

President's Letter

Post-pandemic Optimism

My dear friends of Walnut Grove, Joyful greetings! Finally, it seems that our days of subdued activity may be coming to an end – we are seeing light at the end of the dark tunnel of the pandemic. Inevitably, the coronavirus has changed the way we lived, our attitudes, our psyches. As we return to some form of normal, we need to reflect on some questions: How do I picture my new normal? What has this pandemic taught me? Is it life as usual? Am I jumping back to doing all the things that I have been missing, engaging in the same pastimes? Given an awareness of how fragile life can be and what powerless beings we are, we need to take advantage of the incredible opportunity we have been given to think deeply about what we want our new life to look like.

Some questions to ponder after experiencing the scariest and saddest period of our time: Did I discover how simple life can be and how little I need in life? At the peak of all the uncertainty, was I discouraged, or did I depend on my faith, looking forward with hope, understanding that God knows it all and is in control? How did I spend my time, energy, and money to help the suffering people around me? Did my relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and even enemies (though we should not have any) improve, and did I see the good in them?

In all of these, one thing is important – that we align our new normal to the true purpose of our life. Our lives will now move forward in a different way, but our optimism, “the doctrine of the ultimate triumph of good over evil,” will lead the way. Our future will be about living without fear, despite the experience of the pandemic, anchoring our life in our divine filiation, the fact that God is our loving Father. We cannot allow fear to grip our life – when we are afraid, it is because we have not understood God’s love.

Join us as we look forward to these next months with optimism, knowing that God has been with us, and he continues with us, every step of the way.

~ Cynthia Abesa



From the Prelate



Since 1968, university students have been gathering annually in Rome during Holy Week for the UNIV Congress, a worldwide meeting to reflect on significant issues affecting youth and society. This year, the congress was cancelled due to COVID travel restrictions. Undaunted, on Sunday, March 28, 2021, organizers seized the opportunity to schedule the first ever live virtual get-together between university women in 64 different countries and the Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Ocariz.

The Prelate welcomed the students, stating, “...this opportunity brings me great joy, although logically, meeting in person is better. The advantage is that before, not everybody could come to Rome and now, many more can connect and participate. In a way, you are all present in Rome.”

Students from several countries addressed the Prelate and the group, sharing concerns and experiences ranging from discovering St. Josemaría on the internet, to the suffering of refugees, to the challenges of sanctifying work in developing economies. Monsignor Ocariz responded, noting that one single online connection had united all of them. He continued, “This is a way of staying connected, but there is a connection which is much more important, which is prayer, which is not only asking God for others and their needs. Prayer is that too, but prayer is communication with Our Lord, with God.”

The Prelate also emphasized the importance of service, asserting, “to form a family you have to love people... [with] a real love, serving, a desire to really help. ... [The] Lord himself says to the Apostles, ‘I am in your midst as one who serves.’”

The get-together ended with a palpable sense of unity and vibrant ambitions to gather again soon, hopefully in person, and in Rome.

upcoming events

Online Faith & Reason Class

Jun 5, Jul 10, Aug 7, Sep 4, Oct 10
Time: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm
For Zoom link, go to <https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/seminar-faith-and-reason>

Summertime, and the Livin' is... TONS OF FUN!!!

Long Beach Service Project

June 20 – 26, 2021
High school girls
Volunteer as a day camp counselor, attend seminars, and explore LA
To apply go to <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/lbp-application>

Camp Monte Stella

June 20 – 25, 2021
Girls entering grades 5 – 9
Livermore, CA
To apply go to <https://www.campmontestella.com/application.html#/>

Pathfinder Camp

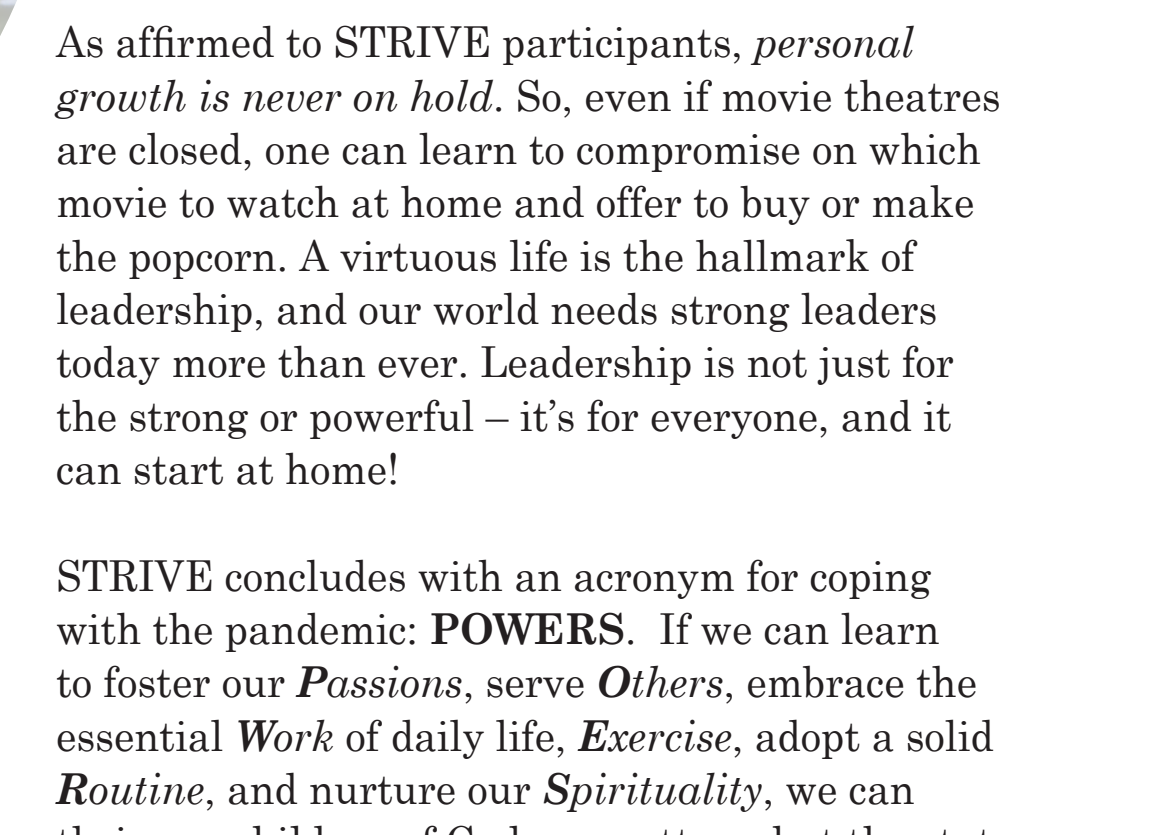
July 4 – 10, 2021
Girls entering grades 6 – 9
Big Bear Lake, CA
To apply go to <https://www.southernhillinc.org/copp-of-summer-camp-2021-application>

College Prep

July 19 – 25, 2021
High school girls
Preparation for college and guidance with the college application process
To apply go to <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/copp-of-lbp-application-1>

Lights, Camera, Action

August 2 – 10, 2021
Rising high school seniors and college students
A media literacy program focusing on media, arts, and entertainment
To apply go to <http://www.westfieldresidence.org/lca-application>



Camp is Back!

Looking for the perfect summer adventure for your daughter? Want fun, friendship, and formation in a fantastic outdoor environment? Look no further. Summer Leadership Camp is back!

Girls may apply now to attend summer camp, where they can grow in independence, spending a week away from home, immersed in fresh air, faith, and fun. Campers attend daily Mass and catechism class, helping them deepen their relationship with God. They also develop good habits, with talks on leadership skills and mentoring on personal goals, helping them to make a positive impact wherever they go.

And then there's the fun. Fun comes in all varieties at camp. Activities are plentiful and lively, ranging from sports, to dance, to science, to art, with ample time for exploring the natural beauty surrounding them. And the most fun part of the fun? Making new friends – living with friends, learning with friends, growing with friends – having fun with friends.

If all this sounds like an adventure tailor-made for your daughter, see below to apply.



Northern California

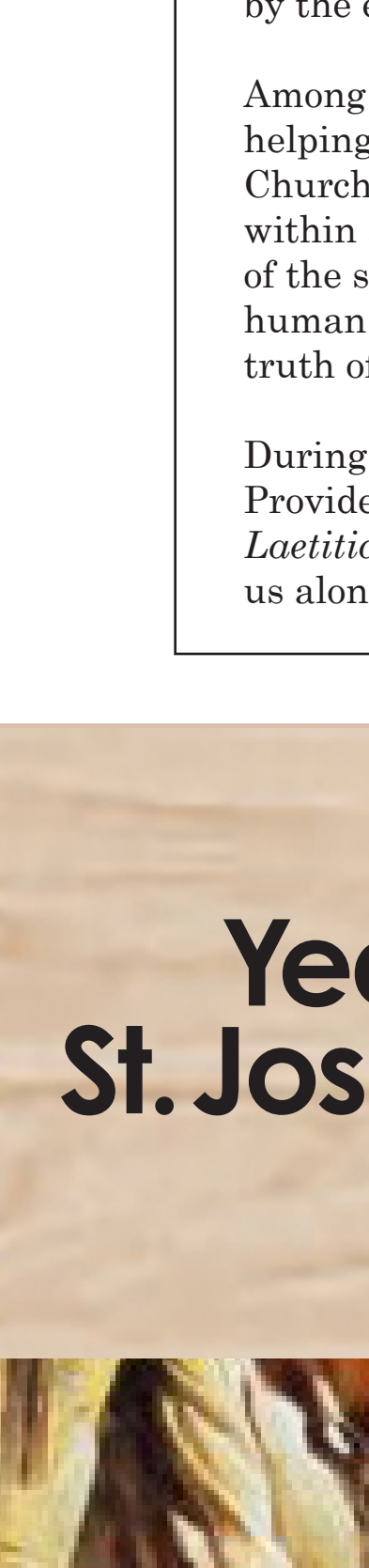
Camp Monte Stella
Livermore, CA
Girls entering 5th – 9th grades
June 20 – 25, 2021
<https://www.campmontestella.com/#/>

Southern California

Camp Pathfinder
Big Bear Lake, CA
Girls entering 6th – 9th grades
July 4 – 10, 2021
<https://www.southernhillinc.org/>



STRIVE San Diego Inspires High Schoolers to Thrive in Every Situation



When we recall our high school days, dramatic dances, friendship milestones, and college applications probably come to mind. But during the pandemic, high schoolers have been mostly staying at home, and getting to classes, let alone to spiritual formation, has been a challenge. However, with the help of Joy Martinez and a few other resourceful women, high school girls in San Diego were able to attend STRIVE, a leadership workshop which inspired participants to use their God-given gifts in practical ways.

The presentation that best encapsulates the theme of STRIVE is one given on February 6 by Teresa Lanza di Scalea, Ph.D. The talk, titled “Well-being in Time of Pandemic,” took a holistic view of health, not only considering physical well-being, but also mental and social health. Diving deeper into the mental aspect of health, she defined personality as a person’s unique pattern of thinking about self and others, as well as one’s emotional reactions to situations and relationships with others. She also highlighted the difference between mature and immature personalities.

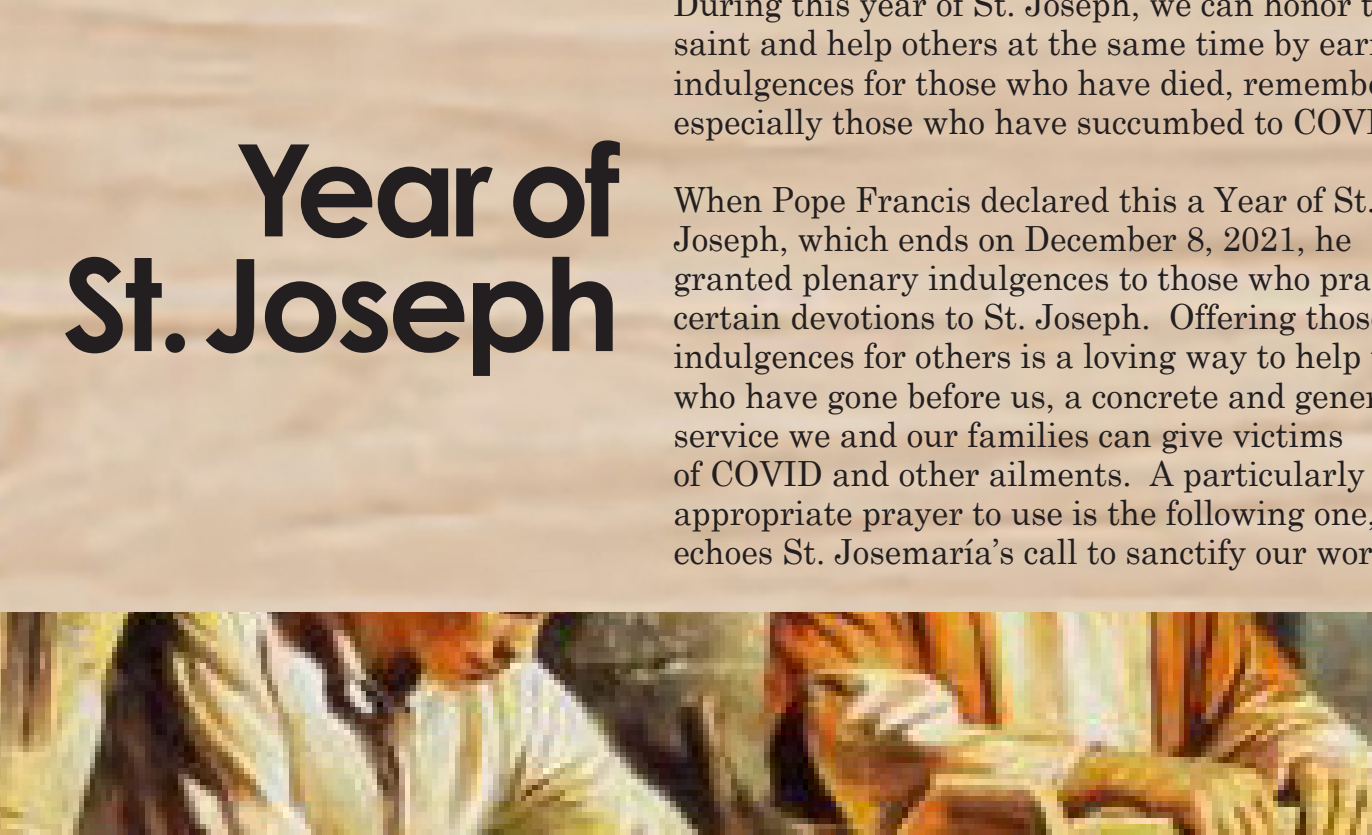
STRIVE emphasizes that through emotional regulation and the use of our intellect, we can see changes not as losses or threats, but as opportunities for growth. There is always room for improvement, and the outcome from self-improvement can be potentially exponential. As high schoolers adapting to both rapid changes in themselves and in the world around them, the lesson of embracing one’s gifts while learning to control one’s weaknesses is one of immeasurable value.

As affirmed to STRIVE participants, *personal growth is never on hold*. So, even if movie theatres are closed, one can learn to compromise on which movie to watch at home and offer to buy or make the popcorn. A virtuous life is the hallmark of leadership, and our world needs strong leaders today more than ever. Leadership is not just for the strong or powerful – it’s for everyone, and it can start at home!

STRIVE concludes with an acronym for coping with the pandemic: **POWERS**. If we can learn to foster our *Passions*, serve *Others*, embrace the *essential Work* of daily life, *Exercitise*, adopt a solid *Routine*, and nurture our *Spirituality*, we can thrive as children of God, no matter what the state of the world is. Restrictions don’t have to feel like a loss – they are opportunities to grow, develop, and flourish.

~ Anna Livia Brady

COVID, Creativity, and Cuisine



As with everywhere else, COVID brought all of our in-person programs at Aster Center to an abrupt halt. However, the quarantine pushed us to think outside the box and helped us find many new ways of connecting with others. We transformed **Creative Cuisine** into an online cooking class, with some graduates of the program helping! It gave the high school girls a chance to become better friends, and they eagerly helped us, both behind the scenes and in front of the camera.

Our high schoolers were an integral part of the team, and the classes wouldn’t have been the same without them. During a practice run with Tessie, we realized how hard it was to look at the right camera when we were teaching and not at the laptop where we could see her cooking. Many times, we had to remind each other of where to look, and we laughed about it. Kayla brought her tripod, which was invaluable, and she became the official camera person. Many alerted us to all the questions the girls had, while Tanya was our all-important runner who got everything we needed. Abby helped with setting up the ingredients so the class would run smoothly, and many of the high schoolers taught a recipe as well!

Some of the online attendees invited friends to their homes during the classes, so they could learn and work together, multiplying the fun. During each class, attendees did an impressive job making a complete meal, which they served to their families that night. We loved the pictures and feedback! Because the classes were online, we were able to reach far-flung aspiring chefs. My niece, who attended some classes from Chicago, learned a new favorite go-to dinner. Her father even bought the ingredients again so they could repeat it a few more times that week – he was so proud of her skills and loved the flavor of her latest creation!

It will be wonderful to see the girls back at Aster! We have really missed the joy, laughter, and friendships they create amongst each other!

~ Ann Axium

Check the Aster website, <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/>, for activities and summer programs.

Amoris Laetitia Family Year

On March 19, 2016, Pope Francis published the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, on the beauty and joy of family love. This year, to commemorate the Exhortation’s 5th anniversary, the Pope announced the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year, which will close on June 26, 2022. Pope Francis explained, “In imitation of the Holy Family, we are called to rediscover the educational value of the family unit... founded on the love that always regenerates relationships... when forgiveness prevails over discord, when the daily harshness of life is softened by mutual tenderness and serene adherence to God’s will.”



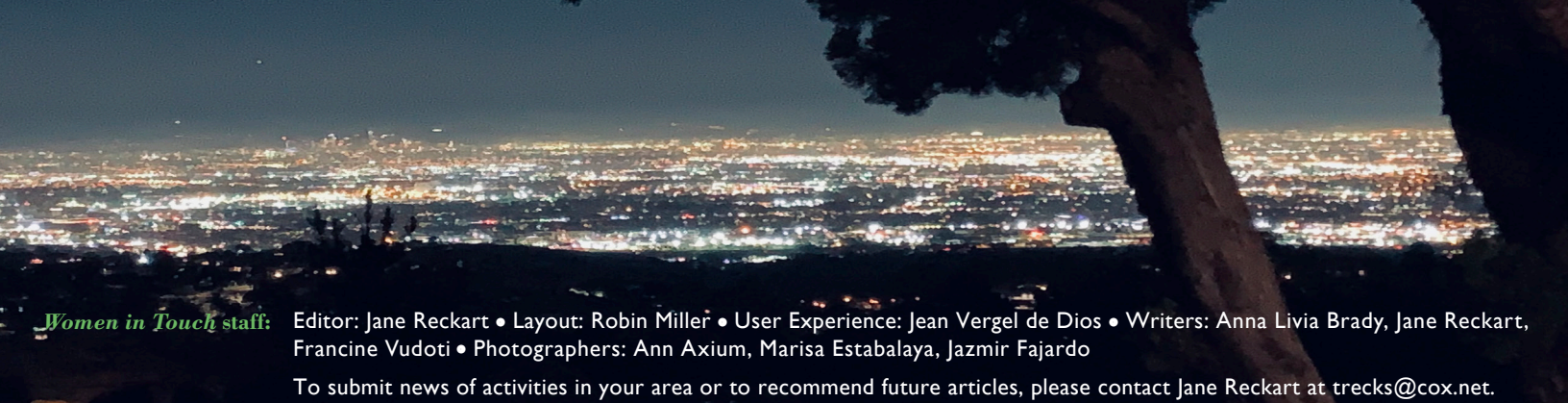
The Pope added, “In this way, the family opens itself up to the joy that God gives to all those who know how to give joyfully. At the same time, it finds the spiritual energy to be open to the outside world, to others, to serving brothers and sisters, to cooperation in building an ever new and better world... [The] family evangelizes by the example of life.”

Among the goals of the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year are helping families experience the joy of being a gift for the Church and society; encouraging family apostolate, both within and between families; emphasizing that the gift of the sacrament of marriage has the power to transform human love; and helping youth to value formation in the truth of human love and the gift of themselves.

During this time when we have so needed Divine Providence, what a blessing to have both the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year and the Year of St. Joseph to help us along the way!

During this year of St. Joseph, we can honor the saint and help others at the same time by earning indulgences for those who have died, remembering especially those who have succumbed to COVID.

When Pope Francis declared this a Year of St. Joseph, which ends on December 8, 2021, he granted plenary indulgences to those who practiced certain devotions to St. Joseph. Offering those indulgences for others is a loving way to help those who have gone before us, a concrete and generous service we and our families can give victims of COVID and other ailments. A particularly appropriate prayer to use is the following one, as it echoes St. Josemaría’s call to sanctify our work.



Prayer Before Work to St. Joseph the Worker

(Composed by Pope St. Pius X)

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thy example, O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life and in death. Amen.

For more devotions to St. Joseph and to review the conditions under which the indulgence is granted, go to <https://stjosemaria.org/a-spiritual-toolkit-for-the-year-of-st-joseph/>.

Reaping Treasure from the Opus Dei Website

The Opus Dei website, www.opusdei.org, is an extensive resource to help us grow in our spiritual lives and our relations with others, especially since COVID guidelines have restricted access to in-person gatherings. The site offers videos, articles, news, and testimonials on a variety of topics, all aimed at strengthening our relationship with Christ and with those around us.

In this issue, *WIT* considers *Family Life*, a series of articles on issues that arise in the daily lives of families. Topics such as the importance of good manners, teaching modesty, and managing technology within the home are explored in depth, while offering several practical suggestions.

The article on **temperance** advises parents to be courageous in living temperance, which is especially relevant in light of society’s preoccupation with consumerism. The article encourages parents to help children make their own decisions by teaching them to see the consequences of their actions.

The article on the **good use of free time** states that part of teaching children to use their time well includes learning how to use their leisure in a healthy and responsible way. The article spotlights the importance of playing, affirming that play has a major role in children’s development and maturation. Play involves

rising to challenges, following rules, and meeting goals, all of which are essential skills that children will need as adults.

An excellent article on **parental authority** exhorts parents to help children manage their freedom responsibly, noting that authority is a service that guides others toward the goals they are seeking. Authority entails offering children the tools they will need to mature, helping them “discover that there is more joy in giving than in receiving.” While reminding parents to respect each child’s independence and personality, the article stresses the importance of affection and trust, and recommends that parents “be invigilant in finding opportunities to spend time together.” The article ends with the advice that “[parents] need to pray for their children. They need to talk to God about them, about their virtues and their defects, asking how they can help them, and asking for God’s grace for their children and patience for themselves.”

The articles in *Family Life* are indeed a treasure that will help us and our friends grow in ability and in confidence as parents, so we can lead our children to develop into mature Christian adults.

Visit <https://opusdei.org/en/section/family-life/> to access the *Family Life* articles.

“Come Away ... and Rest a While”

Jesus ... said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place.” (Mark 6:31-32)

This spring, more than 30 women gathered in Rancho Palos Verdes for an in-person, social distancing retreat, one of the first offered since the beginning of the pandemic. Noting the backlogged demand for retreats because of COVID, Rosemary Kite, one of the retreat administrators, disclosed, “The retreat registration went up on the Walnut Grove website on Friday, and by Sunday, it was full.” She continued, “Retreats are opportunities for exterior silence for the sake of interior dialog with the one who loves you most, the one who created you. They are a chance to spend time face to face with your maker, like Moses speaking to God as a friend.”

Nestled amidst the peaks of Rolling Hills with an expansive view of Los Angeles below, retreatants spent the weekend immersed in God and strengthening their relationship with Him. Debbie, an attendee who goes on retreat annually, welcomed this opportunity to be rejuvenated spiritually. “I love retreats!” she shared. “I treasure the one-on-one time with Our Lord in a quiet place, away from the distractions and demands of my daily life. I really need that chance to go more deeply in conversation with Christ, to know His will for me in my life.”

Echoing her sentiments, Susan, another retreatant, added, “I need to rest in Christ. I want to reconnect with Our Lord in a deeper way, away from my daily routine, so when I get back home, I am refreshed and ready to serve again. Also, it’s really helpful to be able to spend time organizing my priorities, looking back on the past year, and looking forward to next year, to see how I can improve my relationships with God, family, friends, and co-workers.”

Attendees left the retreat rested and revitalized, ready to face their lives, families, and work with renewed vigor and faith. Check the Walnut Grove website, <https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/>, for the availability of future retreats.

~ Francine Vudoti, Youth Editor, Fullerton Observer

