Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may our families always live in faith, hope, and love, after the example of the Holy Family.
From the Provincial Superior

GREETINGS AND BLESSINGS TO EACH OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES!

I feel it is most appropriate that I make reference to your families in my salutary greeting because we are within the exciting time of the World Meeting of Families Conference scheduled to be held in the “City of Brotherly Love,” Philadelphia, PA, starting September 22nd and culminating with the Mass of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, on Sunday, September 27th. Our Church is celebrating the gift of family and the urgent need to protect and defend it during this time when it is under a tremendous amount of stress and attack by our secular world. I am aware that for some the term “family” can conjure up a wide range of feelings and emotions, for many of us it means happiness, safety, comfort, love and security, but unfortunately for many others, it can connote fear, worry, sorrow, pain, abuse and violence. In our modern society we cannot simply assume that the sense of family or its reality automatically translates itself into positive emotions.

We are called to assist those families that are hurting and struggling, especially those families where God is absent and a deep connection to the Holy Family, we realize that the light of God shines in the midst of our own families as we confront those same tensions and crises in our life together.

As Oblates of St. Joseph priests, brothers, seminarians, sisters and laity we recognize and uphold the value of each and every family as a “domestic church,” fittingly labeled by Pope Saint John Paul II. Even generations ago, our holy founder, St. Joseph Marell (1844-1895) understood the family unit as the fundamental foundation of society and the unique place where children learn their Christian Faith and ultimately become responsible citizens. His pastoral letters written in 1892 and 1894 as Bishop of Acqui (diocese in northwestern Italy) highlight his thoughts and teaching on this in an exceptional way.

We, the Oblates of St. Joseph religious family, will be proud to be represented at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia and to be in the company of our Holy Father. It is an exciting time for us as we promote through our ministries the sanctity of Marriage with the devotion to the Holy Spouses, and consequently the sanctity of the family. May this fall issue of our CUSTOS magazine help you to understand better how our religious congregation walks promoting all that is sacred and God-centered.

May we feel divine strength within ourselves and our families as we strive to combat the errors taught by today’s world, errors that seek to weaken the very foundation of society and the Church. The Holy Family of Joseph and Mary and Jesus is a model for all of us as we struggle to make our own families holy places of peace and love.

Lovingly yours within the Family of God,

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

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.

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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: Painting of the Holy Family by Pawel Domaszewicz, located at the Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń in Licheń Stary, Poland.

World Meeting of Families
by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

As this issue goes to print, the United States is gearing up for the visit of Pope Francis. In union with our country and indeed the world, we are happy to share with you the following column written by Archbishop Chaput on July 22, 2015 in preparation for these exciting events.

When Pope John Paul II chose Denver for World Youth Day 1993, skeptics were aghast. Colorado was an empty square in the middle of nowhere. A second-tier city with a Ku Klux Klan legacy, Denver was planted in the most “unchurched” region of the United States. It was more than 1,000 miles from any historic center of Catholic life. It had all the warning signs of a disaster.

Critics worried that it would break the finances of Church and city. A few tens of thousands of visitors might turn up, at most. They were wrong—and not just “wrong,” but wildly so. An ocean of young people converged on the city, the crime rate dropped to nearly zero during the week, and the final papal Mass brought together as many as 750,000 pilgrims. World Youth Day profoundly changed the local Church, the city and the state. It sparked an energy that continues more than 20 years later.

The change took time. There were no miracles of the sun. No sudden spike in baptisms. No surge in Mass attendance or priestly vocations. A year after the event, some people wondered if the whole thing had just been a very big party, with some religion thrown in.

But over the next few years, the spirit of the place gradually came alive in dramatic ways. A generation of Catholic young adults had found their faith, the Pope, and the presence of Jesus Christ in a life-changing way at World Youth Day. As time went by, the local Church served as a tractor beam for scholars, teachers, seminarians, youth ministers, new apostolic communities, ministries and movements, young families and dedicated Catholics from around the country.

To put it simply: World Youth Day remade and reignited the Church in Colorado. Two decades later, the fruit of that conversion is still being harvested. And if a miracle could happen in Denver, the same miracle might happen—with God’s grace and a lot of work—almost anywhere else.

So much for background.

Three years ago, the Holy See asked if Philadelphia would stand as one of the possible sites for the World Meeting of Families in 2015. Saying “yes” wasn’t easy: At the time, Philadelphia’s local Church faced very serious problems.

Yet our priests and laypeople warmed to the idea immediately. From the start, public officials and business leaders actively committed their help. In September, with as many as 15,000 visitors expected for the family congress, and more than 1 million for the closing papal events, the economic impact for Greater Philadelphia could be extraordinary.

For the Church, this global meeting offers a chance to renew Catholic life in the city where our nation began. Of course, Philadelphia 2015 is a long way from Denver 1993. A mass gathering of families is different from a meeting of young adults. Colorado was largely unchurched. Pennsylvania has deep religious roots. The Church in Colorado was small and young. The Church in Philadelphia is large in numbers but older in her demographic profile. She also has a much longer legacy of social service and organized presence in the community.

Most importantly, today’s world is very different from even 20 years ago; but not nearly as different as the world will be 20 years from now. Marriage, family and the raising of children with a strong faith—these things are under great pressure today from the surrounding culture. The future in Philadelphia and worldwide will have big challenges for anyone serious about being Christian. It will need a new generation of disciples formed by joy and perseverance.

The family is where new life begins: new life for the world; new life for the nation; new life for the Church. It’s where we learn love and patience, and how to work with others in peace.

Archbishop Chaput is the ordinary of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and has been instrumental in the implementation and success of the World Meeting of Families 2015.
“El Padre Viejo”

by Linda Gomez

In commemoration of the canonization of Junipero Serra taking place on September 23, 2015, we are blessed to be able to share with you this insightful and original work written specifically for CUSTOS magazine by a member of the Oblate parish of St. Joseph Marelo in Granite Bay, CA.

Junipero Serra was a 56-year-old asthmatic with a gimpy leg when he reached Alta California in 1769. The frail, five-foot-two friar seemed ill suited for the rigors of missionary life in New Spain’s northern frontier. But appearances are deceiving.

Born and reared in Petra, Mallorca, Miguel Jose Serra was a sickly kid. He joined the Franciscans at 16 and chose the name Junipero in honor of the “Holy Fool,” one of St. Francis’s early followers known for “guileless simplicity and celestial mirth.”

Serra excelled in his studies, earning a doctorate from Ramon Lull University in Palma de Mallorca, where he later taught philosophy and theology. The short, skinny priest was a popular, charismatic professor with a bright and comfortable future when in 1749 at the age of 36 he chucked it all to become a missionary in the Americas.

It took four ships and five months for Serra to sail from Mallorca to Mexico. He celebrated his arrival by walking almost 300 miles from Vera Cruz to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe to consecrate his mission. On that trek a spider or mosquito bit Serra’s leg leaving an ulcerous open wound that tormented him until the day he died.

Serra toiled in Mexico for 16 years, first in the Sierra Gorda Mountains with the Pame tribe, then at the Colegio de San Fernando—Franciscan Missionary headquarters—in Mexico City. When the Jesuits were expelled in 1767 he was dispatched to Baja California to oversee their missions. The following year Spain pushed the frontier north to Alta California and Serra joined the expedition. At last he was where he wanted to be: In a new, virgin missionary world.

Serra knew he was a stranger, migrant and missionary on someone else’s turf and wrote as much. “I am not the first to walk these lands, only the first Christian.” Serra called Native Californians “Gentiles,” employing the New Testament word for people unfamiliar with Christ. Considering “heathens, savages and barbarians” were the common terms of the time, in any European lingo, Serra showed an enlightened perspective from the start.

For the aged Franciscan it was a case of love at first sight. He wrote of the Native Californians’ “gentleness and peaceable disposition,” recorded their acts of kindness and generosity and admired the beauty of their singing voices. “They are our children, for nobody but us has engendered them in Christ. And so we look upon them as a father looks upon his children.”

Guided by that belief, Serra was unstoppable. In less than 15 years he founded 9 missions and baptized some 6,000 natives. He converted the environment as well as the inhabitants, whom he wrenched from nomadism into herding, tillage and industry. Contrary to popular myth, there were no forced baptisms. At least not on Serra’s watch. Nor strong-armed conversions. [Serra ended a year in San Diego without a single baptism.] It wasn’t until Carmel in December 1771 that he performed his first Alta California baptism, with a 5-year-old boy name TK from the village of Achatas.

Missionary Vision

Serra was a visionary, but his vision was based on the Mallorcan countryside of his youth and Alta California was half a world away. Initially, cargo ships were the missions’ lifeline so the Padre Presidente was meticulous with requests; he dictated the dimensions, wood, and hardware for shipping crates so they could later be turned into tables and chairs. Serra was ferocious in priorities. Plows, yokes, tools and rope topped the list, followed by seeds, vines, thread and cloth. Serra could never get enough fabric as it was greatly coveted by the locals. The old friar quipped had he “given all the cloth requested he’d be surrounded by a hundred pagan Franciscans.”

Armed with animals and agriculture the Franciscans transformed California. Rumor had it they got help straight from Assisi. Oxen, mules and horses provided muscle power while sheep, goats, chickens, pigs and cows lent pastoral counsel. Native Californians were naturally curious about these odd creatures and the seemingly miraculous technologies of the missions like wells and irrigation. Buildings of earth rose from the ground. A hole was dug and water was found. A stream was diverted and a garden grew with exotic new foods like beans, corn, squash, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic and chilies. Serra’s philosophy was “to let them taste how sweet God is,” because once they did they’d keep coming back.

All Serra wanted was to do pastoral work. It’s when he was happiest.

All Serra wanted was to do pastoral work. It’s when he was happiest.
and for Serra, writing was fighting. He wrote thousands of pages denouncing both the Spanish military and civil authorities, complaining they were “men without any fear of God whatever in their hearts.” He decried the systemic rape of indigenous women and fought for the removal of military officers who did nothing to stop it. When three years of writing changed nothing, El Gran Caminante—The Great Walker—left Monterey for Mexico City to plead before Vice-roy Bucarelli on behalf of Native Californians.

He returned four thousand miles later in 1773 with the 32 article Representaciones, hailed as the first bill of rights for Native Americans or anyone else in North America. He was an advocate for human rights before the word existed. Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez theorizes Serra doesn’t get proper credit because he was a “working class” missionary—a guy who tried to get things done. His writing and thinking are practical, administrative. He was a problem solver, not a prophet. "

Junipero Serra was a gifted writer, administrator, teacher and preacher, a man driven, devoted, inspired and on fire with his love of God."

Serra was a complex man. He was a gifted writer, administrator, teacher and preacher, a man driven, devoted, inspired and on fire with his love of God and desire to evangelize. He was an adherent of medieval spiritual practices (such as self-flagellation) and not uncomfortable with corporal punishment. He was a Trotamundos—a Globetrotter—who covered over 24,000 miles in his life, more than the combined travels of Marco Polo and Lewis and Clark. By the time Serra reached Monterey the fraile andariego—walking friar—had journeyed over 15,000 miles and seen a thing or two. He had a profound understanding of human nature and truly believed paternalistic religious rule offered Indians a better life than the exploitation promised by soldiers and settlers. He knew English colonists on the Eastern seaboard paid $20 bounties for Indian scalps and had heard George Washington advocated Indian extermination. Russians had a terrible reputation at home with serfs; why would they be better in Alta California with Indians? Granted the alternatives of the 1770s, Spanish Colonialism didn’t seem so bad to the Mallorcan friar.

Despite his chosen name, Junipero was nobody’s fool. Knowing soldiers on the outpost of empire couldn’t be trusted near women, he moved the missions from the presidios. He actively discouraged Spanish settlers, fearing they’d exploit and enslave the Indians. El Padre Viejo thought the land belonged to the Native Californians and the only justification for Spanish presence was to bring the love of God.

A Life for the Gospel

In his last years Serra’s sole desire was to administer confirmations. He traveled throughout the missions and established direct relationships with the baptized natives. The military authorities, jealous of his popularity and power, tried to stop him. But Serra was continued on page 10

The Power of Mercy

by Fr. Gregory Finn, o.s.j.

Our holy father Pope Francis continues to lead us and challenge us as Catholics and genuine followers of Christ. In his Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, the Joy of the Gospel, he sought to motivate us to an authentic expression of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of us all, by urging us to seek Christ personally and be open to the joy that comes from living in union with Him. All those who open their hearts and believe in Him will know the wonder of His love and the power of His grace, and that gives us a level of happiness that the enjoyments of the earth cannot. It also provides a motivation to go out and share this joy with others—that everyone would revel in the beauty, the peace, the contentment, the fulfillment, the rejoicing of a life united to God!

This is what the Church is about as the organized Body of Christ, the great union of all believers of which he is the earthly leader, and this is also what each of us, the individual believer and follower of Christ must be about. Our Holy Father spent some time looking at the world and its challenges, looking at the Church and its challenges and suggesting how we might go about doing this. He especially suggested we become genuine “missionaries,” carriers of the joyful message of Christ to as many as we can, with whatever means are at our disposal, by word of mouth and by deeds that demonstrate.

As another step in this great project, Pope Francis has established a Holy Year: a Holy Year of Mercy! The idea of the “Holy Year” is an old one in the Church, taking its inspiration from the Bible itself where in ancient times God wanted a special year of both joy in gratitude for His bounties, and effort to live more closely to Him. This was the “Jubilee Year” a time to celebrate all that God does, and to renew our dedication to Him. It was a Year filled with a special closeness to God, an abundance of His grace, and with activities...
that only occurred at that time to show how special God was and how important it is to orient our lives to Him. The Hebrews of old held moments of public prayer and sacrifice, common celebrations and feastings, forgiveness of sins and debts, and return to ancestral lands as ways of marking the year.

Christians in the centuries after Christ marked the regular anniversary of the infinite gift of the Redemption, Christ’s saving Passion and Resurrection which frees us from the bondage of sin and opens for us eternal life. Every twenty five years a special year of “jubilation” was held, focused in the city of Rome, where pilgrims would come from all over the world. On these occasions, to concretely mark the bestowing of joyful graces, a special Holy Door would be opened, only for this time, in all the great Basilica Churches in Rome, so that passing through, you would know that you had entered the place of joy and received graces, which freed one from the wounds of sin, gave increase in relationship with God, and opened hearts for yet greater experiences of God’s presence and power. Clearly these were moments of spiritual celebration, but celebration nonetheless! What greater joy than a soul purged of even the traces of sin, free from its effects, with clear paths for the love of the Lord! In additional to these twenty five year celebrations, Popes have called for Holy Years to mark other remembrances of Christ’s deeds or significant events in the life of the whole Church.

Pope Francis has inaugurated this Holy Year to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the last great gathering of the world’s Bishops in ancient form to offer guidance to the course of the Church as it faces the modern world. By the light of the Holy Spirit direction was given that even now we seek to follow and draw inspiration from to continue to bring the Gospel of Christ to a world that ever needs Him.

But even more, the Holy Father is moved by the experience of his own service to God’s people and no doubt the Holy Spirit himself to focus this Holy Year in a particular direction: Mercy! His Papal Bull of Indiction, Misericordiae Vultus (“Face of Mercy”) draws us to see, as God Himself would wish us to see, that He is foremost a God of mercy! His is the "face of mercy,” looking with love and pity on His children, from the time of their fall in Adam and Eve, until now, seeking to rescue and restore what was broken. The entire Bible is a testament to God who is moved by mercy, who desires to forgive and heal us.

The Holy Father wants a Year so focused on God and his mercy that it will be widely experienced by his children, and even by those not yet his children, but whom he wishes to be. It is a year not only for the experiencing of mercy, but for the living of mercy. Our Church, fruit of God’s love, must be a place that lives immersed in God’s mercy, rejoices in it, is humbled by it, embraces it with trust and gratitude, and is energized by it. It is a year for the showing of mercy. Mercy received, mercy enjoyed, must become mercy shared. If we have been so saved by mercy, it is up to us to let it be part of what we say and do, of how we relate to others, to the world, of how we reach out to those most in need and those furthest from the Lord.

The Holy Father's entire Bull of Indiction is a reflection on the source, meaning and demonstration of mercy as the core principle of this Holy Year. In this context we can also see the International Congress of the Family, being held in Philadelphia this year, with the presence of the Holy Father as well. Linked to it is the Synod of Bishops on the Family, gathering Bishops from all over the world to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and offer the Church reflection on the divinely created reality of the family. Is there any greater forum for the experience of mercy than the institution of the family in the world today? God made the family to be a reflection of himself, One God in Three Persons. The family thus is ordained by God to be a building block of human life. It has always been a challenge for us humble human beings, but it seems more so now, as forces of the world seek to either change it to their own convenience, undermine it by disconnecting it with its deepest meaning, or sideline it altogether as no longer relevant to our lives. Here we need mercy! Mercy to show us God’s true purpose and its beauty and necessity. Mercy to help us live it as He intended with all its challenges. Mercy for those struggling in broken and difficult situations. Mercy for those who fail to understand what family is about and seek to unwisely change and distort it. Mercy for those who have nearly forgotten it or live without out it. The Holy Father in his call for mercy, places before us an area of great need: the family!

Let us heed the call of the Holy Father. Let us read and reflect on his thoughts, and be renewed in the wonders of God's mercy and therefore more conscious and capable workers of mercy in the world!

Fr. Gregory Finn, O.S.J., is the pastor of Holy Annunciation parish in Hazleton, Pa.
And there were many, to say nothing of diseases. Unwittingly the Spanish unleashed European diseases (measles, influenza, chicken pox, syphilis), for which Native Californians had no immunity. The death toll was staggering; a demographic catastrophe. When the Spanish arrived in 1769 there were about 225,000 Native Californians. By 1820 there were only 200,000 and by 1848, when the U.S. took California from Mexico there were 150,000. The population declined 33% in 80 years of Spanish and Mexican rule, virtually all attributable to disease.

The slaughter began with the Gold Rush. Between 1848 and 1858 the California Indian population plummeted to 50,000 at the hands of a “ruthless flood of miners and farmers who annihilated them without mercy or compensation. The direct causes of death were disease, the bullet, exposure and acute starvation,” wrote historian Sherburne F. Cook.

In the midst of such apocalyptic terror Native Californians reported seeing Serra “on the highest mountain, promising to ‘pray for you forever.’” Others relayed how El Padre Viejo would bi-locate when his leg was too inflamed to walk and he needed to administer sacraments. “He’d sit in the middle of the road and pray for two or three hours,” said Joseph John Hitchcock, who was born in 1881. “Then he’d rise, say ‘it is done,’ and it was true; the people had actually received the sacrament.” People claimed Serra could walk to a place faster than a man could ride.

By 1934 there were enough stories, in Spanish and English, to initiate an investigation into the cause of canonization for Junipero Serra. Testimony taken through the missions included Native Californians recalling how their grandparents invoked Serra’s help to find water or catch fish and had advised giving Padre Santo tobacco or chocolate. Spanish sayings unique to California such as making más sacrificios que Serra (more sacrifices than Serra) and being más santo que Serra (more saintly than Serra) were recorded.

Father Noel Francis Moholy, a short Franciscan theology professor with a bad leg, joined the cause in 1950 and became the head postulator, in 1958. Moholy (as in “I’m moh’boly than you”) had an unfailling sense of humor he considered “essential for this line of work. There’s no vow to be dour and sour. Serra had a great sense of humor.” And though that seems odd for a guy who beat himself bloody, Serra’s writings do, in fact, reveal a wry, dry and playful wit.

Moholy viewed Serra as a personal friend and “chatted with him every day. I call him Old Man and he called me Bulldog... Right from the start I said, ‘Look, Old Man, we have a tough row to hoe. So let’s make a pact. I’ll do the work and you take care of the dough.’ Well, from that day he never let me down.” Working alone and unsalaried Moholy raised $1,000,000 to pay for prayer cards, historical research, medical testimony and the translation of 15,000 documents into Italian for use by the Vatican, to say nothing of 25 lobbying trips to Rome, where he stayed for free with Irish Franciscans.

Under Moholy’s watch Serra was promoted to Venerable in 1985 and Blessed in 1987. Moholy worked for the Old Man until his death in 1998. Asked why he worked so hard for 48 years the native San Franciscan quipped, “I’m lazy and looking for a shortcut to Heaven. I figure the Old Man will be waiting for me when the time comes and he’ll say ‘I owe you one, Bulldog.’”

Moholy was ever confident of his fellow Franciscan’s canonization. “Serra’s been in heaven for 200 years. We’re just recognizing it so we can have him for an inspiration.” The Irish-American friar enjoyed musing about Serra’s eventual promotion. “I wonder, what job will the Old Man get? I think he should be the patron saint of travelers, but he’s also qualified to cover Californians, correspondents, migrants and immigrants. What about immigrants to California?”

Linda is an author, a journalist, and a member of St. Joseph Marello parish in Granite Bay, CA.
Family Support

by Erlene Cueto

Parents want the best for their children, and parents of faith know that the best comes from living in right relationship with God. While the parents are the first ones responsible in this task, the role of youth ministry in the faith formation of youth cannot be underestimated.

Having served as a youth director for 11 years, and a CCD teacher for 35 years, I can honestly say I have always enjoyed teaching our Catholic faith to the little ones. They are so free and open to all of God’s goodness and beauty found in God’s love, and it has always been a great blessing to share with our youth how God gave us his only Son to suffer for our sins, even to the point of death so that we could have life.

We know that the first teachers of our children’s lives are the parents, but we must not forget that the Christian community is so very important in our children’s lives and their formation as well. As parents we teach them to share, to love, to get along with others, and to forgive one another. We share this by our example and harmony to the family. There is so much that as parents we can give to share with our children, especially in regards to our Catholic faith. The foundational teaching we need to make sure that passes on is God’s love for us and to share his love with others. It is through this love that we are able to know who God really is and how we can best serve him within our families and in our communities. These easy steps of loving, knowing, and serving the Lord allows our children and us to prepare for our eternal life in heaven. As parents we cannot do this on our own; we look for the support of our Christian community.

One particular area that assists parents in the moral, spiritual, and human formation of our children is in the youth ministry of our local parish. Youth ministry helps our young people to ask questions and receive answers according to our faith. As parents we want the best for our children. And one of the best things we can offer them is to be involved in youth ministry.

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As parents we want the best for our children. And one of the best things we can offer them is to be involved in youth ministry.
Fr. Sergio Perez, vocations director for the Holy Spouses Province, welcomes
the following contribution from Alan and Mary Shearer on their experience of
supporting their son in his vocation to be an Oblate of St. Joseph.

Ours is an ordinary family that is faced with the
same daily challenges as every family. As spouses, we
complete and complement each other, surrender-
ing our imperfections and growing in God’s love. As
parents, we are called to help our children discover
that God loves them and has a unique plan for each of
them. We discover through our children that each and
every life is precious. The family, the domestic church,
should be a school of love, mercy, forgiveness, respect
and humility in a world that struggles with sin, par-
ticularly selfishness.

Having been blessed
with four children and
three grandchildren, we
recognize that each is a
unique and unrepeatable
gift from God. We are
family; each is different,
yet we see ourselves in
each other. Our oldest
child, Fr. John, is called
to the priesthood in a religious community. Being an
ordinary family with ordinary struggles in the world,
we have been blessed to witness and participate in
Fr. John’s journey to the religious life and priesthood.
Our lives have been filled with great joy, many chal-
enges and a profound sense of gratitude watching our
children grow up to adulthood. To witness your child
seek and discover their vocation in life brings with it
a deep sense of faith and fulfillment, of being within
God’s will.

As a religious, Fr. John belongs to a community, a
family, dedicated to family life through St. Joseph; it
is a congregation that guards, upholds and promotes
family life as designed by God. They teach “life giving
love” through catechesis, marriage preparation and the
sacraments as taught by Christ’s Church. In our parish
in Madera, CA, we have witnessed this love blossom:
from the family springs
the spiritual fathers who
pass on the faith by being
living and loving examples
of God’s fruitful life giving
love. The family is the
seedbed of vocations.

The experience of hav-
ing a son called to be a re-
ligious and a priest brings
into focus our personal challenges. On the natural
level, one of the great challenges, caused by our selfish-
ness, is that we will not have grandchildren or the joy
of daily family life together. Having enjoyed time with
his siblings’ children, we realized that we would never
have that experience with Fr. John. On the supernatu-
ral level though, through prayer and trust in God, we
know that Fr. John will be blessed with many spiritual
children and that we, too, share in those blessings. This
insight helped us to understand more fully the inter-
dependence we have with one another as family, and
through baptism, with the Church as the family of God.

We expect our children to grow up and perhaps
even move away, but the reality of Fr. John serving
on the East Coast presented us with another personal
challenge. Letting go and trusting in God has led us to
appreciate God’s perfect plan in awe and wonder. We
have witnessed Fr. John mature through obedience into
the man God has called him to be.

Many years ago, the Oblates instituted a ministry
of the Vocation Cross at St. Joachim Parish in Madera.
At each Sunday Mass, a beautiful cross is handed on
to a person or family to pray through the week for
vocations. That cross has become a symbol for us of
how the prayers of our family and faith community
continue to be answered. At Fr. John’s ordination, and
indeed in the years leading up to his ordination, we ex-
perienced the power of that prayer and our interdepen-
dence in our family and faith community. We began to
understand that through the prayers of our parish fam-
ily, answering Jesus’ call to unity in John 17:21, we were
linked to an even larger family, the Universal Church.
Fr. John’s vocation to the priesthood and religious life
is first of all a total gift of God which is nurtured and
brought to fruition through the generosity, sacrifice
and prayer of the entire community and family that
surrounds him. As his parents, we are profoundly
grateful to God, the Church and the Oblates of St. Jo-
seph for nurturing and supporting his vocation.

Alan and Mary write from their hometown of
Madera, CA, where they belong to the Oblate parish of
St. Joachim.
News & Events

SANTA CRUZ, CA
- On August 23, the parish of St. Vincent de Paul in Davenport hosted their 21st annual parish barbeque. Fr. Jackson Pinheiro, O.S.J., headed the committee who put on a nice event which included lunch and a raffle.
- The Shrine of St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer, hosted a retreat for the Salesian Sisters and staff of Salesian Elementary and Junior High School in Corralitos, CA. The retreat was an opportunity for the staff to prepare for the new academic year.
- Also in August, the Shrine welcomed a confirmation retreat for youth from Coalinga, CA. Forty young people came as they prepared for their confirmation in Spring 2016.
- The Shrine continues its efforts to plan and build a coffee house on the grounds, which will invite more visitors to the Shrine and serve as a beautiful venue for evangelization in the city of Santa Cruz, CA. Please continue to pray for the success of this project. More details to come in future issues of CUSTOS magazine.

MADERA, CA
- Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J., hosted the “Glory to Glory” pilgrimage on the Russian River in California, July 27-31. The pilgrimage included 108 pilgrims from Oblate parishes and ministries around California. Also present at various times were Fr. Sergio Perez, O.S.J., Bro. Stephen Spencer, O.S.J., Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J., and Oblate aspirants.

PITTSTON, PA
- The officers of the Josephite Marellian Laity held a meeting on Friday, August 21 to finalize the calendar for the new fiscal year which runs from September 2015 thru June 2016. The first meeting of the new year will be held on Wednesday, September 2 following Mass and Novena to St. Joseph.
- The Triduum of St. Joseph the Worker will be celebrated September 4, 5, and 6 in the Seminary Chapel in Pittston, PA. Mass and Novena honoring St. Joseph the Worker will be held each evening at 7:00 PM. The Feast day celebration will be on Labor Day, September 7 in the Seminary Chapel with Mass at 10:30 AM.
- On November 8, the Pittston and Hazleton laity will welcome Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J., to lead the Fall Formation Conference from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. Fr. Mariusz is responsible for the care and guidance of four seminarians residing at the new Oblate house of formation in Bala Cynwyd, PA, a suburb of Philadelphia. Mass will be held at 4:30 PM in the seminary chapel followed by a reception. A Mass of remembrance honoring deceased laity members and their families will be held on Sunday, November 22 in the seminary chapel at 7:00 PM. Light refreshments will be provided by the laity members following Mass.
- Once again the Josephite Marellian Laity of Pittston will have their annual Thanksgiving Project. Food items will be collected during the entire month of November for the Pittston Food Pantry. This year proceeds will also go to help Fr. Mariusz and the Oblate seminarians in Philadelphia, PA.

LOOMIS, CA & GRANITE BAY, CA
- The Oblates in Loomis welcome back Brian Ceja who continues his formation to be an Oblate of St. Joseph, and also welcome Jorge Mendoza who begins his first year of seminary formation. Please continue to pray for Oblate seminarians throughout the country and the world.
- St. Joseph Marellio Parish in Granite Bay, CA, will complete the construction of the new ministry center in early September. The new building will serve to enable the parish to...
continues its mission to share the gospel with the people of Granite Bay and the surrounding areas.

- The Family of St. Joseph will resume the regular monthly mornings of recollection. The first gathering will take place on September 19 at Mount St. Joseph in Loomis, CA. The day begins with Mass at 8:00 AM, followed by adoration, a potluck breakfast, and a reflection given by Fr. Matthew Spencer, O.S.J. All are welcome.

INTERNATIONAL
- The Oblates of St. Joseph commemorated the centennial anniversary of the first missionaries arrival in the Philippines this year. In celebration of this wonderful occasion, Oblate leadership around the world gathered for a Council of the Congregation. In addition, the Oblates hosted education and youth congresses with attendees from around the world. The Holy Spouses Province was represented by Oblates from the U.S.A., as well as laity from our communities involved in education and youth ministry.

Pilgrimage to Fatima, Santiago, and Madrid  
M A Y  1 7 - 2 6 ,  2 0 1 6

Cost: $2,999

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

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

Included in the cost: Airfare from Newark, accommodations, airport-hotel group transfers, tour escorts, local guides. Some restrictions apply.

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Choosing our Families

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

A buy two years into the seminary I went through one of those rough patches that we all do every once in a while. I started to doubt whether I should continue along this vocation or not. Nothing seemed to be going well at the time, and when things get tough we can practically convince ourselves why we should just give up, sometimes before we even realize we’re thinking about it. In this case, in the midst of that small crisis, I was pretty sure that small crisis, I was pretty sure I would never be hanging myself thinking: “In my former life, couldn’t people just be more like me? Why are our styles could ever work to even realize we’re thinking about it. Yes, family certainly takes work. Yet as the Church gives us this special time to reflect on the gift of family, I have to say that I am so grateful to God to be an Oblate of St. Joseph, to have so many of us as part of our extended family, and to work together at making Jesus Christ known and loved in the world. We don’t always choose each other in our journey of faith, and every once in a while our differences can cause us some grief. But if we can follow the inspiration of Pope Francis and work towards uniting our families in greater love and mercy, then family life itself will be transformed for the better in our nation and in the world.

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