W. I. T.
women in touch

Women seeking holiness at home, at work, and at play

Lent 2023 | eNEWSLETTER NO. 19 | The Quarterly Newsletter of Walnut Grove

President's Letter

Happy New Year!

With a lot of gratitude to the Almighty Creator, a New Year has descended upon us. While we leave behind 2022, a year that was marked with the persistent Covid-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, the ravages of war, political and

From the Prelate
Opus Dei Formation
from Rome

social conflict and confusion, and a misleading media, we cannot allow our faith to dissipate as we usher in 2023 facing many of the same issues.

In *The Way*, #31, St. Josemaría wrote: "These world crises are crises of saints." Michael Kirke thought those were intriguing words. But he explains, the phrase essentially underlines St. Josemaría's idea that the earth is really only properly understood in the context of heaven, and that if the problems of the earth are to be solved at all, they can only be truly solved on the horizons where heaven and earth meet in the hearts of men, in the reality of holiness, in the sanctity of the stuff saints are made of.

There is certainly much work for us to do to build a better society, founded on Christian values where people are more loving, respectful, tolerant, and understanding, as many saints have modeled.

As we prepare to journey through another year, let us take time to focus on what fills our heart with gratitude and joy, and be energized by the important calling we have to spread understanding, compassion, and inclusiveness in all that we do.

On behalf of the WGCC Board, we thank all of you for your unwavering support that has inspired us to pursue our mission of providing our cooperators and friends with professional, cultural, and spiritual formation that prepares women to face today's many challenges.

~ Cynthia Abesa, President
Board of Directors

In his January 7, 2023 letter, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz suggested that we petition our Lord for the grace that our desire to live for others be shown through our deeds. He also asked that we pray for the extraordinary General Congress scheduled to be held in Rome during Easter week, April 12 -16, 2023. At the request of Pope Francis, the Congress will study opportune changes in the Statutes of the Prelature, with the goal of safeguarding the charism of Opus Dei. Msgr. Ocáriz concluded his letter with the following appeal: "I am counting on your prayers to complete this work in the best possible way." *Let us all be united to the Prelate and those participating in the Congress by supporting them in our prayer during these next few weeks.*

To read the Prelate's letter in its entirety, go to https://opusdei.org/en-us/article/letter-from-the-prelate-7-january-2023/

Walnut Grove

Opus Dei Women's Activities

upcoming events

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

For details, go to https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/recollections

Opus Dei Women's Retreats

March 17 - 19, 2023
May 5 - 7, 2023
Mary and Joseph Retreat Center, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

To register, go to https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/retreats

Faith & Reason Class

First Saturdays of the month

March 4, 2023
April 1, 2023
1:30p – 3:00p

Beverly Cultural Center

For details, go to https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/faith-and-reason-classes

For Your Daughters:

Mother/Daughter Tea

Date: TBD

Watch for announcements

Creative Cuisine

6th & 7th grade girls

Stitch & Design

8th grade girls

Saturdays, 1:00p - 3:30p

Aster Study Center

March 4, 2023
April 1, 2023

Both programs teach practical skills while instilling confidence and a spirit of service.

To apply, go to https://www.asterstudycenter.org/creative-cuisine-stitch-design

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Stepping Up

9th & 10th grade girls

Mentoring, discussion forums, and skill development

To apply, go to

https://www.asterstudycenter.org/stepping-up

College Prep

11th & 12th grade girls

Guidance in applying for college and preparing for college life

To apply, go to

https://www.asterstudycenter.org/collegeprep

Saturdays, 1:00p - 3:30p

March 18, 2023
April 15, 2023

Aster Study Center

Catholic in College

Meditations, retreats, pilgrimages, and more

For more information, go to https://www.westfieldresidence.org/catholic-college-activities

Pathfinder Summer Camp

Girls entering 5th – 9th grades

July 9 – 15, 2023

Cedar Lake Camp, Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

To apply, go to https://www.southernhillsinc.org/

Long Beach Day Camp

High school girls

June 18 - 24, 2023

Volunteer as a day camp counselor

For more details, go to https://www.asterstudycenter.org/aster-summer-leadership-programs

Summer Seminar

Girls entering 11th and 12th grades

Guidance through the college application process

For more details, go to https://www.asterstudycenter.org/aster-summer-leadership-programs

A Lenten Journey with Harambee

The three pillars of Lenten devotion are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Catholics typically give alms throughout the year, but during Lent, we try to make our almsgiving more significant – giving even more in reparation for our sins. Families looking for a meaningful almsgiving opportunity that can involve the whole family need look no further than **Harambee**.

Harambee Africa International is a nonprofit worldwide organization founded in 2002, on the eve of St. Josemaría's canonization. Harambee's goal is to benefit the people of Africa, "taking into consideration the enormous diversity of talent and resources within independent African countries." The word, "Harambee" means "all together for one" in Swahili. This spirit of solidarity imbues all the projects that Harambee funds – so far, they have completed 66 projects in 20 countries. Since 2002, Harambee Africa International has grown to include a network of national associate nonprofits, including Harambee USA Foundation.

WIT spoke recently with Isabel Macalintal, the President of the Board of Harambee USA. She reported that the projects Harambee USA has funded have ranged from micro-business training, to a nursing scholarship program, to providing emergency supplies. Macalintal added, "We've improved access to healthcare – our maternity program, which provides prenatal and postnatal care, has improved the infant mortality rate, and we've had no maternal deaths." When asked where the need was greatest, she responded, "The schools are very poor – in Nigeria, students have to share desks. And in Ivory Coast, many women are still illiterate."

At the inquiry of how families in the US can help, Macalintal answered, "First, pray for us." She also urged families to support Harambee USA financially, so more projects can be funded. "Remember solidarity," she said. "Teachers can donate to teachers; nurses can donate to nurses." Noting that the Harambee USA Board is located in New York, Macalintal continued, "One of our goals for 2023 is to grow to other states in the US, so we can expand our donor base. We'd like delegates in more states, and we also need young volunteers to bolster our social media platforms." She commented that in addition to supporting education and development in the region, Harambee USA seeks to promote a positive outlook on Africa in the US, transmitting "the richness and complexity of African culture." To that end, another way that families can help is to learn about Africa, its culture and its history, its music and its art. Macalintal said with a smile, "If the children make artwork about Africa, send us a photo, and we will post it on our website."

Supporting Harambee USA spiritually, financially, and even physically could be the perfect way for you and your family to direct your Lenten almsgiving. In addition to making art about Africa, kids could do extra chores like pulling weeds or washing cars to earn money to donate. Tech savvy members of your family might want to help with Harambee's social media. If your strength lies in organizing, consider volunteering to be a delegate for your region. Harambee USA offers families an opportunity to strengthen family bonds while working together in a meaningful manner to fulfill our Lenten almsgiving with solidarity and make a real difference in the world far beyond our borders.

For more information about Harambee USA Foundation and to donate, go to https://www.harambeeusa.org/

THE QUOTABLE SAINT

How do you explain this confident prayer — this knowledge that we shall not perish in the battle? It is a conviction rooted in something which is always a cause of wonder to me: our divine filiation. Our Lord, who during this Lent is asking us to change, is not a tyrannical master or a rigid and implacable judge: he is our Father. He speaks to us about our lack of generosity, our sins, our mistakes; but he does so in order to free us from them, to promise us his friendship and his love. Awareness that God is our Father brings joy to our conversion: it tells us that we are returning to our Father's house.

St. Josemaría Escrivá
Christ is Passing By, 64

Holiness in Ordinary Life

reaping treasure from the opus dei website

The Opus Dei website, https://opusdei.org/ is an extensive resource to help us grow in our spiritual lives and our relations with others. 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.

A Lenten Discussion of "Stuff"

"What are you giving up for Lent?" That's a question we hear often during the Lenten season, when we strive to grow in detachment to prepare for the coming of Christ at Easter. Parents trying to help their children also grow in the virtue of detachment may struggle to determine just how much "stuff" is best for their kids to have. A video on the Opus Dei website, **"Stuff": An Open Conversation**, can help address those concerns.

To see how families across the globe are attempting to break free from consumerism and the stress associated with it, the video interviews several couples from different countries, discussing the challenges of child-rearing in a status-centered world. During the video, parents related topics such as wanting the best for their children, not wanting to see their children suffer, and the difficulties of differentiating between instant gratification versus lasting joy. Parents knew that, however difficult it was, not giving in to every one of their children's desires would promote their self-development and help them become things differently. For instance, one Australian father opened up about growing up with limited means and wanting to give his children as much as possible.

It's clear that parents everywhere want the best for their children and want them to enjoy as many opportunities as God permits. And in a materialistic world, the word "opportunity" is sometimes mistranslated as "stuff." Parents often think that if they give their children more stuff, their kids will be better off than they were. But that is not the case. As one father put it, "If you give a ten-year-old kid everything, after he graduates at twenty to twenty-five, what will his goal be?" A mother said, "Simplicity is important. That's what they remember, the little things."

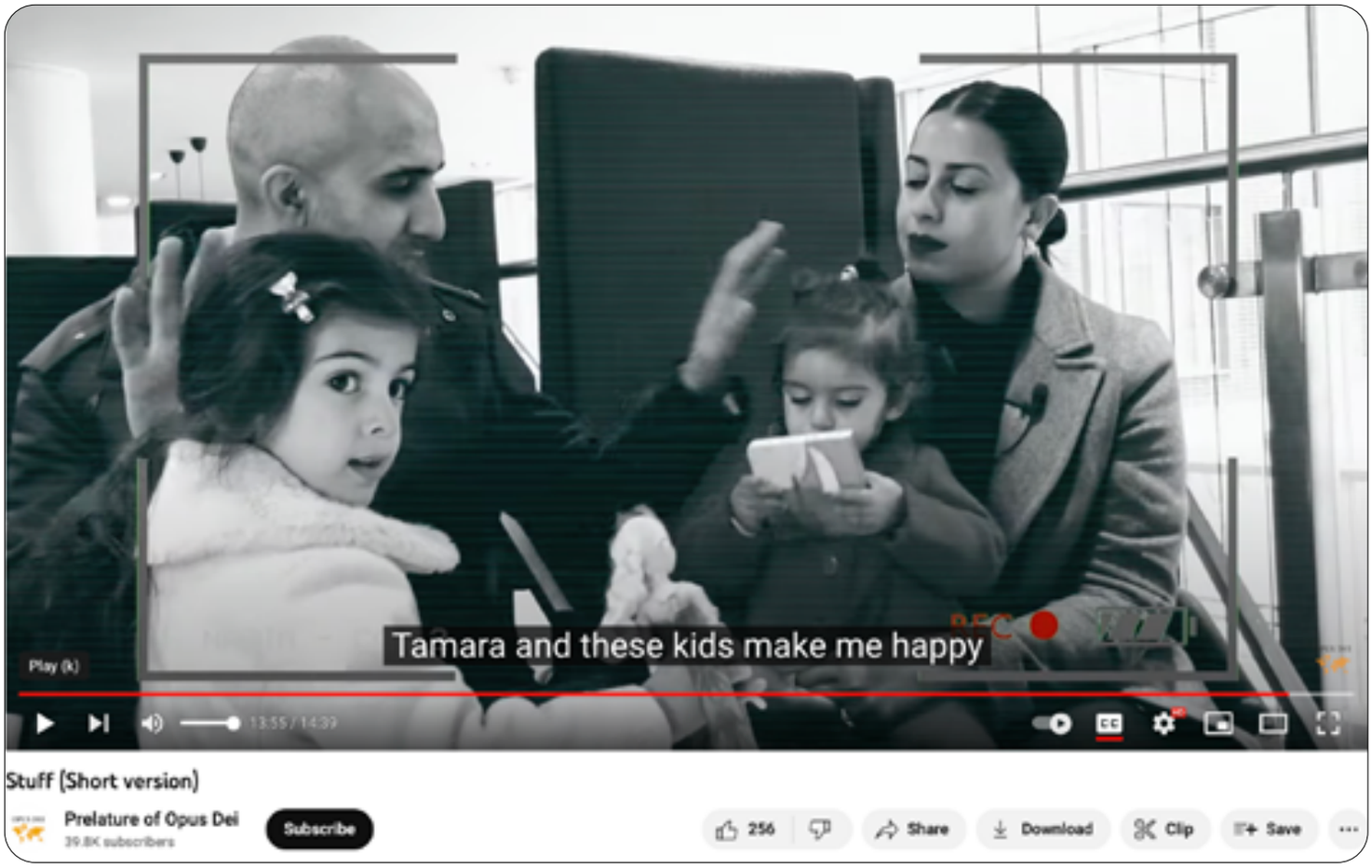
Each Lent, we're called to abstain from earthly pleasures that we so often convince ourselves are necessities. But by embracing detachment out of love for Christ, we teach ourselves and our children that the pursuit of virtue is far more valuable than the latest Xbox model.

generous, selfless adults.

While several of the couples found themselves imitating the patterns of their own parents, others did

As St. Josemaría says, "To be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart which is in love." (*Furrow*, 795)

~ Anna Livia Brady



To watch the video, **"Stuff": An Open Conversation**, go to https://opusdei.org/en/article/stuff-an-open-conversation/

Body Language and the Majesty of Christ

As Catholics, we believe in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist – that he is truly present there in his entirety – his body, blood, soul, and divinity. That means that Jesus – our Lord, our Savior, our *God* – is there, in the Eucharist, in the tabernacle, in church, and we are *physically in his presence* when we celebrate the Mass. As humans, we can become accustomed to events that occur repeatedly, but being physically with Jesus, our Lord, is something we should try never to become accustomed to. Imagine that you knew about Christ's true presence, but you'd never experienced it before. The first time you walked into a church and saw the lit tabernacle candle, you would be breathless. Over time, it can be difficult to sustain that kind of intense reaction, but the reality is time from home, and maybe even your wake-up time, so you can arrive a few minutes early and greet our Lord in a purposeful way.

Appropriate **posture** while in the pew is another detail of love and reverence we can give Jesus. Don't slouch or cross your legs, as if you were on the couch at home, watching a football game. Remember, we are in church to be with our Lord. Sit upright and use the **missalette** to follow along with the Mass to help you remain focused. When it's time to **kneel**, *do* that – don't "sneel" with a half-sit, half-kneel. Kneeling can be a sacrifice of love we give Jesus that underscores our reverence and respect.

still there.

The knowledge that Christ is right in front of us in the Eucharist should affect how we attend Mass – it should fill us with reverence and gratitude. Also, we are creatures with a body and a soul, so it is not enough for us to have simply an attitude of reverence at Mass. As a detail of love for our Lord, we can show that reverence with all of our being, including with our bodies – our posture, our gestures, our clothes.

Showing our love of Christ at Mass starts before we even arrive, when we choose our **attire**. We should dress like we are visiting the king of the universe, which we are, and not like we are going on a picnic. Sundresses can be accompanied with a sweater or shrug to cover the shoulders, and wear closed-toe shoes – they are more formal. Because mornings can be busy, it can be helpful to lay out church clothes the night before.

We show reverence upon entering the church with our **genuflection** while making the sign of the cross before we sit down. That is how we present ourselves to our Lord – "Here I am, Jesus. I have come to worship you." When people are distracted, their genuflection can look more like a stumble, and their sign of the cross can resemble swatting away a fly. Be intentional and focused when you genuflect, and greet Jesus with love in your own words. It's difficult to genuflect meaningfully when you arrive late and are trying to slide into the pew without attracting attention. Adjust your departure

Participate in the Mass. We aren't spectators who slip into our seats and then mentally check out to plan that night's dinner or the chores for the week. We celebrate with the congregation, singing and praying out loud in the call and response of the liturgy. You can make the prayers your own by mentally inserting "I" and "me" and "our family" into the texts.

Receiving **communion** is a high point of the Mass – we receive the creator of the universe *inside* us. In order that the family is able to receive Jesus in communion, we can make confession a priority, putting it on the calendar every Saturday. After we've received communion, Jesus remains physically inside us for about ten minutes, until our bodies start digesting the host. Take advantage of that time while Jesus is physically closer to us than anyone else in the world can be by thanking him for all the joys in your life – your family, the music at the Mass, the beauty of world, your parking spot in the shade… Remember that "eucharist" means "thanksgiving."

Keep in mind the majesty of Christ and that we are creatures with a body as well as a soul. That can help us intensify our reverence and show our love of God with more intention during the Mass. As we do that, we are modeling to our children how to show love with deeds, and not just with words, so they can develop lifelong habits of reverence and respect, and in the process, become Catholics with integrity.

~ Jane Reckart

National Eucharistic Revival

Photo: Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, Il.

Enrich your understanding of mortification in time for Lent and Eastertide

About the Holy Spirit

by Francisca Javiera del Valle

About the Holy Spirit was written to foster devotion to the Holy Spirit. Designed as an Eastertide spiritual aid, each of the ten days from the Ascension to Pentecost has a daily reflection, prayer, and resolution. Very simple, yet deep. The author, Francisca del Valle, was a simple and poor dressmaker, but is considered a great spiritual author. It would appear that some of her writing shaped St. Josemaría's spirit of mortification, especially little sacrifices in the ordinary opportunities of daily life. This is one of those books that I read over and over, and it is always by my bedside. One pearl of wisdom that really stuck with me: "Our holiness is in proportion to our mortification." ~ TE

Mornings for Moms

Science and Marriage

At the most recent Morning for Moms, we were fortunate to have Dr. Sonsoles de Lacalle speak on marriage from a neurobiological perspective. While the title at first seemed daunting to this writer, Dr. de Lacalle grounded with scientific fact a lot of what we know as Catholics about marriage and family life.

For example, conjugal intimacy for men decreases testosterone and aggression, which would be beneficial in a marriage as a man becomes a father to small children. For women, the effect is an increased desire for intimacy and bonding. In marriage, this makes sense to stabilize the home, but the effects outside of marriage can be seen in the heartbreak and confusion that is common in young women today.

Dr. de Lacalle also spoke about the scientific studies that support traditional family values. For instance, studies show that girls raised by their biological fathers reach puberty later than girls raised with men in the home who are not related to them. The later entry into puberty gives girls more time to mature before needing to deal with sexual issues. Additional studies show that children raised in a dysfunctional home with a mother and father do better in school than children who come from divorce.

In our modern culture where there is so much confusion about gender ideology and how to raise children, Dr. de Lacalle provided a much-needed boost to the Church's teaching on marriage and family. That our values were confirmed by scientific studies is not necessary for our faith, but it can be a helpful resource in discussions with our extended families and friends.

~ Nicole Tittman

evangeli.net

the daily Gospel for you and your family

As Christians, we aspire to know Christ better every day, and one of the best ways to do that is by reading the gospels, learning from eyewitnesses about Christ's words and actions while he was here on earth. The website *evangeli.net* is a fantastic tool to help you and your family access the gospel each day.

An international team of priests, now numbering 200, was inspired in 2003 by St. John Paul II's admonition to "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature **through internet**" (cf Mk 16:15). These priests comment on the daily gospel along two tracks, one for the general reader and one for families. Contemplating Today's Gospel provides the gospel of the day's Mass, along with a short meditation, followed by three quotes: from a saint or a Father of the Church, from a more recent Pope, and from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Today's Gospel for the Family presents an illustrated summary of the day's gospel, with a simple commentary for children, and includes practical advice. The child depicted in each gospel illustration visually represents St. Josemaría's advice to place ourselves in the scenes of the gospels and become one more person in the narrative.

Be a part the mission of *evangeli.net*, "to send the gospel by internet to all parts of the world, for helping the development of humankind." Subscribe to receive daily emails of the gospel commentaries, which are available in English, Spanish and several other languages.

To subscribe, go to https://evangeli.net/gospel

GIRLS' CLUB CORNER:

Have you been wondering if a girls' club may be the right fit for your daughter?

Club Moms

Stroll Down Memory Lane

Would you like to be more actively involved with your daughters and their friends, but aren't sure how to start? *WIT* caught up with several moms who have led girls' clubs in the past to glean their wisdom and learn about their experiences. The moms, **Susan**, **Julia**, and the team of **Lydia and Dora**, led their clubs for varying amounts of time, from six to ten to almost twenty years. That's about 35 years – plenty of experience for us to learn from! The girls ranged in age from 7 – 14, with high schoolers involved as counselors. Here are highlights of our conversation:

All four of my daughters were involved both as participants and as counselors. They loved the club, and they especially loved Pathfinder summer camp as an extension of the club.

I thought a club would be a great avenue for girls to receive character and human formation.

We most enjoyed working with the girls, seeing them have fun while learning skills and hobbies, as well as developing virtue and friendship.

Everyone, including the moms, had fun learning the basics of Salsa dancing, taught by Dora, and we also presented a unit on Personal Grooming and Health that the girls talked about for a long time.

Many of our activities were oriented toward taking care of the home, like table setting, cooking, and making beds – the moms especially valued that!

My daughters learned a lot from the formation provided in the club, but perhaps the most formative part was helping Mama clean up the house before and after club meetings, AND preparing the virtue talks when they were counselors – "No one learns more than the teacher!"

I enjoyed planning the talks and activities, and sharing the ideas and responsibilities with the moms as well as the girls.

Many of our activities were planned according to the season, like Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Mothers' Day, while other activities were geared toward social skills like etiquette and making conversation. We had classes on developing good study habits, and we scheduled a service project twice a year.

We organized our service projects around the corporal works of mercy, so, for example, for bury the dead, we put flags on veterans' graves, and for give drink to the thirsty, we had a lemonade stand and donated the

Our background was in fashion, so we had a program called, "Fashion with Style and Attractive Modesty."

One of my favorite

proceeds to the Pathfinder Camp Scholarship Fund.

themes was Around the World. We had presenters from numerous countries, including Japan, Ethiopia, Guatemala, and Sweden, and we served snacks that were typical foods from those regions.

The moms really appreciated the club, and I am still in contact with some of them. I can whole-heartedly say that running a girls' club was one of the most rewarding experiences I ever had. My hope is that wherever life leads the girls, they will want the same experience for their daughters and for all young girls.

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