

- Making the Fairest Love Statue
- Opus Dei Activities for Women
- News, updates and resources bringing God into daily life



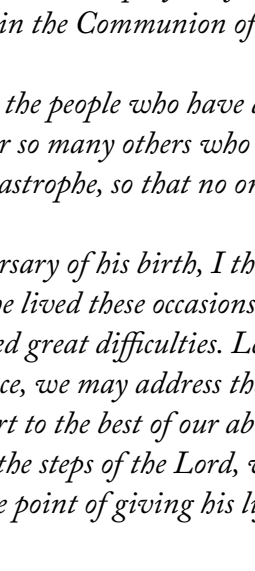
upcoming events:

St. Josemaría Feast Day Mass
 Saturday, June 21, 2025
 10:00a - 11:30a
 Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
 555 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles

Family Enrichment National Conference

This year, the National Conference for Family Enrichment will be held in San Antonio, Texas, March 28 - 29, 2025. Join couples from across the country as they gather at the Hilton Palacio del Rio on San Antonio's famous Riverwalk to strengthen marriages and families. Speakers will include Alexandre Hayward, Rosa Ploh, and others. Register by March 15 for this great opportunity to enrich your marriage and family life.

From the Prelate Opus Dei Formation from Rome



Finding Christ in our Daily Life

On learning about the recent wildfires in California, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, reached out to his children in the US with the following letter:

May Jesus watch over my daughters and sons in the United States!

I am writing these lines after bearing news of the disasters caused by the fires in California. I want to assure you of my closeness during these moments and convey the affection and prayers of the entire Work: we accompany you closely, united in the Communion of Saints.

I ask the Blessed Virgin Mary for the people who have died or been injured, for their relatives, and for so many others who have suffered severe consequences due to this catastrophe, so that no one loses hope.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of his birth, I think of our Father, St. Josemaría, and how he lived these occasions, accompanying with his prayers those who endured great difficulties. Let us also turn to him so that, without losing hope, we may address the needs of others and learn to pray and offer comfort to the best of our abilities. Let us live Christian charity, following the steps of the Lord, who gave us an example of self-forgiveness to the point of giving his life for everyone.

I continue relying on each and every one of you to carry forward the work of Opus Dei throughout the world.

*With affection, constant remembrance, and blessings,
 Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz
 Rome, January 9, 2025*

women

*Click the activity title for links to more information

Retreats*
 March 14-16, 2025
 March 28-30, 2025
 May 24-26, 2025
 (Memorial Day Weekend)

Faith & Reason Class*

The April 5, 2025 class is CANCELLED; future dates TBD.
 Beverly Cultural Center

Monthy Reflections*

Pasadena • Orange County • Long Beach • Comarcho
 San Diego • Las Vegas, NV • Phoenix, AZ

Creative Cuisine Open House

An Inter-Club Day
 Beverly Cultural Center
 Saturday, April 5, 2025, 2:00p - 5:00p

Moms will hear about the power of story for nurturing the child's moral imagination from speaker Jennifer Nieveu. Daughters will share fun with new and old friends while experiencing Astor's program for young girls.

daughters

* Saturday, 1:00p - 3:30p - later Study Center

Key Girls entering grades 5-8!

Register NOW for Pathfinder Camp!
 July 6-11, 2025. See article below next to Girl's Club Corner for more information.

6th & 7th grades
Creative Cuisine* } Both programs teach practical skills while instilling confidence and a spirit of service.

8th grade
Stitch & Design* }

9th & 10th grades
Stepping up* } Mentoring, discussion forums, and skill development

11th & 12th grades
College Prep* } Guidance in applying for college and preparing for college life.

College Age Women
Catholic in College } Meditations, retreats, pilgrimages, and more at Holy Residences near the main ODA campus.

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love

Creating the Fairest Love Statue

The magnificent statue of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, sculpted by Cody Joseph Swanson, will soon be traveling to the United States. It will be temporarily housed at St. Mary of the Angels Church in Chicago, until its permanent home in California is ready. As we await the arrival to our country of this stunning image of Our Lady, it can be illuminating to consider all the effort that went into crafting the statue.

Cody, who lives and works in Florence, Italy, with his wife and five children, has extensive experience producing award-winning sculptures and private collections in the US and Europe, including likenesses of both St. Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.

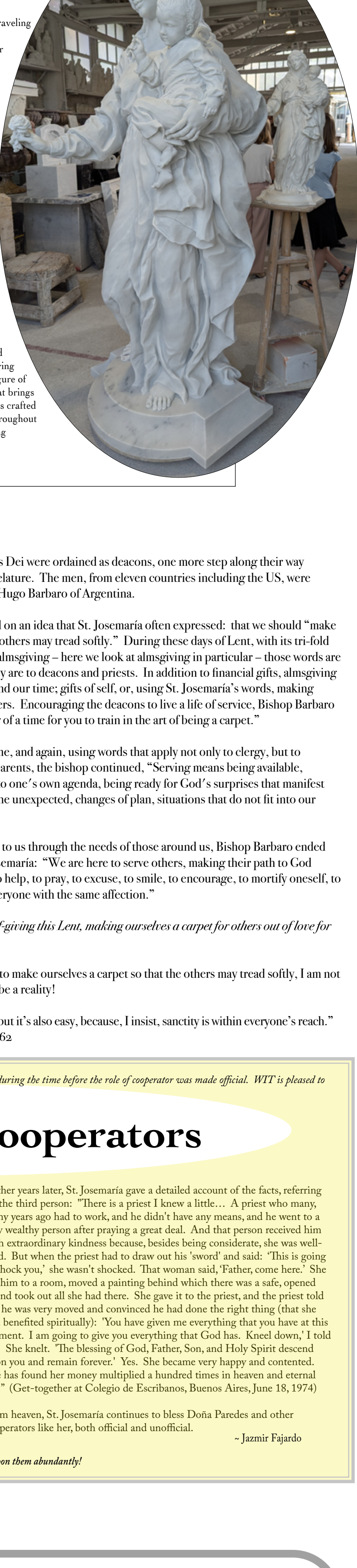
The process of creating the Fairest Love statue was complex, involving several distinct steps. After sketching and refining a drawing of Fairest Love, Cody carved a small model out of clay in his Florence studio. He used that clay model to form a mold of the image, which was subsequently used to create a plaster model.

Turning from the smaller model, Cody then shifted the process to working on the full-sized statue, which was too bulky to be crafted in the Florence studio. To sculpt a statue that will last through the ages, Cody chose to work with marble because he wanted the most noble and best material available for Our Lady. But not just any marble would do. After insightful deliberation, Cody ultimately selected a hefty block from the Carrara quarry, famed for its white and blue-gray marble. Carrara marble has been mined since ancient Roman times – the Pantheon and Trajan's Column in Rome were constructed of it, and during the Renaissance, Michelangelo used it for some of his sculptures.

To accommodate the massive block of marble, Cody moved his work to a spacious studio at the base of the Carrara mountain mine, where his family joined him, leaving their Florence home for the summer.

Sculpture in the 21st century diverges at this point from the 15th-century process used by Michelangelo and other famed sculptors. Cody made a 3-D scan of the plaster model, and he used that scan to generate a carving program for a large robotic carving apparatus. Carving away excess marble, the robot produced a rough figure of Our Lady. Cody then delicately hand-carved the sculpture, adding access and refining the meticulous detailing that brings the statue to life and creates a true work of art. After 1,000 - 1,500 hours of work over 14 months, Cody has crafted the image of *Mary, Mother of Fairest Love*, inviting them to follow our hearts and our love; that will inspire families throughout the world to seek her intercession and her motherly care; and that will serve as a focal point for ever-growing devotion to her. For this, we are exceedingly grateful.

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, pray for us!



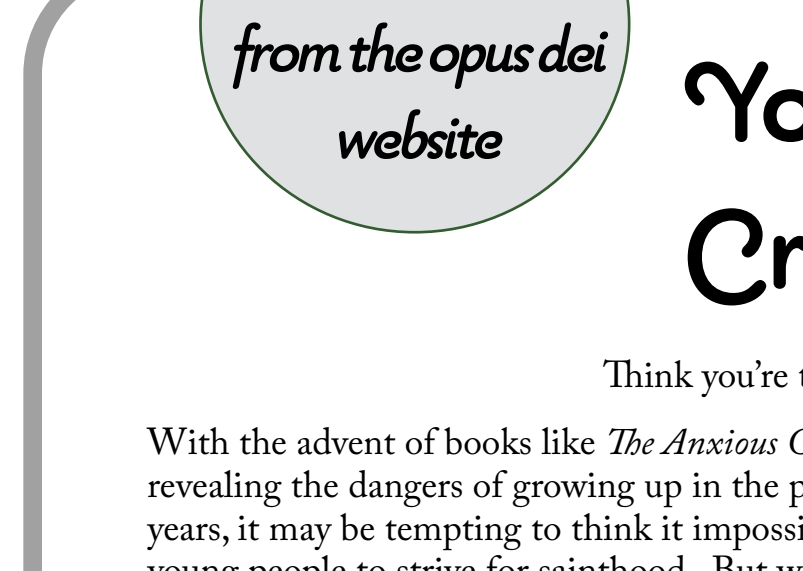
The Quotable Saint - Holiness in Ordinary Life

St. Josemaría Escrivá

Christ is Passing By, 65

What a strange capacity man has to forget even the most wonderful things, to become used to mystery! Let's remind ourselves, this Lent, that the Christian cannot be superficial. While being fully involved in his everyday work, among other men, his equals; busy, under stress, the Christian has to be at the same time totally involved with God, for he is a child of God.

Being a Carpet for Others



Read more about the ordination on the Opus Dei website [here](#).

Recently, twenty men of Opus Dei were ordained as deacons, one more step along their way to becoming priests of the Prelature. The men, from eleven countries including the US, were ordained in Rome by Bishop Hugo Barbo of Argentina.

The bishop's homily centered on an idea that St. Josemaría often expressed: that we should "make ourselves a carpet so that the others may tread softly." During these days of Lent, with its tri-fold focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – here we look at almsgiving in particular – those words are as relevant to laypeople as they are to deacons and priests. In addition to financial gifts, almsgiving includes gifts of our service and our time: gifts of self, or, using St. Josemaría's words, making ourselves a carpet for the others. Encouraging the deacons to live a life of service, Bishop Barbo stated, "This is the beginning of a time for you to train in the art of being a carpet."

Quoting Pope Francis this time, and again, using words that apply not only to clergy, but to laypeople as well, especially parents, the bishop continued, "Scrying means being available, renouncing living according to one's own agenda, being ready for God to surprise that manifest themselves through people, the unexpected changes of plan, situations that do not fit into our schemes and frameworks."

Noting that God often speaks to us through the needs of those around us, Bishop Barbo ended with more quotes from St. Josemaría: "We are here to serve others, making their path to God pleasant," and "To serve is to help, to pray, to excuse, to smile, to encourage, to mortify oneself, to care, to listen, and to treat everyone with the same affection."

Lord, help us increase our self-giving this Lent, making ourselves a carpet for others out of love for you.

"When I preach that we have to make ourselves a carpet so that the others may tread softly, I am not simply being poetic; it has to be a reality!

"It's hard, as sanctity is hard; but it's also easy, because, I insist, sanctity is within everyone's reach."
 - St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, 562

Part I Our Original Cooperators

Five years after the founding of Opus Dei in 1928, St. Josemaría established the DYA (Dynamis) – an acronym for "Derecho y Arquitectura" (Law and Architecture) – was a student residence and study academy that opened in November 1933. "Together with its academic and residential activities, DYA was a place where St. Josemaría could spread the message of Opus Dei by living alongside the university students, inviting them to follow a path of prayer compatible with their human and professional ideals." (Romana, n. 62, January-June 2016)

In a get-together years later, St. Josemaría gave a detailed account of the facts, referring to himself in the third person: "There is a priest I knew a little... a priest who many years ago had to work, and he didn't have any means, and he received to a very wealthy person after praying a great deal. And that person wanted him with extraordinary kindness because, besides being confidante, she was well-bred. But when the priest had to draw out his 'mood' and said: 'This is going to shock you,' she wasn't shocked. That woman said, 'Father, come here.' She led him to a room, moved a painting behind which there was a safe, opened it, and took out all she had there. She gave it to the priest, and the priest told her he was very moved and convinced he had done the right thing (that she had benefited spiritually): 'You have given me everything that you have at this moment. I am going to give you everything that God has. Kneel down, I told her. The blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descended upon you and remain forever.' Yes. She became very happy and content. She has found her money multiplied a hundred times in heaven and eternal life." (Get-together at Colegio de Escrivanos, Buenos Aires, June 18, 1974)

From heaven, St. Josemaría continues and besides Doña Paules and other cooperators like her, both official and unofficial.

- Jazmir Fajardo

Thank you, Lord, for our cooperators; please pour your graces upon them abundantly!

reaping treasure from the opus dei website

Young People Have a Crucial Role in the Work

Think you're too young for a life of holiness? Think again!

With the advent of books like *The Anxious Generation* revealing the dangers of growing up in the past several years, it may be tempting to think it impossible for our young people to strive for sainthood. But with Blessed Carlos Acutis's beatification coming up on April 27th, during the Jubilee of teenagers, we're reminded that the Church's youth are called to serve the work of God right here, right now, with the tools and talents they've been granted.

The new section on Opus Dei's website titled *Youth* highlights such a claim – featuring the testimonies of young adults in the Work and providing resources for spiritual evangelization.

Media as Evangelization

Opus Dei was revolutionary for many reasons – one of them being its focus on the sanctification of daily life. Today, it may still shock some that the Work can be carried out by IT analysts and influencers alike. The Work recognizes the beauty of social media and its power as a means of evangelization.

Opus Dei's Youth section is vibrant, fun, and artistic. As the reader scrolls through the page, they see collages, quirky fonts, and multiple short-form videos, enticing them to click.

St. Josemaría for Dummies

Not everyone is familiar with St. Josemaría's teachings. Some may even be skeptical about his ideas. For such individuals, the Youth section article, *Soundbites from a Saint*, is a wonderful place to start. The piece highlights segments from St. Josemaría's conversations with young people across multiple countries. One quote that continues to resonate especially with young adults is "Fight now, come on! Don't wait until you're too old."

Those who wish to learn about St. Josemaría's early life and his journey into founding Opus Dei can jump to *A Biography of St. Josemaría*. Readers new to St. Josemaría may not realize that he was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002 as the "saint of ordinary life," or that he sent letters to young members of Opus Dei while escaping religious persecution in the Pyrenees in 1937.

Young People Living the Faith

Beyond providing educational materials about St. Josemaría, the Youth section accentuates the apostolate of young people like *Chris Parreno*, a UK-based calligrapher who finds connection to God and others through her artistic endeavors.

Another story, *Pedro Was a Real Influencer*, points out the exemplary character of a young man who lost his life to osteosarcoma at age twenty-one, as told by his younger brother Javi. Throughout his short time on earth, Pedro followed his conviction to dedicate his life to God, filled others' lives with joy, and said yes to whatever God asked of him.

A Space for All

Christianity teaches us that all are called to his kingdom – he doesn't discriminate based on age, profession, background, or personality. Whether our young people are called to make doctors or become doctors, we in the Work are here to support them. To be Catholic means to be part of the true, universal church that Christ founded – let's make sure our young people know that when they seek to cooperate with God's will, their unique vocations and convictions are welcome and encouraged.

- Anna Livia Brady

This Tremendous Lover

...a great book for strengthening your spiritual life, just in time for Lent...

This *Tremendous Lover* is a Christ-centered presentation of the sacraments, prayer, mortification, spiritual reading, and other aspects of the interior life, with many useful suggestions. From time to time, I let work or trivial excuses get in the way of spending time with God in mental prayer. This is the book that finally made me value and spend time with God in personal prayer. This particular passage is golden:

"God wants our love; he will be satisfied with nothing else. That is what he principally looks for in our works. The things that we do or achieve are not of primary value to God; for he can create them by a mere thought or with just as much ease; he can raise up other free agents to do what we do. But the love of our hearts is something unique, something no one else can give him. True, he could create other hearts to love him, but once he has created us and given us free will, the love of our particular heart is something unique and in a way irreplaceable." - TE

"...reaping has made many saints." - St. Josemaría (The Way, 107)

This Lent, join Hallow and the St. Josemaría Institute for a 40 Day Prayer Challenge

This Lent, join Hallow and the St. Josemaría Institute for 40 days of Lenten prayer inspired by the writings of St. Josemaría Escrivá. Through The Way, we will follow Jesus into deeper faith, guided by reflections and spiritual insights to help us grow in holiness and trust in God's plan.

Highlights of this Lenten Challenge include:

- Daily meditations drawn from St. Josemaría's writings
- Reflections on A Song for Nagasaki and the inspiring story of Dr. Takashi Nagai
- Guided prayer and fasting challenges with insights from Catholic voices like Fr. Mike Schmitz, Jonathan Roumie, and Cardinal Robert Sarah
- Special content for families, helping children grow in virtue through *The Little Way*

Hallow is offering an introductory 30-day free trial today with full access to the entire Lenten Challenge, plus additional resources for Easter:

May we all achieve a spirit of renewal and conversion through prayer this Lenten season.

Lent is a time traditionally dedicated to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This Lent, consider directing some of your family's prayer and financial support to the following good work, organized by a cooperator of Opus Dei.

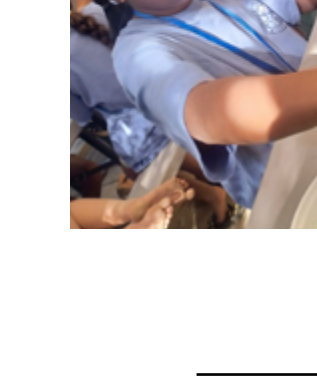
Before



Nadia Mitchell on being a Cooperator of Opus Dei:

For me, being a Cooperator of Opus Dei is a means to put into practice the mission from the *Admonition 68* "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." As a convert without family members who are Catholics, it is a comfort to join with thousands of other lay faithful throughout the world and focus on using our professions to bring honor to God through high-quality work. He is constantly surprising me with new ways to serve Him, for examples by directing dozens of donations to provide wells with simple hand pumps so families in Africa can have safe access to clean water.

After:



This same morning, far across the plain, Martin gets up, gets dressed and drinks his black coffee for breakfast. He will follow the rutted dirt road on his motorcycle to meet three other men in the front yard of Chausku's house. There they will finish the well before the day before by pounding a metal drill bit into the ground to access the water table 30 feet down. Chausku will find him and his team lunch, their only full meal of the day, so they can finish this project and move on to the next location to begin a well tomorrow for another family.

Chausku leads a life typical of the rural women in the Moshi region of Tanzania. The water she collects daily, a total of about 30 gallons carried on her head over several miles, enables her to cook, clean, wash laundry, and slake the thirst of her family. The well from which she draws water with her bucket was hand dug many years ago and is open to the air. There is an ongoing risk of contamination due to the close proximity of the open-pit, well-used latrine, or of animals falling into it or worse, children or night wanderers unaware of the well's existence or location. Sometimes cobras and other snakes inhabit wells and bite the arms of the women drawing the water.

At least 600 open wells have been identified in the region of Moshi alone. Only 10% of the entire population of Tanzania has running water, as most people are too poor to afford plumbing and far too spread out for a municipal water system. The government provides some well water - but at a price, often more than many can afford.

Into this dilemma walked Dr. Nadia Mitchell, an American former educator and specialist in quality control for food manufacturing. On a trip to rural Tanzania in 2021, Nadia brought with her a simple, effective, low-cost technique for manually drilling shallow water wells, covering them, and installing hand pumps. Working with local Catholic parish priests, Nadia helps to determine the need for the well drilling or retrofitting, as well as helping to train the teams who will perform the work. Currently there is a waiting list for either drilling a new well or retrofitting of dangerous open wells.

The wells are always collaborative in nature and a study of human cooperation. In spite of extreme financial limitations, Chausku eagerly partnered with the nonprofit organization formed by Nadia by providing basic materials for the wells' construction in addition to lunch for the workers. Nadia and her team provide the training of the laborers and their wages, as well as heavier supplies to construct and cover the well, install a hand pump, and test the water to ensure its purity. In an area with a significant Muslim population, Nadia's organization provides its services without regard for religion. And each family that receives this benefit happily shares its well with typically 5-10 neighboring families.

That people live anywhere in conditions like this is hard to comprehend. How wonderful that we, through our prayer and also our financial support, can partner with Nadia and those she serves to help fulfill her vision to bring clean water and a higher quality of life to the women and children of Tanzania.

For more information, including how to contribute to Nadia's work, go to [familywellproject.org](#), the website for her nonprofit organization. One \$200 donation buys a well for a family; any amount is gratefully accepted.

- Robin Miller

Pathfinder Camp - REGISTER NOW

Following the Path to Fun, Friends, and Faith



For families who are starting to think about plans for the end of the school year, a highlight of the summer for many girls entering grades 5 - 8 is Bear **Pathfinder Summer Camp**, a one-week outdoor experience on the shores of Big Bear Lake, **July 6 - 12, 2025**. The goal of the camp is to encourage girls to use their talents to lead and to serve others at home, at school, and in the community. This goal is gleefully and enthusiastically pursued during an action-packed week, filled with fun activities; time with friends, both new and old; and growing in faith. A handful of last summer's campers can describe it best:

For girls who may feel hesitant about leaving home, *Katissa*, a first-time camper, had a reassuring comment: "It's not scary. You don't really miss your family because you are having so much fun here." **Alex**, a 7th grader, echoed that thought, adding, "The counselors are really fun, and there are lots of nice girls to make friends with." Alex enjoyed going to Mass every day, sharing, "It brings me closer to God." **Alina**, another 7th grader, was emphatic about the fun - "It's my favorite thing at camp was everything there is here every day. You get to make lots of new friends. It's really fun, because everything is perfect."

Kristen and **Michele**, 8th graders, agreed about the fun, especially with the high ropes. Michele continued, "The high ropes were definitely my favorite activity. There are so many fun obstacle courses, and the leap of faith is awesome. It's just really fun." And for anyone nervous about coming to camp, she reflected, "It's fine as long as you have Jesus."

Come along to **Pathfinder** camp this summer and join the fun. Your new friends and God will be waiting for you!

GIRLS' CLUB CORNER: BUILDING ON PAST EXPERIENCES FOR THE FUTURE

Josie has been involved in girls' clubs since she was in college. She started her current club with some friends when her daughter was in kindergarten – that daughter is now in high school, and she's a counselor for the club, giving virtue talks and mentoring the club girls. Remarkably that their passion in running the club is the mother/daughter relationship, *Josie* said that the moms stay during the club meetings to help foster those ties.

Mary noted that the clubs' emphasis on having fun while being close to God helps the girls integrate their faith into their life. "Also, club is a great opportunity for friendship, not only for the girls, but for the moms as well. *Johanna* agreed, adding that the moms often appreciate the friendship aspect the most, and that girls' club can act as a support group for them.

Maribel reflected that girls' club is where they plant the seed of what it means to be a strong woman living a coherent life of faith. Many of the former club girls are now married, and they often post online positive comments that reflect their club experience.

Service was a common theme running through all the clubs. *Arona* club once ran a campaign for women in Nigeria; the girls raised money to buy them a privacy scene for Advent. *Josie* club does a service project every Lent and Advent, emphasizing that service can be a sacrifice we do for Christ. *Ayris* club brings food to a homeless shelter every Lent, and the girls serve the food, so they can see first-hand the people they are helping. One year, they served shrimp Alfredo, which was a real treat for the recipients. One was so moved, she said, "I haven't had shrimp in so many years; may I have one more?" *Mary* observed that kids don't forget

those experiences that touch the heart – they are formative, and their effects can last a lifetime.

Kelly's club in San Francisco hosted a speaker series, where various women spoke about their careers, ranging from engineering to costume design. Not only were the club girls intrigued by the talks, but the speakers were inspired by the girls themselves, and their quest to strengthen their leadership skills and character. *Joy* mentioned that the value of working with the whole person in club, being able to encourage the girls in so many different aspects of their development. At a recent meeting, the talk was on modesty and body positivity, while the activity was Spa Day, complete with facials, manicures, and practice with different hairstyles. *Susan*, who ran a club in the '90s, recalled that one of their most memorable events was a father / daughter picnic, which moms also attended. *Susan's* husband gave a talk on fatherhood for the dads while the moms and club girls listened to their respective talks. The picnic's highlight was a series of field day competitions between the moms' team and the dads' team – it was a raucous, fun, family-bonding day filled with laughter, cheers, and hugs.

Girls' clubs have a positive impact, not only on the girls who attend, but also on their moms, their families, and their communities. [Find a girls' club near you, and join in!](#)

Our hearts and prayers are with you as you navigate the devastating aftermath of the Southern California wildfires. We know that some of our close friends and loved ones are experiencing significant personal losses: of homes, of livelihoods, of school closures and evacuations. Know that you are not alone. We are here to support you in the best way we can: with our faith-filled resources, with our prayers and work offered to God each and every day, and by the power of our friendship. We are here to lend a helping hand, and to offer a listening ear and a shoulder to lean or cry on.

Many generous people, churches, and other organizations have been offering and continue to offer material assistance. Walnut Grove, on the other hand, would like to provide you with the resources that can help you find a path to spiritual comfort and healing as you try to grapple with the mystery of suffering.

Feel free to turn to [our page on the wildfires](#) often to nourish your soul and spirit with words from many wise and holy sources.

A Message from the Walnut Grove Board of Directors

W77 Staff: Editor: Jane Beckart • Layout: Robin Miller • User Experience: Jean Vergel de Dios • Writers: Anna Livia Brady, Jazmir Fajardo, Robin Miller, Robyn Poythress, Joy Martinez, Nadia Mitchell, Josie Plascencia

To submit news of activities in your area or to recommend future articles, please email us at [tracks@cox.net](#).