected. Brad and Janet Morris, members of St. Joseph Marellio Parish in Granite Bay, graciously opened their home and hearts with love. They hosted a beautiful dinner for all of us on the trip along with a group of parishioners from California, including the group who visited Pennsylvania last October. Every

religious organization is a family called together by God to love one another by the bonds we have established.

The entire trip was a demonstration of what it means to belong to the Oblate Family. God cre-

Unity does not mean that we automatically agree as one Oblate family. It requires work, patience, and forgiveness. It requires a commitment of the heart to genuinely seek and respect the other person.

ated us all to be family, and every aspect of life requires family to feel complete. Yet it is a very blessed family that has for its model the Holy Family of Nazareth, and this is what all Oblates—professed and lay alike—try to live in our own lives. Our examples are Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who remind us that God himself is a family! He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

and he brings us to the fullness of life and love.

Therefore, because the Oblate family is modeled after the Holy Family and the Blessed Trinity, we see that it is God centered. If it is not, it is not genuine family. God offers this to every Oblate heart, giving a sense of connection, and a source of bonding within the Oblate lay community. This sense of unity does not mean that we automatically agree as one Oblate family. It requires work, patience, and forgiveness. It requires a commitment of the heart to genuinely seek and respect the other person. If we are connected to God, then as an Oblate Family we learn to love and honor each other completely. In addition to this, we must strive as a family to have no pretensions. The Oblate charism is one of being hidden and humble, and we must work to live this out in our daily activities.

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



Family

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

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

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

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



News & Events

Feast of the Holy Spouses: January 23, 2015

In Oblate houses and parishes throughout the world, we celebrate the wonderful feast of the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph. The Oblates have been given permission to observe this feast, though it is not yet part of the liturgical calendar around the United States or the world. The Oblates in the United States observe this feast with special significance as it is the patronal feast of our Holy Spouses Province. Please come join your local Oblate community to celebrate this feast, and contact your local bishop to encourage him to consider adopting this feast as part of the diocesan liturgical calendar!

SANTA CRUZ, CA

■ The shrine community welcomed pilgrims from Pennsylvania, who were on a ten day tour visiting our Oblate parishes and religious communities throughout California. They enjoyed a weekend visit from October 24-26 where they celebrated Mass at the shrine, enjoyed the grounds & attractions of Santa Cruz, concluding their visit by participating in a special Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Capitola, celebrated by Bishop Richard J. Garcia, Bishop of Monterey.

■ The anniversary of the shrine dedication was celebrated on Monday, November 3, at the daily Mass. Fr. Jackson Pinhero, O.S.J., associate shrine director, served as celebrant and homilist commemorating the shrine's dedication in 1993.

■ Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J., shrine director, participated in the annual meeting of national shrine directors throughout the U.S.A. held in St. Augustine, Florida, from November 3-6.

■ A pasta calamari dinner was held on Sunday, November 16, to benefit the shrine. Numerous volunteers, including local O.S.J. laity members, helped organize the fundraiser. The sold out event was enjoyed by friends of the shrine and visitors of the area.

■ Thanksgiving Day Mass was celebrated at the normally scheduled morning Mass with the church filled with locals and tourists enjoying Santa Cruz for the holiday. Guest celebrant of the Mass was Father Gregory J. Semeniuk, C.M., theology professor at St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, CA, who was visiting the O.S.J. community over the Thanksgiving holiday.

■ On December 1, the shrine welcomed the staff of Our Lady of Peace Parish, San Jose, for their annual day of recollection.

■ In conjunction with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8), the movie "Mary of Nazareth", directed by Giacomo Campiotti, was shown in the Marelo conference room, adjacent to the shrine bookstore. Admission was free and opened to the general public for their viewing pleasure.

■ The religious community and staff of the shrine welcomed numerous visitors that were in Santa Cruz for the Christmas holiday season. Confessions and Masses were offered to all on a daily basis.

■ January 14 -22, 2015 will be the novena in preparation for the Feast of the Holy Spouses, which will be celebrated on Friday, January 23,

with special Masses scheduled at 11:00 AM & 7:00 PM.

- Father Donald Calloway, MIC, will be a guest speaker at the shrine on Thursday, January 29, at 7:00 PM. He is nationally recognized as a dynamic speaker and renowned author for telling his personal story of conversion from a young life of immorality to his answering God's call to the religious life and priesthood. This "surfer priest," as he is nicknamed, will also address topics on the Holy Eucharist, Our Lady, the Papacy, the Sacraments and the presence of the devil and sin in our lives.

PITTSTON, PA

- The Josephite Marellian annual Christmas Party was held on Friday, December 12, 2014 in Exeter, PA.
- The 50th Anniversary of the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Pittston will take place next year on May 30, 2015. More details to come.

MADERA, CA

- The local SLIM Chapter / Family of St. Joseph sponsored a bus pilgrimage to Mission San Juan Bautista on December 14, 2014 to see the drama, "La Virgen de Tepeyac," which presented the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- The Pro-Family, Pro-Life ministries together with the youth ministry and confirmation preparation programs are planning to charter at least eight busses for the West Coast Walk for Life in San Francisco on January 24. The parish participated in a Fall campaign of 40 Days of Prayer for Life with prayer and fasting 3 times a day at the local Planned Parenthood abortion business.

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

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

- Marelo Youth Retreat Center welcomed about three hundred youth from local Catholic schools during the first week of Advent. Targeted at fifth graders, the Youth Center hosted its annual Advent youth retreats, in order that they might appreciate the Advent and Christmas seasons all the more.
- On December 12, 2014, St. Joseph Marelo parish held a celebration in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Following the evening bilingual Mass, the parish community also celebrated posadas, a Mexican tradition reenacting the trek of Joseph and Mary to find lodging in Bethlehem.
- On December 14, 2014, Marelo Youth Retreat Center held its second annual Advent Luncheon. The luncheon was an opportunity for our benefactors to gather together in support of our mission at the Youth Center, and to joyously celebrate the Advent season.
- As of the time of this writing, St. Joseph Marelo parish has raised \$2.26 million in pledges and donations for its capital campaign. It has been a great success thus far, thanks to the generosity and hard work of so many parishioners.
- On January 19, 2015, Mount St. Joseph will welcome back our seminarian aspirants after their Christmas break. In addition to the three returning seminarians, the seminary will also receive two new aspirants who will begin their formation to be Oblates of St. Joseph.

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Starting the Year with Mary

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

As we embark on this New Year of 2015 we have Mary on our side, the greatest intercessor before Jesus. But it's up to us to work on our relationship with her.

SOME YEARS BACK, well before I was thinking of the priesthood or religious life, I was blessed to have been able to visit several Marian sites in different parts of Europe. I have a distinct memory of my visit to Knock, Ireland, where our Blessed Mother had appeared along with St. Joseph in 1879. It



was a prayer I uttered that I meant with all my heart, even if it wasn't the best prayer of my life: "O Mary, if I

caught a glimpse of you, just for the shortest of apparitions, I'm certain I would do whatever you want of me for the rest of my life."

I daresay I'm not the only one who has made a prayer like that. In fact, if you *haven't* ever thought that a short vision, a brief apparition, or a minor miracle would help you be a better disciple of Christ, then you're probably in the minority. Doesn't it stand to reason that we would believe more strongly if we had a more powerful

experience of God's power? Isn't it logical that a supernatural manifestation of God's power and plan would convince us even more in our faith? For that matter, if such miracles help us in our faith life, why doesn't God make such things happen more often? Why don't they happen to *me*?

There is a simple answer to that last question: the life of faith never follows the easiest path. Would it be easier to believe if the Blessed Virgin appeared to us in an apparition? Maybe. But there are *so many* tried and true ways to work on our faith life, that God is inviting us to believe without seeing, to use these ordinary, proven routes to holiness.

The reason we always begin the new calendar year celebrating the great solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is not because we all seek to have a vision of her during the year. Rather, it's a reminder of the surest way of arriving at our eternal goal: to be in relationship with our Blessed Mother. Mary's life provides us with boundless meditation on how to best be in relationship with Jesus. Mary's example re-

minds us of our own need to grow in virtue and be converted, and no apparition or vision is needed for that!

I never had the vision I prayed for. I still haven't looked upon the face of Jesus or Mary with unveiled eyes. And yet I think I realize now more than ever before how important it is to have them present in my life, to really work on my relationship with them. And this is one of the great blessings of the New Year. It's an opportunity to recommit ourselves to praying the rosary daily, as devoutly as possible. It's a chance to work again on reconnecting with our Mother who loves us so much and yet whom we neglect so often. It's the moment for us to look not for extraordinary signs of God's love for us, but at the wonder of the Mother he has given us to guide us to her son Jesus.

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.

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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