“May the Holy Family guide and protect us always in this life, and lead us to safe shores in the next.”
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 as 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,

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

Custos • Winter 2014-2015 1
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 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.
Consecrated Life through the Centuries

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

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

Saint Anthony the Great preaches the gospel to millions and he has a poor, and he is a life of asceticism. He eventually takes up residence in the desert and a hermit. His story is recorded by Saint Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, and becomes a fourth-century "hermit," who images men and women to live as hermits.

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

Pathenion, a contemporary of Saint Anthony the Great

and a mount of deaconesses. He creates a model for ascetic life, the common, or common life, based on the life of Christ. Christians communally live in Jerusalem with all monastics sharing their goods and praying in common.

Saint Paul establishes large communities of monks in Asia Minor, enlisting them in the apostolic work of teaching and pastoral care.

Through the rule of Benedict, the Benedictine Rule becomes prevalent in various monastic communities in Europe and beyond. The Benedictine Rule is a set of rules meant to guide a daily life of prayer and contemplation. It is the most widespread and successful form of monastic life.

Saint Benedict's Abbey of Nursia has 550 monasteries and more than 110,000 monks, most in small and medium-size monasteries. In contrast, Benedictine communities serve the needs of the poor, especially through education and medical care.

Custos Order, a religious order dedicated to the service of the Church, is founded in 1150.

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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.

Venerable Brothers and Beloved Children in Christ,

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, from thinking about the teachers to whom they entrust their children on the one hand, and on the other from thinking about 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 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.

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 Sacred Scriptures, great praise is given to old Tobias because he instructed his son, from his earliest years the way to follow Christ, 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.

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 happy accomplishment of a work for the common good in time and in eternity.

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.

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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 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, intolerance 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: “Eritis 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!
Step by Step: A Reflection on Youth Ministry, Part II

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

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.

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.

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 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’ relationship 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 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 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.”

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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 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 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 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 Marello parish in Pittston, PA.

Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J.
Director of Vocations (East Coast)
e-mail: vocations-east@osjusa.org
phone: (570) 654-6902

Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J.
Director of Vocations (West Coast)
e-mail: vocations@osjusa.org
phone: (916) 652-6336
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 Marello 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 created us all to be family, 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.

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. 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 pretentions. 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.
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 Marello 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.

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA

- Marello 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 Marello 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, Marello 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 joyfully celebrate the Advent season.

- As of the time of this writing, St. Joseph Marello parish has raised $2.26 million in pledges and donations for its capital campaign. They might appreciate the Advent and Christmas seasons all the more.

- 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.

SANTA CRUZ, CA

- Provincial House
  - Guardian of the Redeemer Shrine
  - 544 West Cliff Drive
  - Santa Cruz, CA 95060-6147
  - phone: (831) 457-1868
  - fax: (831) 457-1317
  - web: http://osjusa.org
  - Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. (Rector)
  - Fr. Victor Garcia Padilla, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Jason Pinheiro, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Aldo Grasso, O.S.J. (Los Banos)
  - Bro. Marcello DiNardo, O.S.J.


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 buses 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.

MADEIRA, CA

- 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.

Bakersfield, CA

- Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
  - 601 East California Ave.
  - Bakersfield, CA 93307-1143
  - phone: (661) 323-3148
  - fax: (661) 323-6016
  - web: http://www.guadalupebakersfield.org
  - Fr. Larry Toschi, O.S.J. (Pastor)
  - Fr. Chummar Chirayath, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Steven Peterson, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J.
  - Fr. David Pohorsky, O.S.J.

HAZLETON, PA

- Holy Annunciation Parish
  - St. Gabriel Church
  - 122 S. Wyoming Street
  - Hazleton, PA 18201
  - phone: (570) 845-0212
  - fax: (570) 459-5187
  - web: http://www.holyannunciation.com
  - email: stgabes@ptd.net
  - Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J. (Pastor)
  - Fr. Victor Lodo, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Daniel Schwebs, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J. (Rector)
  - Bro. Mathew Chipp, O.S.J.

Pittston, PA

- St. Joseph Marello Parish
  - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church
  - 237 William Street
  - Pittston, PA 18640
  - phone: (570) 654-6902
  - fax: (570) 655-5448
  - web: http://www.mtcarmelparish.com
  - Fr. Carlos Espinel, O.S.J. (Pastor)
  - Fr. John Shearer, O.S.J.

Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary

- 1800 Highway 319
  - Pittston, PA 18640
  - phone: (570) 654-7542
  - fax: (570) 654-8621
  - Fr. Joseph Sibalian, O.S.J. (Director)
  - Fr. Alvaro de Oliveira Joachim, O.S.J.
  - Fr. Raymond Tabor, O.S.J.

LOOMIS & GRANITE BAY, CA

- Marello Youth Retreat Center
  - 501 West 5th Street
  - Loomis, CA 95650
  - phone: (916) 652-6155
  - fax: (916) 652-0179
  - web: http://www.marelloyc.org

St. Joseph Marello Church

- 95637-4406
- Madera, CA
- phone: (559) 673-3290
- fax: (559) 673-6471
- web: http://www.sjoachim.org
- email: church@sjoachim.org
- Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J. (Pastor)
- Fr. James Catalano, O.S.J.
- Fr. Gustavo Lopez, O.S.J.
- Fr. Shaji Athipozhi, O.S.J.

Oxnard, CA

- Holy Annunciation Parish
  - 200 South E Street
  - Oxnard, CA 93030-5704
  - phone: (805) 385-2332
  - web: http://www.holyannunciation.com
  - email: stjmarelloparish@yahoo.com

St. Joseph Marello House of Studies

- 544 West Cliff Drive
- Santa Cruz, CA 95060-6147
- phone: (831) 457-1868
- fax: (831) 457-1317
- web: http://osjusa.org
- Fr. Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. (Rector)
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. I have a distinct memory of my prayers being heard, and I was thinking of the priesthood or becoming a mother. But it’s up to us to work on our relationship with her. In fact, if you ever thought about having a vision of her during the year, it might be easier to believe if the Blessed Virgin appeared to us in an apparition, or a minor miracle would have happened 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. 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 Spirit Province and as rector at Mount St. Joseph Seminary and Novitiate in Loomis, CA. You can reach him at tspencer@osjusa.org.
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