

Faith & Life

BRINGING GOD INTO YOUR DAY

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Faith & Life

BRINGING GOD INTO YOUR DAY

YEAR FOR PRIESTS: Fr. Camilo Garcia

I grew up in Changuitiro, in the State of Michoacán in Mexico. When I was twelve a very important event occurred that began my journey to the priesthood.



Fr. Camilo is an avid golfer.

I made my First Communion. This was a time when there was a lot of trouble in my life with my parents and a neighboring ranch. After my First Communion I began to really ask the Lord to help me with these problems and soon after the difficulties with

my parents improved. I began to experience the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist in a special way and it was in Jesus that I began to find comfort in the difficult times I faced in my family.

When I was 22 years old I came to the U.S. to live in Keyes with my Uncle. Shortly after I began attending Delta College in Stockton to learn English, I met a friend who went to a youth group for Hispanic Catholics from all over the Stockton Diocese. I kept making excuses not to attend usually because I had a date with my girlfriend. At that point in my life she was more important. He kept inviting me without giving up and eventually I went with my friend to see what he was so excited about.

It was on a retreat with Fr. Carlos Hernandez in Hilmar when I began to look at my faith differently. He said, "we need to grab our salvation." He acted like he was going to give me a pencil saying, "salvation is

like this, grab it". I tried to grab it and he pulled back his hand. Then he took three steps back. So I ran and grabbed it out of his hand. He said "that's the way! We have to fight to be with God!" I began to live my faith like this, no longer content to only sit in the pew. I decided to really live my faith every day.

In youth group a bible passage really struck me: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 20:18). I felt like Jesus was calling me to do this, but I didn't yet

understand how. I realize now this was the call of Jesus for me and I decided to get more serious about considering the priesthood. I lived together with five other young men in community. Every morning Fr. Ricardo Giraldo would offer Mass. He also helped us with English and we worked with him in the diocesan youth group. I really think that God

was guiding us all through this priest and his practical help.

As I progressed in the decision making process of discernment I briefly considered becoming a Franciscan, but I decided to study at the Seminary in Tijuana for the Diocese of Stockton. At the time I didn't know what difficulties I would face in the seminary but I did trust that Jesus would provide the grace I needed to face them because He assured us "I will be with you always." (Matthew 28:20).

Fr. Camilo

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On the Cover: Our annual *Children's Christmas Pageant & Mass* is held Christmas Eve at 4:30pm in Fr. O'Hare Hall.



Join Fr. Camilo this Christmas Eve for Mass.

Have You Been Away From Mass?



OUTREACH & WELCOME

Have you been away from Sunday Mass for while? Are you looking to experience God through your Catholic parish? Are you new to the parish? Then you are invited to attend a Catholics Come Home Welcome Meeting at St. Joseph's for those who have been away from practicing their faith and for those who are just new to the parish.

We would love to see you at Mass. The parishioners of St. Joseph in Modesto are ready, willing, and able to hold out a welcoming hand, discuss issues or questions, with the goal to lead you back to a personally fulfilling relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. We are the Body of Christ and through His Sacraments and prayer we all experience the fullness of Faith in our daily lives.



Welcome Meetings at St. Joseph's:
Dec. 29 and Jan. 7
Join us in the John Paul II Center, Suite 2
6:30-8:00pm

Returning to the practice of your faith has never been easier. Some people who have been away have things from their past that they think cannot be forgiven or other things they think cannot be reconciled with regular Sunday Mass attendance. Many times these perceived barriers can be overcome with a little effort and a first step forward and that's why we're here to help.

St. Joseph's has many parish events, spiritual talks, celebrations, small communities and family gatherings throughout the year. Sunday Mass is celebrated eight times from Saturday Vigil through Sunday evening. We are enthusiastic about our faith; come and see! We are your family members, co-workers, neighbors, and friends. We'll walk with you on the spiritual path that will enrich your life. We welcome you Home!

Talk to a real live person about
returning to Mass: 338-4286

Visit our local *Catholics Come Home* website
www.cch-modesto.org





The Saints Gathered Around

WORSHIP

Original art work and descriptive text by Mary Mullins, Valley Rose Designer Glass 2008

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. Then one of the elders said to me: "Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?"

I said to him, "My lord, you are the one who knows."

He said to me. "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 13-14)

Overview

The twelve windows encircling the east and west of the altar honor the lives of twelve Saints and Blessed souls whose lives of holiness and virtue lead the Church to believe they are already in Heaven with God. They have survived the time of "great distress" and stand with us around the Table of the Lord as members of the Church Triumphant in the Communion of Saints. Their examples of faith and love inspire us and their intercessory prayers aid us, the "saints" still on our pilgrim journey, as well as those being purified in Purgatory. The saints look directly at us, engaging us in their story and inviting us to join them on the path to eternal life with Jesus.

St. Maria Goretti [October 1890 – July 1902 (Feast Day – July 6th)]

Historical Overview

The story of St. Maria Goretti is a dramatic yet tender account of faith,

family love, joy, hardship, purity and forgiveness! And yet, Maria, the heroine of this story had not yet celebrated her twelfth birthday when she became a martyr! Through gentle humble souls such as hers, God shows us that we can never be too young, too poor or too uneducated to be an instrument of His love and His glory if we are willing to follow His commandments!

Maria was born in the mountain village of Corinaldo in Italy. Although the village and the surrounding landscape were incredibly beautiful, providing for their family was a constant struggle for her father, Luigi and her mother Assunta. Luigi served as a soldier in his younger days and had seen the warmer Mediterranean lands further west. By 1897, he believed it was time to try his luck elsewhere, so he and Assunta packed up their little brood of four young children: Angelo was nine, Maria was six, Marino was four and the baby, Alessandro, was still an infant. Their hopeful journey down the mountains toward Campagna had challenges of its own particularly traveling with such young children. It took two weeks to journey two hundred miles, a trip we would make in 3 or 4 hours today. But, they kept their hopes up, stopping to pray in the churches along the way. They anxiously looked forward to settling down to work on a farm with the rich fertile soil Luigi had seen so many years ago.

By the time the family arrived in Nettuno, they were tired of traveling and ready to settle down. In Nettuno, Luigi heard of Count Mazzoleni who had good farming land in Ferriere, to the southwest. With high hopes, Luigi and Assunta



Saint
Maria Goretti

the Table of the Lord: Part Four

signed on as sharecroppers on Count Mazzoleni's land. They would finally have a home and eight acres to work! Along the way to their new home, they passed by the Count's lovely fertile fields, but soon they discovered that the Count's land that they would be working skirted the Pontine Marshes. It was damp miserable mosquito infested land that needed constant draining. The home and the accompanying buildings were in a desperate state of repair so Luigi also needed to renovate their living conditions.

Despite the disappointments, Luigi and Assunta worked hard to make the place a happy home and in time, they welcomed three more babies. They were prayerful people and worked to instill a deep love of God in their children. Maria's heart was innocent, an open flower filled with the love of God. She knew loving Him meant loving those around her. Although she was illiterate, the Passionist priests in the area oversaw her religious education and she received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion. Maria was growing into a beautiful young lady. She had a sensitive yet cheerful disposition and was a great help and delight to both her parents.

As the years went by, the hard work, the heat, humidity and repeated bouts with malaria left Luigi exhausted and barely able to work the crops. When Count Mazzoleni visited the Goretti's one day to see how his fields were progressing, he was furious that Luigi's crops were not well taken care of. He did not have a reputation for compassion nor did he care that the living conditions he provided for the Goretti's contributed to Luigi's failing health. To protect his crops, the Count sent Giovanni Serenelli, a 60 year old widower and his 18 year old son Allesandro, to live and work with the Goretti's and also claim a share of the crop. Luigi was not happy with this, but since he and Assunta felt they had **no** choice, they decided to make the best of things.

For a brief time, this arrangement went well; the Serenelli's got the crops back on track and the two families lived harmoniously. However, once the harvest

was over and winter set in, so did the problems. Giovanni Serenelli liked his wine and was even more mean-spirited when drunk. Allesandro became sullen and one day when Assunta was cleaning, she discovered he had a collection of pornography.

Luigi and Assunta were

concerned about his influence on their oldest son Angelo. More time passed and in April 1902, Luigi who was exhausted, disappointed and sick from malaria, died. As he lay dying, he whispered to his wife to take the children and return to Corinaldo.

Assunta sincerely missed Corinaldo, but it was impossible for her, a woman alone to travel over two hundred miles with seven children. She decided to stay put for the time and work in the fields while Maria assumed the household duties and care of the children. Giovanni Serenelli made life hard for her, with his anger and laziness. Unbeknownst to Assunta, Maria now had to contend with Allesandro. He had been stalking her and trying to force himself upon her and then threatening her if she told anyone. All Assunta knew was that Maria's joy of life was gone.

In July 1902, just months after her Luigi's death, Allesandro attacked Maria, ripping some of her clothes off her body in an attempt to rape her. She fought him begging him to stop and telling him what he wanted to do was a terrible sin. In response, he stabbed her repeatedly before running away. No one but the little children she was taking care of heard her screams over the sound of farm machinery. Eventually their crying awoke the angry Giovanni Serenelli from his nap and his shouting brought Assunta and the other neighbors running to the house. They found Maria drenched in her own blood, but still alive. She identified Allesandro



*...I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the Communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body and
life everlasting. Amen*
The Apostles Creed

Saints (cont...) next month: Blessed Miguel Pro and Mother Teresa



as her attacker.

An ambulance wagon took Maria to a hospital in the town of Nettuno where the doctors tried without much hope to repair her

wounds. The anesthesia was not effective and Maria woke up during the painful surgery. She suffered fantastic pain for 20 hours, but still she was able to very sincerely forgive Allesandro praying that he would be one day with her in paradise. She died on July 6, 1902.

This is a sad ending, but remember, God brings good from evil, so the best is yet to come! The police quickly arrested Allesandro. At first he pled not guilty and even tried to accuse Maria of encouraging his advances. But the evidence against him was strong and so he was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison. In the meantime, a heart broken Assunta took her six children and returned to Corinaldo; the memories of life in Ferriere were too painful to face every day!

Even the horrors of prison did not bring Allesandro to repentance. For six years he remained angry and unrepentant, even attacking the priests who came to minister to him. Then one day after Msgr. Giovanni Blandini visited him, Allesandro had a dream in which he was in a beautiful garden. He saw a pretty young girl in the distance who appeared to be walking toward him. He was puzzled because she was dressed as a farm girl, but in light, pale colored clothes, not the usual dark dresses worn by farm girls of those days. As she approached, he saw that the girl was Maria, radiantly beautiful, smiling at him and gathering white lilies as she came toward him. One by one, she handed Allesandro a lily. As she did so, the lily became brilliant white and burned up in his hands. Maria did this fourteen times. In her gentle, delicate gestures Allesandro knew that Maria had forgiven him and from then on he experienced a true conversion and became

a model prisoner. He wrote to Msgr. Blandini and told him of his dream. His behavior was so good that he was released three years early. He was now 47 years old.

Upon his release from prison, Allesandro needed to start a new life. First, he sought out the Capuchin Friars at Macerata who welcomed him in the charity and spirit of St. Francis. He lived and worked there, tending the gardens until his death in 1970 at the age of 87. The second thing Allesandro did after his release was to find Assunta and beg her forgiveness. She sincerely forgave him saying that if her little Maria forgave him, she must forgive him as well. The day following their meeting, they attended Mass and received Holy Communion together.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII canonized Maria at a Mass at St. Peter's. Assunta Goretti was there and she was the first mother to be present at the canonization of her child. Allesandro Serenelli was also there calling Maria his "light and protector". The Church honors St. Maria Goretti as the patron saint of rape victims, youth, chastity, poverty, purity and forgiveness.

In this window...

St. Maria is walking down a stone path in a lovely garden with butterflies fluttering very close to her. Her skirt, blouse and the simple shawl around her shoulders are soft blue and she has her work shoes on her feet. Her reddish brown hair is loose around her shoulders and she looks at us with a serene expression.

In her hands and on either side of the footpath are fourteen white lilies in full bloom. These represent the fourteen lilies she gave to Allesandro Serenelli. In the bottom of the window, a knife rests on a rock by the garden path. The knife represents the knife that Allesandro used in his attack on Maria, but to further illustrate Maria's forgiveness of Allesandro, she does not hold on to it. It is simply rests on the rock; a symbol of the reality of what happened but because she is not holding it, the knife resting on the rock is also a strong symbol of her forgiveness of Allesandro.



Advent Dawn Masses & February Retreat



Misa de Gallo - "Rooster's Mass"

December 16 - 24, 5:00am

The tradition of a novena (nine days) of dawn Masses began in the Philippines when priests held Mass before daybreak for farmers who wanted to attend Christmas Mass but could not leave their fields. Even today, faithful wake up very early to attend before dawn as an expression of devotion to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. A commonly-held belief is that if an individual completes the nine consecutive days, the act would merit a wish made by the devotee being granted. Each morning after the Mass, warm fellowship and breakfast follow in Fr. O'Hare Hall.

Join us for prayer and devotion in preparation for the birth of Jesus!

PARISH CENSUS

Who is our family?

When's the last time you counted the children in your house? Well, every so often St. Joseph's needs to update the status of our parish family of families. This year we are conducting a parish-wide census; a count of all families to verify current addresses, activity in parish, children and marital status, contact information and update our sacrament records if anything is missing.

This month you received a personalized copy of your parish registration information. We ask you take the time to update/correct any missing information and return the form in the enclosed envelope. With this information we will be able to determine who intends to be registered in St. Joseph's or may have transferred to another parish.

Verifying sacramental records and adding or deleting family members are just two of the benefits from conducting a parish census. When completed we will report how many families consider St. Joseph's their home parish and the total number of men, women, and children in our rosters. Another benefit is the option to indicate the primary language of each member so that correspondence can be personalized.

Also included is a *Quick Survey* (orange slip of paper) for a possible Catholic pre-school at St. Joseph's. The parish leadership councils and committees are interested in your need and/or support to bring early childhood education to our campus. Please be sure to fill out this survey and return it with your update family census.

Did you receive your "PARISH CENSUS"?

Please complete & return today.

Questions? Contact Donna Elson:
551-4973 x122 or delson@stjmod.com.

*The Militia of the Immaculata Prayer Village and Family Village
at St. Joseph's Catholic Church and*

The Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata Present:

"One Heart, One Mind... With Mary"

One-day Diocesan-wide Retreat in Two Parts

1) Adults & Teens 2) Children

Saturday, February 6, 2010

8:00am Mass until approximately 5:00pm

Silent Retreat for Adults & Teens

In Fr. O'Hare Hall, \$25.00 per person.

includes materials, continental breakfast & lunch

A room is provided for parents with non-walking infants.



Retreat Master: Fr. Patrick Greenough, OFM Conventual,
National Director of MI, US/Canada

Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata, *West Covina, California*

Fr. Benedict Kottarathil "Fr. Benny,"
MI Spiritual Director at St. Joseph's

Carlos Gonzalez, *Director of Youth & Family Ministries at St. Joseph's*

Children's Marian Retreat

(For toddlers through age 12; all in this group can be accommodated at the Children's Marian Retreat.)

In John Paul II Center, \$5.00 per child.

Includes Materials & Continental Breakfast

(Child must bring own non-perishable sack lunch; parent must attend Adult Retreat in Hall.)

- **Malissa Souza,** *MI Family Village Lay Apostolate Leader*
- **Nicole Miranda, Kathy Durando, and Martha Hovestall,** *MI Family Village Members*

To volunteer for the Children's Retreat please contact:
St. Joseph's Center for Lay Apostolates at 551-4973 x207
More Info: 209-521-8299 or visit: www.stjmod.com



Meet the

FAITH FORMATION

This past September, two Indian priests joined our parish family of families at St. Joseph's. Under contract with the parish for three years, we welcome our new brothers in Christ with these self-introductions. Each priest is being assigned to different ministry groups at St. Joseph's and has a full-schedule of sacraments and parishioner assistance.

Fr. Benny Kottarathil

I, Fr. Benny Kottarathil, am a Benedictine monk-priest of the Sylvestro-Benedictine Congregation. I am born of Catholic parents and was baptized within two weeks



Fr. Benny

of birth. My parents and grandparents were all Catholics ever since the time of St. Thomas and we are popularly called 'St. Thomas Christians.' I belong to the Syro-Malabar Rite, one of the three oriental churches of the East Syrian family. [Attending to the spiritual needs of other St. Thomas

Christians in Modesto, on every first Sunday of the month, we are celebrating the Holy Mass (Qurbana) in the Syro-Malabar Rite in our church at 3:30pm, in Malayalam language. You are most welcome!] I have two brothers and one sister. My mother died of a heart attack (during her sleep) two months prior to my sacerdotal ordination. May her soul rest in peace!

I felt a strong call to the monastic way of life and I joined St. Joseph's Benedictine Monastery, Makkiyad [Kerala, India – some 108 km away from my home] soon after my High School; and I made my Religious Profession in the year 1993. I made my Perpetual Profession in 1999 and was ordained a priest on the Solemnity of Epiphany in the year 2001.

After my ordination to priesthood I served as Director Assistant in our Monastery Retreat Centre for a whole year. Then I was sent to Rome to do my higher studies in Sacred Liturgy; and I did my Licentiate in Sacred Liturgy (Licentiam in Sacra Liturgia – LSL) from the prestigious Pontifical Liturgical Institute, Rome. On my return after studies I was once again appointed as the Assistant Director in the same Retreat Centre where I served a few years before. Then I was transferred to our monastery in



Fr. Benny (far right with beard) with his family in India; Father (far left), brothers and sister, their spouses, and his niece and nephews.

Bangalore where I worked as a professor of Sacred Liturgy in a number of seminaries in the city. I come to St. Joseph's taking a break both from my teaching profession and from my monastic life.

I enjoy sports and games. I love badminton and play chess. I love music. I like classic and historic movies. I am interested in reading; my favorite authors are Shakespeare and Tolkien. I speak Malayalam (my own native language), English and Italian fluently; and I have working knowledge in Ecclesiastical Latin, New Testament Greek, modern German and a little bit of French. [I also have working knowledge in a couple of other Indian languages.]

I love St. Joseph's, as it is a vibrant parish. I appreciate the magnanimity of Fr. Joseph Illo in giving me this opportunity to become part of this flamboyant family. I thank all the PSR kids for their lovely 'welcome cards;' and thanks to you all for your warm welcome and fraternal concern. May God bless you and keep you!



Jumping into parish life, Frs. Benny, John Peter, and Camilo at the Annual Parish Dinner and Auction in November.

Priests

Fr. John Peter Pragasam

Mark Twain used to tell a joke that he put a dog and a cat in a cage together as an experiment, to see if they could get along. They did. So he put in a bird, pig and goat. They, too, got along fine after a few adjustments. Then he put in a Baptist, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic, and hell broke loose. Mark Twain did not even bother putting together a Christian, a Muslim, and a Hindu. That was unthinkable in his days.

More than ever, the global village has made it so easy for us to cross cultures, creed, customs and distances without much difficulty. We are to try and make it a peaceful place to live. I am so grateful to all of you for accepting me in your midst. I am here with a simple heart and a great enthusiasm to put myself at pastoral work in this great parish. Thankfully Fr. Joe has already done everything to make it the best parish with an admirable operation of it. Frs. Larry and Camilo do their pastoral duties with a great deal of zeal. The staff at St. Joseph's is so efficient and



Fr. John Peter with adult volunteers, Soliel Talamantes and Richard Braun, at the recent Fall High School retreat in Aptos, CA.

the parishioner involvement in the many ministries is awesome. Without a doubt it makes my and Fr. Benny's ministry easier and our transition quicker. I am gradually adjusting to the parish and surroundings. My first observation is that all of you are friendly and welcoming. What can I say and what more could I ask for!

By now, I assume that most of you know my name but not many of you know my full name: Fr. John Peter Soosai Pragasam. It is the shortest name my parents could ever find for me! Since it is too long and not easy to pronounce, I would advise you one thing: don't risk it... My family and friends call me Fr. JP or Fr. John Peter and I like those names. I was born in Tamil Nadu, south of India. My education has been primarily at the Salesians of Don Bosco schools. I was a commerce graduate when

I entered the seminary. I was ordained priest for the diocese of Vellore. Since then, I have been an associate-pastor, pastor, and director of a few commissions in the diocese, including the Youth Commission. The pastoral and the years of youth ministry shaped and enriched me so much.



Fr. John Peter Pragasam

My family has been Catholic over many generations. With regard to my siblings, I have three older brothers, four younger brothers and one beloved sister. By God's grace my parents are still healthy and strong. My Mom walks a mile to the church every day even now. We are two priests and one religious brother in the family; three are married and three are single. We have two teachers, one interior designer, a mechanic, a social worker and last but not the least my sister, a university lecturer. The greatest inspiration for all of us in the family is my grandfather, Mr. Isaac, a simple catechist who taught catechism and helped in the conversion of 45 villages, of course, together with the MEP fathers. I learned from him to believe, "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me" (Phil 4 : 13).

Some nursery school kids were preparing a Christmas play. Little Cynthia did not like the part she was assigned to play. She wanted to change parts with her friend Monica. When the teacher asked her why, she answered, "Because it is easier to be an angel than to be the mother of Christ." The little girl is certainly right. Certain roles are tough and to be the mother of Christ is no light matter. When tough roles challenge us, Mother Mary is there to teach us to walk through our life's journey. In my life and ministry I attempt to draw abiding inspiration from Mother Mary whose maternal presence leads me to Jesus constantly. Hence, often I feel one with her in saying, 'God has done great things for me!'

I feel, I can't thank you enough, especially Fr. Illo, our pastor, Fr. Larry, Fr. Camilo, staff, for your generous support and genuine prayers. I am very happy to be part of your parish family. We are a people graced by God. We come together as a community of faith, supporting each other as we live and celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ. God bless all of us!

Thanks,

Fr. John Peter



The Nativity Teaches

IDENTIFYING WITH OUR FAITH

by Donna Roeck, Parish Council Member, Women's Bible Study Group Leader, CLOW Coordinator, Parishioner

Christmas is that wonderful time of year when we treat each other a little nicer, we hold doors open, and we give some money to the bell ringers with the little red kettles. We think about other people. What would they want? What would bring a joyful look to their face? It is a time when people show love. It's a time when we, like our Heavenly Father, give out of a desire to be generous. Christmas brings out the best in us. Too often though, when we think about giving, our minds go straight to money. We tend to measure our generosity by how much we financially give to the church, charitable organizations, or individuals. But what else does God ask us to give...what sacrifices are more precious than the things we possess or can buy?

We never tire of hearing the Nativity story, or telling it to our children and grandchildren, because it is filled with fascinating characters in a setting unlike anything we know. But, this year, consider looking at the Nativity story through the lens of stewardship as six characters in the story give generously, sacrificially, something of themselves. The Nativity story holds the key to understanding how stewardship in the Kingdom of God works.

THE MAGI: *God asks for our Money and Possessions*

(Matthew 2:11 ... and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.)

The wise men didn't know much about Jewish tradition or even a Messiah. From another land, they studied the stars on a regular basis. God orchestrated their study with what



Holy Land depiction of the Angel announcing to the shepherds that Jesus is born!

He wanted to reveal. They went to Jerusalem to ask about a king. Herod, with mixed motives, sent them to Bethlehem. The wise men came to worship a king. Not understanding who this truly is, they bring their very best material possessions and offer them as gifts. **Do you feel your loving generosity is stretched with some coins tossed into a red bucket?**



Donna Roeck

THE SHEPHERDS: *God asks for our Time*

(Luke 2:15-17: When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.)

In the Nativity story, the shepherds receive a revelation from the angels: heavenly song, instructions, and announcement of the arrival of the Messiah. They stop their work and leave their fields to see a baby in a manger. The shepherds gave of their time and then reported exactly what they saw. These simple shepherds became the very first evangelists proclaiming, joyfully, the Messiah is here. **Are you able to tell others in loving generosity what you believe and why?**

JOSEPH: *God asks for our Reputation*

(Matthew 1:18-24: When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.)

Think of Joseph. He finds out his bride-to-be is pregnant. He thinks that he's been betrayed. It's all around town. The only way a betrothal could be broken was through divorce. Now embarrassed, Joseph decides that he will be as gracious as he can and divorce her quietly. But, Joseph is told in a dream by an angel 'Do not be afraid' as God takes you on your journey of loving generosity. When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. No one understood the price Joseph paid. For all of his life, he would be misunderstood. But, in obedience, Joseph gives generously even at the cost of his reputation. **Are you willing to stand up for what is right even in the face of adversity?**

Us Loving Generosity



Nativity mural from the interior dome of the church at the Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem.

MARY: God asks for our Future

(Luke 1:26-38: Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.")

Can you imagine being 15 years old and there's an angel in your bedroom? Not just any angel, but Gabriel, the one who makes the BIG announcements. Notice what happens: He says, "Hail, favored one." Mary's reaction? She was greatly troubled. God wanted to use her beyond anything she had ever dreamed. Mary, a godly Jewish woman, knew she was being asked to carry the Messiah in her womb—the highest, most amazing privilege on earth. The cost for Mary was her idea of the future: all the dreams Mary had for herself and Joseph. But she says "yes" in loving generosity to a higher calling, both supernatural and amazing, as only God can provide. **When God has a wonderful new direction for you, is your first reaction "uh oh"?**

JESUS: God asks for our Life

(Mark 10:45: For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.)

In loving generosity, Jesus came with a singular agenda. He came to make the ultimate sacrifice to give His life for you. He humbled Himself to be born in a manger, lived a perfect human life, and revealed the Father through signs,

miracles, and teaching. Ultimately, Jesus died upon the Cross and paid for the sins of all by His blood. He gave His life. **If God asks for your life to save someone you don't even know, what would you do?**

THE FATHER: God asks for our Love

(John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.)

Jesus was someone else's Son before he became Mary's baby. God the Father gives His most perfect gift of love—His Son. For parents it's much easier to give your own life than to watch your child suffer and die. You realize the most precious thing you have is not your own life but the one you love the most. **Can you respond with loving generosity to God's request for personal sacrifice?**

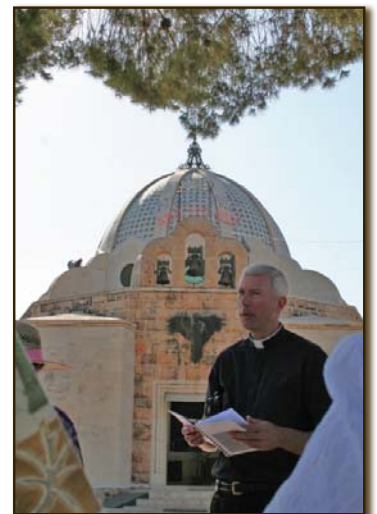
WE TEND TO THINK that giving our stuff is the hardest thing to give. Actually, giving things is simply training wheels on stewardship. God starts with things that are tangible and easy to see. He will ask you to trust Him with your money. Then He'll ask you trust Him with your time and/or your reputation. Sometimes God says, "I have a better plan for you," and rearranges your whole future. Finally, when you feel you have very little left for yourself, He will say, "I'm not done; I want a living and holy sacrifice—all of you." **Where do you find the strength to endure your own generosity?**

1 Corinthians 13:7-8 - [Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Perhaps this Christmas, make a list of all the blessings God has lovingly and generously showered upon you this past year. Look at that list and ask yourself, "God has done all this for me. God sent his only Son so that I can spend eternity with Him. In what ways can I offer my life as a living, generous, and loving sacrifice for others? **This year, how will I return the loving generosity God has shown to me?**

Stewardship in Action: Sit down with your family or by yourself, write down your blessings, and place them on your Christmas tree.

Fr. Illo at the church in the Shepherd's Field, Bethlehem.





2009 Parish Pilgrimage

Parish Life



Arrival in the Holy Land and visiting the Old City in Jerusalem where shop keeping has been a family tradition for generations (photo from 2006 pilgrimage).



Left: Across the Hebron Valley a walk among the tombs lends a spectacular view of the Dome of the Rock, where Abraham was called to sacrifice his son Isaac.

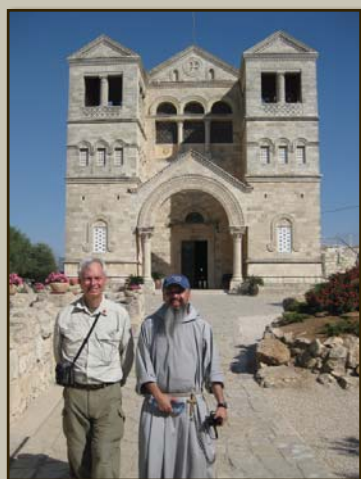
Below: Pilgrims wait their turn to touch the rock at Calvary where Christ was crucified.



Above: Fr. Joseph offers Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built where Jesus was crucified and buried.



Left: The shrine that surrounds the tomb of Christ. Over the centuries, the mountain surrounding the tomb was carved away to allow for protection and veneration.

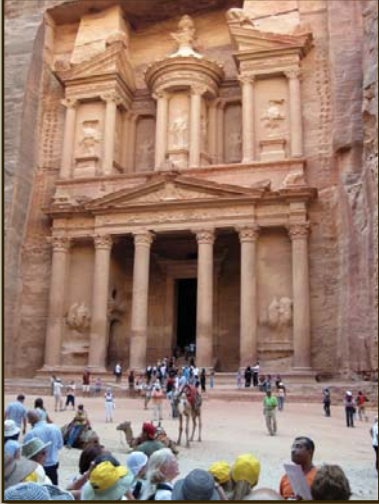


Right: Mount Tabor and Church of the Transfiguration with Ron LaMont and Brother Terresiano of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.



Left: The Catholic church in Cana where three parish couples (Casiano, Souza, and Hernandez) renewed their wedding vows.

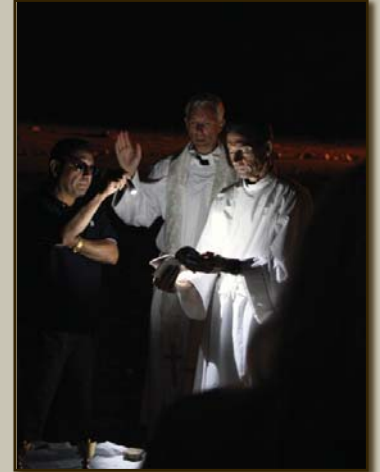
to the Holy Land



The "Treasury" in Petra, Jordan. The rock city trading post established 100 years before Christ.



Fr. Dean McFalls and Fr. Joseph Illo concelebrate the Mass in a 4th century AD Christian Church with 34 parish pilgrims.



Fr. Joseph celebrates the Mass in the middle of the desert near Mt. Sinai with the aid of a few flashlights on a moonless night.



Camel expedition was one option for the six hour round-trip journey to the top of Mt. Sinai.



Starting at 2:30am, 2000 pilgrims from all over the world traversed the dark and treacherous path to arrive at the crest of the mountain and greet the sunrise.



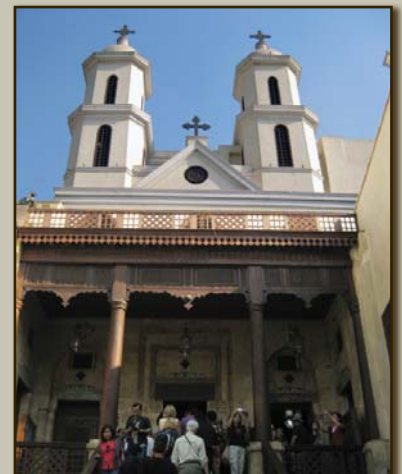
Behind St. Catherine's Monastery the "camel path" winds 7500' to the peak of Mt. Sinai.



The burning bush of Moses and hundreds of icons are in St. Catherine's.



The Great Pyramid near Cairo, Egypt was already 2500 years old when the Holy Family left Bethlehem and escaped here from Herod.



Christianity in Egypt dates to St. Mark the Apostle, 1st century AD.



Building for the Future

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

Parish Finance Council

A review of the parish Building Fund history.

In 2002 our parish began a Capital Campaign (*Honoring the Past...Embracing the Future*), which ended in 2005. This campaign, through the generosity of our parishioners, received a little over three million dollars. \$1.2 million was used to purchase the Lancey Building. \$1.1 million was used to expand Father O'Hare Hall and kitchen. \$100,000 was used as a down payment on the \$775,000 cost for the purchase of the Radio Station Building (at September 30, 2009 the balance on our note is \$570,000). In addition we spent approximately \$100,000 on campaign consultants, and other professionals that helped us update our Master Plan and Architectural renderings for remodeling our church and/or building a new church.

At the conclusion of the capital campaign pledge period in 2005 we continued "Building for the Future" with a monthly collection using our green envelopes. The monies left over from the 2002 campaign have been augmented by these monthly collections. Like our own homes and businesses our Church campus is in continual need of renovation and refurbishment. The Lancey building was changed from an office complex to a multipurpose classroom complex. Close to a half-million dollars was spent to expand and beautify our parking facility. We have painted both the inside and outside of all our buildings. We have replaced roofs and air conditioners and flooring and carpets and alarm systems. We have had to purchase chairs and tables for our classrooms used by our many ministries. We have updated our computer and phone systems. We have beautified our Church interior and rebuilt our parish book store. All and much more has been done with the stewardship of our members, treasure given in the green envelopes and specific bequests.

As we look to the future and welcome home our fellow Catholic's we need to continue to consistently provide for the upkeep of God's campus using our monthly green envelopes.

God Bless your generous gifts!

PARISH BUILDING FUND

Fund Balance - FYE June 30, 2008 **\$ 1,018,432**

2009 REVENUE

Restricted: Stained Glass Windows	\$ 25,900
Bequests: Unrestricted	\$ 26,786
Green Envelope Donations	\$ 241,742
Restricted: Convent	\$ 5,247
Interest Income	\$ 14,048
Other income	\$ 720

Total Revenue **\$ 314,443**

2009 EXPENDITURES

Stained Glass Windows	\$ 25,900
Master Plan Updated	\$ 13,306
Parking Lot	\$ 409,076
Hall Storage (in progress)	\$ 2,842
Chapel/Bookstore/Confessional	\$ 41,923
Church HVAC (<i>Church for Tomorrow</i> * Project)	\$ 135,554*

Total Expenditures **\$ (628,601)**

Fund Balance - FYE June 30, 2009 **\$ 704,274**

**HVAC cost to be reimbursed from Diocesan Capital Campaign in June 2010.*

St. Joseph's Book Store, first opened in 2000, has tripled in size.



Our new church HVAC system is more efficient and cost effective.

The 12 stained glass windows in the church were memorial gifts from parishioners.



The campus was appended and designed for 437 total parking places.

Events & Activities Calendar

December 20

Sunday, 12:00noon
Mass of Thanksgiving

1:00pm - 3:00pm
Luncheon in Fr. O'Hare Hall

CELEBRATING THE ORDINATION OF SAM WEST TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Many St. Joseph's parishioners have supported Sam West as he made his journey through seminary. Now St. Joseph's is pleased to announce Sam West's ordination to the priesthood on December 19th at the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Stockton. Sam will offer a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Joseph's at 12noon on Sunday, December 20th. All are invited to continue the celebration in the hall following the Mass with a luncheon in his honor.

Cost: Free

January 6, 13, 20

6:30pm - 8:00pm
John Paul II Center, Room 7

Lecture Series with Dino Durando CATHOLICISM 101: The Sacraments

Study the basic teachings of the Faith from the Catechism. This study focuses on the second section of the Catechism on the Sacraments. Please bring your own Catechism and Bible.

Contact: Dino Durando, 551-4973 x203 or ddurando@stjmod.com

Cost: Free



January 9

Saturday, 10:00am Mass
Luncheon follows in Fr. O'Hare Hall

FIRST RESPONDERS' MASS

Come pray with and for Stanislaus County's Fire, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services in a traditional "Blue Mass." Blessing of Emergency Vehicles in the parking lot; luncheon follows. This is an ecumenical event. Visit

Cost: Free

January 23

7:30am Mass - Return 5:30pm

6th Annual WALK FOR LIFE - WEST COAST

Come be a witness for life! Buses will leave St. Joseph's at 8:00am for San Francisco where national speakers will speak at Justin Herman Square, followed by a 2 mile walk on the waterfront ending at Marina Green.

If you are unable to attend, please consider a sponsorship to lighten the cost for other parish families to attend.

Cost: \$25 per person or \$50 per family.
Registration deadline: January 17th

February 6

Saturday, 8:00am - 4:30pm

Militia of the Immaculata DIOCESAN ONE DAY SILENT MARIAN RETREAT

Join us for a day of reflection, prayer, Adoration, Benediction and Consecration to Our Lady. The day begins with Mass at 8:00 am followed by the retreat in Fr. O'Hare Hall. Materials and meals are included. This retreat is designed for families.

See www.stjmod.com or the parish office for more information and to register.

Cost: \$20 per person or \$40 per family
Registration deadline: January 25

SAVE THE DATES!

February 11, 18, 25

CATHOLICISM 101: Life in Christ
6:30pm

February 17

ASH WEDNESDAY MASSES
7:00am, 8:00am, 9:30am, 12:15noon,
5:45pm, 7:30pm (Spanish-church),
7:30pm (English-hall)

Every Friday of Lent

Starting February 19

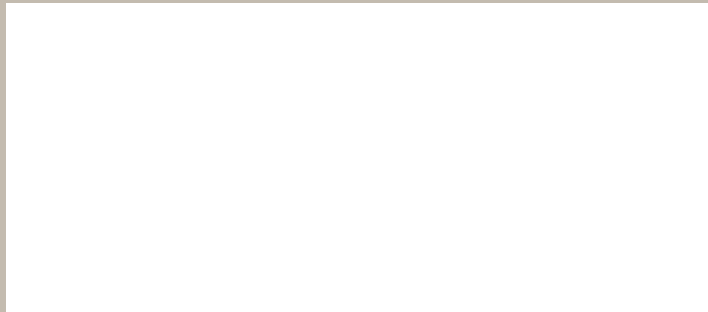
STATIONS OF THE CROSS
8:30am in English,
6:15pm in Spanish &
7:15pm in English

**Knights of Columbus
LENTEN FISH DINNERS**
February 19, 26 & March 12
Crab Dinner: March 6
Shrimp Dinner: March 19
Soup Dinner: March 26



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
 1813 Oakdale Road
 Modesto, CA 95355

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WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY OF FAMILIES
JOIN US FOR MASS!

OUR PARISH MISSION:
 TO EVANGELIZE GOD'S PEOPLE
 BEGINNING WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

Advent & Christmas Liturgy Schedule

DECEMBER 2009

- 12 **Feast Day: Our Lady of Guadalupe**..... 5am Mañanitas
 5:30am Rosary, 6am Mass, 7am Breakfast
- 16 **Parish Advent Penance Service** in the church 7pm
- 16 - 24 **Misa de Gallo**.....5am
(9 days of Dawn Masses. See page 7 for details.)
- 27 **Feast Day: Holy Family**..... All Sunday Masses
- 31 **New Year's Eve Vigil Mass** **5:45pm**
Holy Hour 11:30pm

JANUARY 2009

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God Masses**..... 8:00am, 5:45pm
 Children's Adoration & Confessions.....6:30pm
- 3 **Feast of the Epiphany**.....regular Mass Schedule
 Traditional Latin Form of the Mass..... 9:00am
- 9 **First Responders' Mass (Blue Mass)**..... 10:00am
(See above and page 15)



- MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS EVE - December 24th**
- 4:30pm Children's Pageant & Mass in the Hall
 - 7:30pm Youth Mass in the Church
 - 10:30pm Christmas Concert in the Church
 - 12:00 Midnight Mass in the Church

- MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS DAY - December 25th**
- 7:30am - 9:00am - 10:30am - 12:00 Noon
 - 1:30pm (Spanish) - (Sorry, no evening Masses)