



President's Letter

Dear Friends of Walnut Grove,

I hope this letter finds you well and in great health.

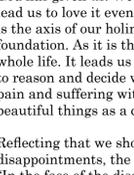
It's been one chaotic year – the virus, quarantines, church shutdowns, riots, unsettling political rivalry, the list continues. We live in difficult times as we see the world changing by leaps and bounds. We look for answers to WHY and yet the answers seem to escape us. In these precise circumstances, we are now living the liturgical season called Advent. Let us reflect on that briefly as we share that ancient, long-standing expectancy for the Messiah. This blessed season is why we fill our hearts and minds with hope and joy. By preparing ourselves once more to welcome the birth of Our Savior, we also renew our ardent desire for his second coming. He who has come to overcome the evils of the world, to bring hope, peace, joy, and salvation to all.

We had wonderful plans to see us through in 2020 but clearly, God had different plans for us. Our sincerest gratitude goes to all our volunteers who never stopped, pandemic and all, with providing us with much-needed boosts to our cultural and spiritual health through their friendly chats, virtual talks, circles, and recollections. To all those who shared their backyards for some limited activities, we are eternally thankful. In addition, through your continued financial support, you provided the volunteers with a much-needed means of more reliable transportation as they travel through counties in all directions delivering messages of cheer, encouragement, and faith. As you create your gift list, please don't forget to consider Walnut Grove for a tax-deductible charitable donation before the year ends.

With Christmas fast approaching, let us sing together in our hearts a well-loved carol among family and friends: "Joy to the World." While singing, you can be sure that you have provided joy to all the women in the world who benefit from our mission of professional, cultural, and spiritual formation. The officers and directors of Walnut Grove Cultural Center are deeply grateful for everything you do to support our organization!

On behalf of us all, we wish you and your loved ones the very best Christmases!

Cynthia Abesa



From the Prelate

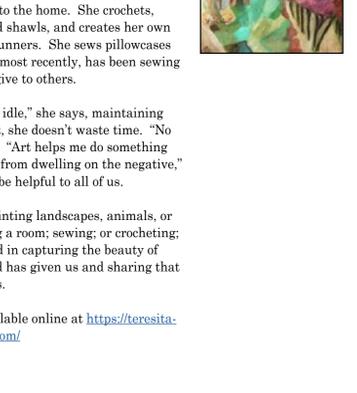
On October 28, 2020, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, the prelate of Opus Dei, wrote a lengthy letter on the universal Christian vocation to holiness "...in the middle of the world—in our real world, with its lights and shadows." He noted that our vocation is a grace "... that shows itself as light and as strength; light, so that we can see the way, see what God wants of us; and strength, so as to be able to respond to the call, to say yes and to go forward on the path."

Monsignor Ocariz stressed that "...the sanctification of our work is the axis on which our search for holiness, for identification with Jesus Christ turns, through our correspondence to grace. This brings with it a positive view of earthly realities, which are those God has given us. We love this world, ...[and] its sorrows should lead us to love it even more. ...And if the sanctification of our work is the axis of our holiness, our sense of divine filiation has to be the foundation. As it is the foundation, our divine filiation shapes our whole life. It leads us to pray with the trust of God's children, ... to reason and decide with the freedom of God's children, to face pain and suffering with the serenity of God's children, to appreciate beautiful things as a child of God does."

Reflecting that we shouldn't get disheartened with difficulties or disappointments, the Prelate reassured us with the following words: "In the face of the discouragement that can arise in us when we see the disproportion between the ideal and the poor reality of our lives, let us have the security that we can begin again every day with the strength of the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Beauty and God

We encounter Our Lord in the Word and in the Sacraments, as well as in goodness and truth, but we can also find him in beauty. An 87-year-old great-grandmother has been doing just that, spending her days seeking Christ in beauty.



Teresita Montecillo, Tessie to her friends, creates art. Lots of art. All kinds of art. Tessie spoke to WIT from her studio in the home where she has lived alone since her husband of 63 years died three years ago. Remarkable on faith and art, Tessie prioritizes spending time daily with God through prayer and reading, and says that some of her art has been inspired by her faith, most notably her paintings of the Madonna and Child.

While she usually paints with oils, she likes to experiment with new skills, confiding, "I am trying pastels now – I just started two days ago." But Tessie doesn't limit herself to two-dimensional art. She is a gifted interior decorator who enjoys infusing beauty into the home. She crochets, making doilies and shawls, and creates her own designs for table runners. She sews pillowcases and pajamas, and most recently, has been sewing COVID masks to give to others.

"I don't want to be idle," she says, maintaining that because of art, she doesn't waste time. "No naps," she smiles. "Art helps me do something good. It keeps me from dwelling on the negative," a skill that would be helpful to all of us.

Whether she is painting landscapes, animals, or flowers; decorating a room; sewing; or crocheting; Tessie is immersed in capturing the beauty of the world that God has given us and sharing that beauty with others.

Tessie's art is available online at <https://teresita-montecillo.pixels.com/>

~ WIT Staff

The Poet Pope

Looking for something new to do during these long COVID months at home? Try the poetry of Pope St. John Paul II, who was a poet long before he was pope. His poems, lyrical yet metaphysical at the same time, are a treat and inspiration for poetry lovers and newbies alike. They are a window into the wide-ranging talents of the man renowned for his intellectual prowess, and beloved for his sanctity.

Lily, one of our readers, shared that several of the Pope's poems are available in audio form. Sean Patrick Lovett, who has worked with the last five popes as English Program Director at the Vatican Radio, reads a collection of fifteen of the poems, accompanied by instrumental introductions and interludes. Enjoy Lovett's soothing voice reading poems on topics ranging from memories of a quarry accident, to the eagerness of children, to hope, and get to know a side of the saint you may never have seen before. Lovett's recordings are available online. For even more of St. John Paul II's poetry, a complete collection of his poetry written between 1939 and 1978 is available in the book *The Place Within*.

~ WIT Staff

Bringing the Radiance of Lourdes to the Home

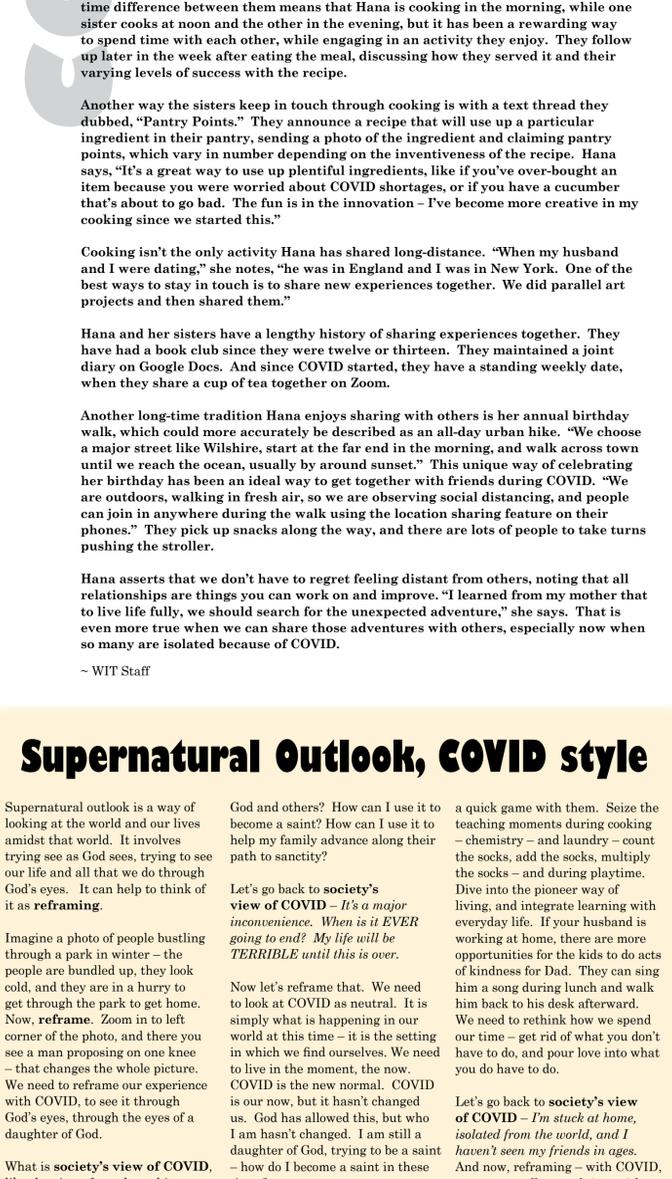
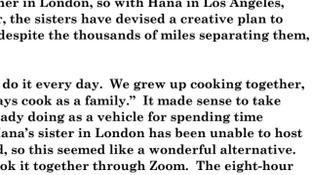
October 2020 isn't what any one of us was expecting – and many Marian traditions, as well as the usual Trick or Treating rituals, were sadly compromised due to the effects of the coronavirus. But in Las Vegas, two incredible women hosted a virtual Marian pilgrimage during the month of the rosary. Motivated by a desire to connect with cooperators and friends during the pandemic, Vivian Owyong and Dulce "Candy" Romea worked together to produce a globe-traversing pilgrimage for participants who never even had to leave their homes.

Following the presentation, the Marian pilgrims joined together in prayer as the Litany to Our Lady of Loreto was displayed on the screen. The joint worship and sense of community left all participants feeling peaceful and grateful for the experience. While participants look forward to an in-person pilgrimage in the future, Vivian and Candy's innovative spirits have provided hope and kinship in the midst of this pandemic.

Our Lady, help of the sick, pray for us!

~ Anna Livia Brady

Using a PowerPoint presentation filled with photos from Marian shrines, the group "traveled" to Fatima, Poland, Lourdes, Medjugorje, and Torreciudad. Despite occasional technical difficulties, the group of women from Las Vegas, Chicago, and Henderson persevered with patience and cheerfulness.



Together and Adventures

Hana, a mom with two small children, shared some intriguing ideas with WIT for staying in touch with loved ones during the pandemic. Hana is extremely close to her two sisters – one is her twin, and the other is just 22 months older. Unfortunately, one sister lives in New York and the other in London, so with Hana in Los Angeles, they can seldom get together. However, the sisters have devised a creative plan to spend time together, using Zoom, and, despite the thousands of miles separating them, cooking.

"Everyone cooks," says Hana, "and you do it every day. We grew up cooking together, and whenever we are together, we always cook as a family." It made sense to take advantage of an activity they were already doing as a vehicle for spending time together. Additionally, since COVID, Hana's sister in London has been unable to host the dinner parties she'd always enjoyed, so this seemed like a wonderful alternative. The sisters choose a recipe and then cook it together through Zoom. The eight-hour time difference between them means that Hana is cooking in the morning, while one sister cooks at noon and the other in the evening, but it has been a rewarding way to spend time with each other, while engaging in an activity they enjoy. They follow up later in the week after eating the meal, discussing how they served it and their varying levels of success with the recipe.

Another way the sisters keep in touch through cooking is with a text thread they dubbed, "Pantry Pantry." They announce a recipe that will use up a particular ingredient in their pantry, sending a photo of the ingredient and claiming pantry points, which vary in number depending on the inventiveness of the recipe. Hana says, "It's a great way to use up plentiful ingredients, like if you've over-bought an item because you were worried about COVID shortages, or if you have a cucumber that's about to go bad. The fun is in the innovation – I've become more creative in my cooking since we started this."

Cooking isn't the only activity Hana has shared long-distance. "When my husband and I were dating," she notes, "he was in England and I was in New York. One of the best ways to stay in touch is to share new experiences together. We did parallel art projects and then shared them."

Hana and her sisters have a lengthy history of sharing experiences together. They have had a book club since they were twelve or thirteen. They maintained a joint diary on Google Docs. And since COVID started, they have a standing weekly date, when they share a cup of tea together on Zoom.

Another long-time tradition Hana enjoys sharing with others is her annual birthday walk, which could more accurately be described as an all-day urban hike. "We choose a major street like Wilshire, start at the far end in the morning, and walk across town until we reach the ocean, usually by around sunset." This unique way of celebrating her birthday has been in fresh air to get together with friends during COVID. "We are outdoors, walking in ideal air, so we are observing social distancing, and people can join in anywhere during the walk using the location sharing feature on their phones." They pick up snacks along the way, and there are lots of people to take turns pushing the stroller.

Hana asserts that we don't have to regret feeling distant from others, noting that all relationships are things you can work on and improve. "I learned from my mother that to live life fully, we should search for the unexpected adventure," she says. That is even more true when we can share those adventures with others, especially now when so many are isolated because of COVID.

~ WIT Staff

Supernatural Outlook, COVID style

Supernatural outlook is a way of looking at the world and our lives amidst that world. It involves trying to see as God sees, trying to see our life and all that we do through God's eyes. It can help to think of it as reframing.

God and others? How can I use it to become a saint? How can I use it to help my family advance along their path to sanctity?

a quick game with them. Seize the teaching moments during cooking – chemistry – and laundry – count the socks, add the socks, multiply the socks – and during playtime.

Imagine a photo of people bustling through a park in winter – the people are bundled up, they look cold, and they are in a hurry to get through the park to get home. Now, reframe. Zoom in to left corner of the photo, and there you see a man proposing on one knee – that changes the whole picture. We need to reframe our experience with COVID, to see it through God's eyes, through the eyes of a daughter of God.

Let's go back to **society's view of COVID** – *It's a major inconvenience. When is it EVER going to end? My life will be TERRIBLE until this is over.*

Living and the pioneer way of life, into the integrate learning with everyday life. If your husband is working at home, there are more opportunities for the kids to do acts of kindness for Dad. They can sing him a song during lunch and walk him back to his desk afterward. We need to rethink how we spend our time – get rid of what you don't have to do, and pour love into what you do have to do.

What is **society's view of COVID**, like the view of people rushing through the park? *It's a major inconvenience. It's messing up my life. My husband and our kids are home all day. I'm trying to teach the kids while keeping up with all my daily work, I'm stuck at home and haven't seen my friends in ages. It's affecting my spiritual life – there are no daily Masses.*

Now let's reframe that. We need to look at COVID as neutral. It is simply what is happening in our world at this time – it is the setting in which we find ourselves. We need to live in the moment, the now. COVID is the new normal. COVID is our now, but it hasn't changed us. God has allowed this, but who I am hasn't changed. I am still a daughter of God, trying to be a saint – how do I become a saint in these times?

Let's go back to **society's view of COVID** – *I'm stuck at home, isolated from the world, and I haven't seen my friends in ages. And now, reframing – with COVID, we can actually spend time with many more friends than we could before. We can Zoom with friends who live on the other side of the country or of the world, as well as friends who live around the corner. We can share a cup of coffee or a glass of wine with them, without even leaving the comfort of our home.*

We need to reframe that view. We need to find that man on his bended knee, pouring that love into his sweetheart. We need to have his supernatural outlook to see our lives, specifically our lives during COVID, through the eyes of a daughter of God. How do we do that?

COVID hasn't taken away our ability to pray. In fact, it has given us a huge, pressing topic for our prayer and sacrifice. Pray for those who have the disease; those who are scared or lonely; those whose finances are suffering; those who have died and the loved ones who are mourning them.

It's true that we really are missing out by not being able to receive Christ in the Eucharist every day, and it will be an amazing gift when we can again. But we can say a spiritual communion. We can pray it many times a day, and if we pray it with enough love, we can get the same grace we would have received with actual, physical communion. And then there is daily Mass itself. With online Masses, we can go to Mass now at any time of day or night. We no longer have to work around the schedule of nearby churches. Additionally, we can go to Mass anywhere. I have a friend who speaks Italian, and she goes to Mass with the Pope! We can attend Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City or at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. It has never been easier or more convenient to attend Mass.

COVID is just what's happening on the outside. It's what's happening in our world, our surroundings – what matters is what's happening on the inside, our spiritual life, and then, how our spiritual life overflows to flood those around us with love.

So, with reframing, COVID is giving us an opportunity to go back in time and live as the pioneers did. Families lived and worked together all through history, until relatively recently, and they didn't go crazy. In fact, I remember reading an article years ago that said that one of the issues with today's youth is that they don't see their parents work the way they used to in their times past, when parents worked in the home. The article said that today's kids are growing up without a mature understanding of work, of the value of work, and of how much their parents work for the family. Well, guess what? COVID just erased that problem, and now we have a chance to capitalize on the situation, really bringing that lesson home, literally, by living and working together, and demonstrating up close and personal the value of work.

So that is reframing, looking at our COVID world with supernatural outlook, with God's eyes, with the eyes of a daughter of God. Let reframing help us reinvent how we spend time with our friends, our family, our husband, and with God.

How can I use COVID as an opportunity to grow in my love for

when the work is done by playing

~ Jane Reckart

Girls' Club Corner

West Valley Girls' Club Continues Despite COVID-19

When the stay-at-home order first issued in late February of this year, many moms felt the pressure of balancing their daughters' spiritual development needs with keeping their families safe. But for the West Valley Girls' Club, led by Teresa Kaldor, keeping their monthly meetings on track was only a matter of figuring out how to mute and unmute on Zoom!



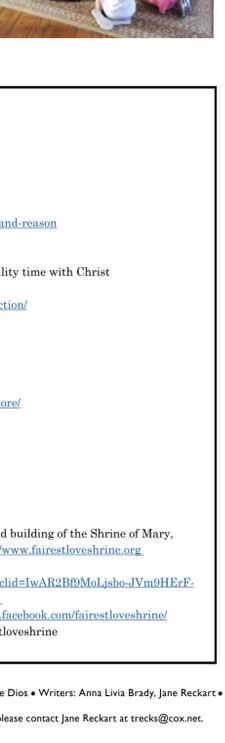
The West Valley Girls' Club hosts about a dozen girls whose ages range from seven to eleven. As many can attest, this age is crucial for young girls to socialize, learn about virtue, and participate in shared activities such as crafts and cooking. In addition, mothers of the participants are grateful to be able to establish a sense of normalcy for their young daughters in the comfort of their own homes.

A typical monthly meeting of the West Valley Girls' Club entails a talk about the virtue of the month, another talk about manners, and then a breakout session where the girls learn a special craft and their mothers get a talk of their own. One month, the West Valley moms were even treated to a fitness class from a fellow GC mom and fitness instructor, which was undoubtedly beneficial in keeping up quarantine morale.

During a recent meeting, the West Valley Girls learned about dealing with conflict and how to communicate kindly and effectively with others. The participants were asked what they would do if someone were upset with them, as well as what they would do if they were upset with someone else. The takeaways? When you're the target of a conflict, calmly ask the person approaching you why they are upset, listen to and acknowledge what they say, and accept responsibility for any wrongdoings. When the other person is the target of a conflict, assume the other's good intentions, ask her calmly to listen to your thoughts, and see what you can do to make the situation better in the future.

We can only hope that the effects of COVID-19 will diminish sooner rather than later. But in the meantime, we're happy to see Girls' Club moms rising to the occasion and zooming it out!

~ Anna Livia Brady



upcoming events

Faith and Reason Online Class
Online class to develop a deeper understanding of the doctrines of the Catholic Church
Saturday, December 19, 2020
1:30p Pacific Time
To join Zoom meeting, go to <https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/seminar-faith-and-reason>

Online Recollections
A monthly opportunity to withdraw and spend quality time with Christ Available at the St. Josemaria Institute website <https://stjosemaria.org/category/blog/day-of-recollection/> and at the Murray Hill Place website <https://www.mhplace.org/afternoon-of-recollection>

Come, Let Us Adore
Weekly Advent Holy Hour Companion Guide <https://stjosemaria.org/advent-2020-come-let-us-adore/>

Virtual Christmas Party
Date and time TBD
Check the Walnut Grove website for updates <https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/>

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love
Let us continue to pray for the purchase of land and building of the Shrine of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love. The website is live! <https://www.fairestloveshrine.org>. Here is a link to a prayer card: https://www.fairestloveshrine.org/prayer-card.1?fbclid=IwAR2B9Moj_sbo-JVm9HErF-Dl8f9QQLv_GB8hh_Ky5xUNWVYVWLOaA5h14 The shrine also has sites on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/fairestloveshrine/about?ref=page_internal and Instagram @fairestloveshrine