W. I. T.
women in touch

Advent 2023

Advent 2023 | eNEWSLETTER NO. 23 | The Quarterly Newsletter of Walnut Grove

Entertaining at Home | Shrine Update | Upcoming Events | Cooperators | and a lot more!

President's Letter

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
~ John 3:16

Dear WGCC Friends,

As we gather once more with family and friends to celebrate this marvelous season of Christmas, let us be reminded

From the Prelate
Opus Dei Formation
from Rome

of the true story of God becoming man because He infinitely loves us, and because we needed a Savior so that we can be with Him for all eternity. This is why this season is a season of joy.

But we ask, "How do we experience joy amidst the wars, hatred, and violence that surround us?" In *The Way*, St. Josemaría held that the root of cheerfulness is in knowing that we are children of God. We are His creature, his favorite creature, so He will never abandon us. Nevertheless, He permits evil, which we helped create, to guarantee our freedom. But at the end of the day, He is in control; He governs.

A world full of Love is what the world needs today, that true and lasting Love that can only be found in God, the God who assumed human nature on Christmas Day, to give us an example of the infinite Love that brought him to the Cross and gained for us our salvation. What could be a better joy than being the object of His Love?

I know the busyness of the season can cause time to fly fast and pass us by, distracting us from reflecting on the true reason for the season. Let us not get sidetracked—let's get perspective, and reflect on Christ's birth and His Blessed Mother who made all this happen. She is also the Mother of humankind, the Queen of Peace, our intercessor with God to obtain the spirit of love, unity, and reconciliation that has eluded us for so long.

The WGCC Board of Directors wants to take this moment to express its deepest appreciation for your support and generosity that has been the driving force behind our projects, giving us the opportunity to make a positive impact on women, especially the young moms who have benefited from the personal, professional, and cultural workshops we sponsored during the year. Your belief in our mission has not only touched the lives of these women, but has also inspired us to continue to serve them through the formation of values that WGCC tries to foster.

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, spoke recently at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. Particularly relevant for us during the Eucharistic Revival, he opened his remarks with, "The Risen Christ, who shed his blood, makes Himself present under the species of bread and wine, and gives his peace to us. The disciples were joyful, and we too open ourselves to his peace and joy." He continued, "As St. Josemaría encouraged us to do, let us seek to make the Eucharistic celebration the center and root of our work; the Lord wants to entrust the wonderful task of transmitting the truth to each one of us. That's how the world will be filled with peace."

In discussing our duty to look beyond ourselves to the world and generations to come, the Prelate encouraged us to "look to the future awaiting us with enthusiasm and hope." He went on to explain, "Enthusiasm is the attitude of anyone embarking on a new path or stage… [and] hope… means waiting trustfully for God's plans to be realized." Noting that courage requires enthusiasm and hope, Ocáriz asserted that we need "courage

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with blessings, peace, and continued moments of kindness, love, and mercy.

~ Cynthia Abesa,
President
Board of Directors
Walnut Grove

to make decisions that will impact our future, and… to think about the well-being of the people who will come after us."

Msgr. Ocáriz concluded his remarks with, "As St. Josemaría wrote in *The Way*: 'Add a supernatural motive to your ordinary work and you will have sanctified it.' This is also an incentive to see the extent of the good that work can have, not only for those directly involved but for all of humanity, if we offer it to God."

Click here to read the Prelate's remarks in their entirety.

upcoming events

Opus Dei Women's Activities

Opus Dei Women's Recollections

Pasadena: St. Andrew's Pastoral Center
Orange County: J. Serra Catholic High School
Long Beach: Holy Innocents Church
Camarillo: St. Mary Magdalen Chapel
San Diego: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

Faith & Reason Class

First Saturdays of the month; 1:30p - 3:00p; Beverly Cultural Center

December 2, 2023 **January 13, 2024** **February 3, 2024** **March 2, 2024** **April 6, 2024**

For Your Daughters

6th & 7th Grade Girls:

8th Grade Girls:

Creative Cuisine

Stitch & Design

Both programs teach practical skills while instilling confidence and a spirit of service. Classes meet once a month on Saturday, 1:00p - 3:30p, Aster Study Center on the following dates. To apply for either program, click here.

December 2, 2023 **January 13, 2024** **February 3, 2024** **March 2, 2024** **April 6, 2024**

9th & 10th Grade Girls:
Stepping Up

Mentoring, discussion forums, and skill development
To apply, click here.

11th & 12th Grade Girls:
College Prep

Guidance in applying for college and preparing for college life. To apply, click here.

Classes meet once a month on Saturday, 1:00p - 3:30p, Aster Study Center on the following dates:

December 16, 2023 **January 20, 2024** **February 17, 2024** **March 16, 2024** **April 20, 2024**

Catholic in College

Meditations, retreats, pilgrimages, and more. For more information, click here.

Daily Centering on God:

A New Year's Planner for the Prayerful

As 2023 comes to a close, we naturally start thinking about the year to come and how we can improve our lives. New Year's resolutions are a great way to "begin, and begin again," as St. Josemaría frequently advised. If you would like to live 2024 more connected with God, then we have *the perfect tool for you*!

Tanbooks.com is offering new planners for 2024 that can help you **make God the center of your plan**, as you arrange all the driving, doctor appointments, sports practices, performances, and other events that will fill the upcoming year. We often hear that spending time with God should come first in our lives – what better way to put that into practice than by using a planner centered on God?

The JMJ Daily Planner was specifically designed to assist you in organizing "your day, week, month, and year with the liturgical calendar, all under the guidance of the Holy Family." Its many helpful features include:

- A collection of daily Catholic prayers planners are finally here!

- A list of saints' days
- Holy days and holidays
- A story and illustration of a saint for each week

Make 2024 a year centered on God, and let the JMJ Daily Planner help you make that a resolution that will last!

From the CEO of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love Shrine

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love Family Shrine

Breaking News

We are thrilled to share a momentous achievement that has been years in the making! Thanks to the unwavering support, faith, and dedication of our staff, volunteers, generous donors, and prayer warriors, we can proudly announce that we have officially acquired the land for the **Mary, Mother of Fairest Love Shrine** project.

After more than six years of relentless searching for the perfect location and raising the necessary funds, we successfully closed the deal on 114 acres of pristine land in Chino Hills, California. This stunning property, with its picturesque views of the San Bernardino Mountain range and rolling hills, is ideally situated just 45 minutes outside of Los Angeles, precisely where we aimed to be.

This remarkable site was carefully selected to fulfill St. Josemaría Escrivá's vision of dedicating a place to Mary, Mother of Fairest Love right in the heart of culture and entertainment in Southern California. It's a place where we believe it is most needed – a voice amid the influential media and entertainment industry of Hollywood, celebrating the values of family and love.

Our initial plans for the property include a chapel to house a seven-foot marble statue of the Mother of Fairest Love, an open plaza, and Bella Terra, our retreat house. The retreat space is an urgent necessity to continue the vital spiritual and formational activities already underway.

While we still have some way to go before we can break ground due to environmental compliance with the state of California, this time will be well spent. We will continue to spread devotion to Mary and increase our fundraising efforts to support both family programming offerings and the building capital campaign.

With your ongoing support, the Mary, Mother of Fairest Love pilgrimage site will not only become a landmark in America but will be known and cherished around the world. It will serve as a place of renewal and hope for families facing all kinds of challenges and a place for already-strong families to grow even stronger.

There is much more work ahead, but we are incredibly grateful for the blessings we've received so far. We are building our audience, forming valuable partnerships, creating impactful programs, and planning beautiful buildings that will shape the future of this place of worship.

We hope this news energizes you as much as it does us, inspiring all of us to redouble our efforts. We are immensely grateful to God and to all of you for your help in this momentous endeavor. Your continued prayers and support are invaluable as we move forward on this exciting journey.

~ Jacqueline Taylor
CEO
Mary, Mother of Fairest Love Family Shrine

There are still significant hurdles to be overcome before the land can be developed, and these could take several years to work through. For safety reasons, and for reasons of liability, the site will not be open to visitors or pilgrims for the duration of the work. We know you will honor this restriction and continue with patience and perseverance to pray for all that is to come!

Mornings for Moms Series

Graciousness in the Art of Entertaining at Home

On September 16, 2023,
Walnut Grove welcomed many new faces to yet another beautiful and enlightening **Morning for Moms**, the first of the school year. Dora's gracious hospitality made every single new guest feel right at home. It is no wonder, since Dora was the expert speaker for the day!

She quickly set out to describe the essential ingredients for any good party: planning, atmosphere, and people. "Plan a menu that requires minimal preparation once the guests arrive." Besides thinking of the space, the table settings, or the food and decorations, always remember that the most important aspect of hospitality refers to the relationship between you and your guests. If you plan well, your mind will be free to enjoy your guests and the time you are able to share with them. Indeed, every wonderful event takes planning, hard work, and even prayer!

After sharing ideas about the simplest of moments, like when a friend stops by for a cup of coffee and a cookie or two, Dora went onto more complicated entertaining tricks. Her stories of that ever-frightening elegant dinner you are called upon to host for your son's potential mother-in-law or your husband's current boss, were both funny and warm. The graciousness you show under either circumstance will be the result of your loving care for those you are entertaining. Always focus on what will help to make your guests feel welcome and cared for. The attention to detail in the care of the home will pay off in spades when your guests find the simple bare necessities in the bathroom well presented, not to mention the well-positioned forks and knives at your place settings. Getting all in the family involved in the preparations, including your spouse and children, even if it only means sweeping the floor or taking out the trash, can really help too.

From simple hors d'oeuvres for buffets, to holiday or birthday surprises, the hostess gets to decide what size event she wants (or can handle) given her space, time, and talent. A July 4th breakfast or dinner can be as simple as adding some red, white, and blue to your decor, while, for Mexican Independence Day, you might choose a small piñata or some big crepe flowers to be a centerpiece.

Again, Dora stressed the importance of being pleasant and well-mannered, making your company feel right at home: cherished and valuable in your presence! (It can help if you remember to make sure your shoes for the event are comfortable. As the hostess, this may not be your moment to show off your new stilettos). Entertaining is about guests: spend time with everyone; avoid talking about yourself or the effort it took to put the event together. With good preparation you can be serene, relaxed, and most welcoming.

Dora's graciousness in sharing her experiences and tips as a hostess were most appreciated – it will definitely come in handy during this Advent season!

~ Rosemary Kite

THE QUOTABLE SAINT

Jesus was born in a cave in Bethlehem because, Sacred Scripture tells us, "there was no room for them in the inn."

—I am not departing from theological truth when I say that Jesus is still looking for shelter in your heart.

St. Josemaría Escrivá
***The Forge*, 274**

Holiness in Ordinary Life

The Reason for The Season:
Meditations
for a Fruitful Advent

The start of the liturgical year is fast approaching, bringing with it the madness of Christmas shopping, party prepping, and so much more. And in the midst of it all, even the best of us can lose sight of what the Advent season is really about: readying our hearts and our homes to receive Christ. One of the best ways to prepare for Christ's arrival is through daily meditation and prayer.

The Opus Dei website offers daily meditations for Advent, centering around themes of intentional anticipation, divine filiation, gratitude, trust, and so many more. The site even offers reflections for the Christmas octave and beyond, urging us to take inspiration from the Holy Family as examples of love and generosity.

One meditation from the third Sunday in Advent (Gaudete Sunday) emphasizes the role of holy joy in awaiting Christ's upcoming arrival, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. After all, with God's perfect love, how can earthly struggles take away our hope of the Savior's advent? As St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians during his imprisonment, *the Lord is at hand* (Phil 4:5).

So often, we turn to worldly distractions and instant gratifications to distract us from the pains of daily life. But by uniting our struggles with the humanity of the infant Christ, we are reminded that we're not alone and that our suffering is not without meaning. By taking ten to fifteen minutes a day to meditate on the intentionality behind this season, we renew our faith, set goals for the new year, and trust that God's divine providence will lead us where we need to go.

All Advent meditations on the Opus Dei website can be found here.

~ Anna Livia Brady

The Camino Schools, scheduled to open in fall of 2024 and already pursuing the goal of forming families while creating community, has been hosting events that do precisely that. Recently, Rich Meyer, President of Junipero Serra High School, was a speaker on the good use of technology in the family. Meyer stressed the reality that phones and computers are helpful to our lives, as long as we can be the masters of them. We are called to be in the world and sanctify it, and technology is part of that world.

A few striking points in the talk included:

- In addition to presenting a challenge to cultivating the virtues of temperance and purity, technology can also make it more difficult to cultivate selflessness and interior life. The more we are on our phone, the harder it is to be attentive to the needs of others, and the harder it is to cultivate an interior life.

- BEFORE you check your phone, ask yourself why you're doing it. If the answer is something like "I just want to check…" it's probably not a good reason. We should be intentional about why we are using our phone.

- When considering rules to implement for your children, it can be appropriate to have different rules for different children. Girls and boys have differing temptations when it comes to technology, and so it makes sense that they could have different rules.

- Think about where technology is allowed in your house. The Meyers do not allow technology in bedrooms because it presents too many temptations and because they don't want technology to be an isolating instrument.

- The Meyer family tries to implement a *technology sabbath* in their home. On Sundays, everyone except the mom puts away all technology for the day. This requires planning and organization, as homework and work need to be completed by Saturday. However, as a result, the family is able to spend quality time together on Sundays on non-technology-related activities, like playing board games or going to the park.

For further education on this topic, read "The Collapse of Parenting" (Leonard Sax), "Digital Minimalism" (Cal Newport), and iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy–and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood–and What That Means for the Rest of Us (Jean Twenge). Also helpful are the podcasts "The Dad Project", "The Heights Cast", and "Plugged In - the Official Podcast of JSerra".

~ Molly Rose

CATHOLIC RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS:

Saints Alive Podcast features St. Josemaría

*In this issue, **WIT** reviews the **Saints Alive Podcast**, whose tagline is "Stories of the Saints for Young Saints in the Making." The podcast team produces monthly audio dramas for children on the lives of the saints, and it also offers educational resources, including discussion questions and coloring pages. The podcast recently featured an episode on the life of St. Josemaría.*

"Like St. Augustine before her, our Martina, when she was still quite little, said once on All Saints' Day, 'As I think of it, Mother, if all those people could do it, why not we?'"

-Maria von Trapp

I definitely enjoyed this podcast. The soothing narration, subtle background music, and sophisticated sound effects made it a pleasure to really slow down and listen again to these familiar stories about Saint Josemaría. The kindness and calm assurance in God that were demonstrated by this remarkable man brought tears to my eyes. These virtues were modeled by St. Josemaría's parents, who went straight to Mother Mary for intercession when their two-year-old Josemaría was close to death. Our Lady of Montserrat heard their prayers and granted healing for the child. Years later, it was on the feast of Our Lady of Montserrat that St. Josemaría would also be miraculously cured of diabetes!

Listening to this podcast is a great way to teach kids about the importance of having a sense of humor during rough times. When St. Josemaría recovered after his collapse from anaphylactic shock in 1954, he was temporarily, but totally blind. Unfazed, he reminded his friend Alvaro, "I'm hungry. Let's get some lunch!"

A wonderful way to enjoy the podcast would be a family date night! Why not light the fireplace, grab some popcorn, and line the living room floor with pillows to listen to this episode? The stories not only engage the imagination, but they also motivate us to imitate the saints in how they lived the virtues.

As additional help for parents, the podcast provides a link to free coloring pages and to purchase saint games, stickers and other items for your home. You might find the perfect Christmas gifts for your family! You and your children may find inspiration in the most ordinary places. Listening to a podcast from ***Saints Alive*** is a great place to start!

Click here to listen to the ***Saints Alive*** episode on St. Josemaría.

~ Melissa Brady

My Camino

Recently, I walked the Camino de Santiago, a network of pilgrimage paths leading to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the shrine of the apostle James in Galicia, Spain. I was seeking greater union with Christ, so I chose this quest, merging both the bodily challenges and the spiritual challenges of a multi-day pilgrimage. I wanted all of me, both physically and spiritually, to be deeply invested in seeking Christ. It was, indeed, a challenge, but I am so grateful for having had the opportunity to walk with and for my God.

Starting from Saria, the walk took six days to cover just over 70 miles. We meandered through woodland paths, where streaks of sunlight on the rocks helped me focus on the trail. We soon fell into a daily routine – pack; organize the luggage; and reload the day backpack with water, snacks, first aid, raincoat, Vaseline, sunglasses, rosary, sunscreen, and battery charger for the iPhone. I had a list to check every night. I also had to check my feet for any hot spots, blisters, and wounds to prevent any complications after the long walk.

During many of the nights, there was heavy rainfall and and there were even thunderstorms. The rain provided fresh air, but also muddy paths. While I walked, I joined other pilgrims who were very friendly and had smiles on their faces. I felt recharged by their smiles and their greetings of "*¡Hola!*" and "*¡Buen Camino!*" These three words ran deep for me, representing the presence of God and a safe passage.

As I reflected on the heavy rain and thunderstorms, I sensed the presence of my guardian angel. I could have been caught by this weather in open fields and been in danger of being struck by lightning. "Rain and thunderstorms are common in September," I was told by the other pilgrims.

Passing by traditional stone houses and massive trees made it feel like time was in slow motion. The nearness of the Creator, His essence, and the purpose of life were so vivid. My aches and pains disappeared, and my senses sharpened. There were several churches along the way. I took the time to soak in the ancient history and to savor the treasures of the Camino.

I arrived at Santiago around 3 pm on September 12, the Hour of Divine Mercy and a feast day, The Holy Name of Mary. The moment I saw the Cathedral, I was overwhelmed and full of gratitude for my safe arrival.

Now, as I reflect on my purpose for **My Camino**, I know God walked with me the whole time and carried me, like in the poem "Footprints in the Sand." Walking with only a light backpack was freedom from materialism. The Camino shell signs along the way were guides to my purpose in life. I learned to trust more in God, and not rely on my own strength. Those six days were a treasure that I will always cherish. Thank you, my Lord and my God.

~ Rebecca Soria

St Josemaria *and the* Cooperators *of* Opus Dei

WIT *is pleased to introduce a new column specifically* ***about*** *cooperators – St. Josemaria's vision* ***for*** *cooperators; what it means to be a cooperator; profiles of cooperators; and much more. Thank you for being our cooperators. We could not do what we do without you!*

Opus Dei has been involved in several educational and social initiatives all over the world with the help of cooperators and many other people of goodwill, for the cultural and spiritual benefit of society. That was the dream of St. Josemaría. He believed the problems overwhelming society could be easily solved if the spirit of Opus Dei could permeate all the activities of the world, and is proper for a Christian." (*ibid.*)

"We need cooperators like you, who pray; cooperators like you, who smile," St. Josemaría once commented to a Peruvian peasant woman, on a trip through Latin America.

He was also grateful for the many cooperators who were not Catholics. Many gave either small contributions or their time for the that this would not be possible without the help of cooperators.

In a letter to the faithful of Opus Dei (supernumeraries and numeraries) he wrote: "Work actively with our cooperators… you will do an incalculable amount of good – gently and powerfully, for the whole of humanity." (*Carta, 9-I-1959*, n. 43)

St. Josemaría was convinced that the Lord blessed the cooperator's material contribution and spiritual generosity (prayers) with many graces: "Strive so that these friends of ours, whom we love like brethren, continue their good works. Never doubt that, if we help them with our prayer and loyal friendship – always with the greatest respect for personal freedom – many of them will receive the grace to choose what apostolic activities in their area. Saint Josemaria viewed those acts of generosity from the cooperators as a "piece of their life."

Following St. Josemaría's desires, cooperators receive love and gratitude in the daily prayer of the Prelate and all the faithful of Opus Dei. He asked that they pray every day for all cooperators, petitioning God to "*reward their generous help, and to lead them to an ever-deeper knowledge of the consoling Truth of Christ*". Furthermore, the priests of the Prelature offer Holy Mass for the souls of deceased cooperators on certain days of the year.

Thank you, cooperators, for your generosity.

~ Jazmir Fajardo

Book Nook – Christian Formation through Spiritual Reading

Marriage advice, one delightful letter at a time

By Love Refined: Letters to a New Bride

by Alice von Hildebrand

Alice von Hildebrand addresses her letters to a young bride, but for someone who has been married for almost 35 years, the letters are as applicable, as relevant, and as pertinent as ever. Even the situations she discusses in marriage are exact and spot-on, but more importantly, the advice and recommendations she suggests are so practical and doable. It's a delight to read her letters, and as I read one letter a day, I am encouraged to work on a resolution – to refine my love more for my husband,

even after 35 years! ~ C. A.

"Reading has made many saints." – St. Josemaría (*The Way*, 116)

GIRLS' CLUB CORNER:

We Wish You a Merry Christmas!

Christmas Greetings from Girls' Clubs throughout the area!

Orange County

nursing home caroling and decorating cookies with residents

Christmas party with cookie decorating

Phoenix

15-year tradition of nursing home caroling, with home-made Christmas cards and goodie bags

San Diego

To

join us for fun, virtues, more fun, service, and even more fun, click here.

nursing home caroling and gift-giving

Rancho Cucamonga

West Covina

Las Vegas

Charcuterie potluck, carols and piñatas

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