

Mission Plan (2016-2020)
The Mission Center at the Shrine of St. Joseph
Stirling, NJ – 1 September 2016

History, Context and Vision

History

From its beginnings in 1924, Father Thomas Judge, founder of the Missionary Cenacle Family, saw the Shrine of St. Joseph as a haven, a place of prayer, rest and reflection for those seeking spiritual solace, guidance and renewed strength for the journey. Initially envisioned as a home for priests suffering from alcoholism, the mission expanded to include being a place of welcome and hospitality for everyone including first and second generation immigrant communities from the nearby cities. It also served as a place where missionaries from these same urban centers – both lay and religious – could come to be renewed and refreshed. In a sense, this same mission has continued to this day. It is the very *raison d'être* of the Shrine's existence today, almost one hundred years later.

As in those years, our world today in 2016 faces many challenges. In some ways, it is the "best of times". The United States now – as then – is the premier economic power of the world. At the same time, it is a nation increasingly secular in the sense that God or a belief in God's presence and action in our lives is only of secondary or tertiary importance if it exists at all. More than 30 million American Catholics have formally abandoned or rejected their faith – the majority of these are young people. The "roaring 20s" had a similar dynamic. There was massive post-war prosperity accompanied often by a weakening of the traditional religious mores and norms among the children of those, principally, immigrant families that constituted the nation. Increased prosperity, a growing sense of personal freedom, especially for women who had just received the right to vote in 1920, and a "can-do" spirit of American optimism marked the spirit of the times. But the Great Depression (1929) and World War II (1941) were just a few years away, experiences which challenged the spirit and heart of all. The Shrine was there for all of that.

Context

As then, so today these times present new realities that both challenge and bless us. As in the past, the Shrine will need to adapt to meet these challenges. But this adaptability is a strength, a blessing of the Holy Spirit who "leads and guide us to all truth" (*John 14:17*). Our prayer is that this mission plan, under the guidance of that same Spirit and "thinking with the Church" (*sentire cum ecclesia*), will help to better define and direct our response to the evolving questions and needs of today's world.

In this context, what will be the purpose, mission, *raison d'être* of the Shrine of St. Joseph as it approaches its centennial anniversary in 2024? As the Shrine prepares for this

important celebration, what will be the path forward for the Shrine? How will it look, feel, grow and develop over the next three to five years in anticipation of this hundred year anniversary?

The Shrine can never be a fortified haven for a select few. Rather, it must be a sacred site where people might experience personally and profoundly the holy light and warmth of God's Love in Jesus, "the light of the world." It is, truly, "a city built on a hill" but not for itself. Rather from this "hill," God's Love must "shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (*Matthew 5:14,16*). Its very reason for being is missionary. The Shrine exists to help fulfill the mission and prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us." It is in this unity -- this deepening sense of communion with God, all peoples, and with creation itself -- "that the world may believe that you have sent me!" (*John 17:21*)

Both Shrine and Mission Center

It is a shrine: a sacred place of encounter with God where faith is renewed, hope restored and love deepens. But it is also a mission center, reaching out in a special way to all those who feel most abandoned and marginalized socially, economically, spiritually. In the words of Father Judge, highlighted in the *Rule of Life* of the Missionary Cenacle, "we are to have 'an ardent zeal for the poor,' for 'those desolate in all things spiritual' and for victims of injustice. Charity urges us to action on behalf of justice as an integral part of announcing the coming of the kingdom" (#6). The *Constitution* of the Missionary Servants adds that "we labor to preach the Gospel, to correct injustices and to care for immigrants and minorities. We do this in response to the social teachings of the Church" (#6.1)

These two divine purposes – the sacred encounter and the response in loving service -- are intimately linked. For it is only those who have experienced and know God's Love can share it convincingly with others. Pope Francis summarizes this necessary dual movement of the Spirit so powerfully when he reminds us that

"Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption....Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?" (*Joy of the Gospel* #8)

St. John Paul II emphasized the same essential dynamic of the authentic Catholic experience. He wrote in 1983 that "every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission" (*Mission of the Redeemer* #90) or, in the words of Father Judge seventy years earlier, "every Catholic an apostle."

The implications of this are profound. Those who have truly encountered the living God in Christ become the "universal brother or sister," "bearing in themselves the Church's spirit, her openness to and interest in all peoples and individuals, especially the least and poorest of the brethren." This universal love thus overcomes "barriers and divisions of race, cast or ideology." It is a living "sign of God's love in the world - a love without exclusion or partiality" (St. John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer* #89).

This is the Church's mission and, of course, the mission of the Shrine of St. Joseph: to invite, encourage and help create "communio," the union of all God's People and all creation as sisters and brothers united in the heart of God. Strengthened by this love and peace, they can go to the world where God has placed them and be bearers of light and hope despite all the struggles and sacrifices involved. This is what Father Judge meant by the phrase, "every Catholic an apostle in the providence of their everyday lives!"

In Honor of St. Joseph

In all this, we honor St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, the husband of Mary, the patron of the universal Church. He is our model, our intercessor, and our guide. Like us, Joseph lived in a turbulent time of social, political and economic transition. Yet he simply and humbly went about his daily life, seeking to be faithful to God and to the mission confided to his care. "In the providence of his daily life," he protected, strengthened and defended the Holy Family so that Jesus, in the company of his mother, might grow "in wisdom, grace and age before God and all." This care allowed salvation and joy to come to the world in Christ.

This sacred mission of Joseph continues in and through us today. For, truly, the "church" is the "body of Christ." Like Joseph, we too are called to protect, strengthen and defend the dignity and goodness of that "body" against all assaults and violence. This "body of Christ," the church, is not limited to the baptized and initiated, but rather is "the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way" (*Ephesians 1:22f*). Every person has an inherent dignity that must be honored, respected and upheld. All creation is sacred and must be protected, strengthened and defended. This was the work of Joseph and is our work too.

We pray that the Shrine of St. Joseph will be such a place where people encounter the living God and bear witness by their lives to the presence of God's Love among us. As Father Judge stated so eloquently: "A safe and rather accurate measure of our love of God is our love of our neighbor." May this "measure" of the active and effective love of our neighbor, especially those most in need – lonely, abandoned, "on the edge" -- be the truest and most genuine "metric" of our realizing God's dream and vision for the Shrine of St. Joseph.

Year by Year with Grace: 2016-2020

2016

- Transitions in Recovery Pillar, now "Recovery, Healing and Health," expanding outreach of Recovery Retreats to other groups and institutions in region (August 2016)
- Plan prepared, reviewed and submitted by SAC (Shrine Advisory Council) and approved by ST General Council (July-September 2016)
- Presentation of approved Mission Plan (MP) to all communities participating at the Shrine (September 2016). Possibly with Fr. Mike Barth present.
- Meeting of SAC with Fr. Mike to discuss MP and its implementation (Sept 2016)
- 15th Anniversary - Tower of Remembrance (11 September 2016)
- Initial draft of St. Joseph Mosaic Chapel by architect presented (September 2016)
- Pillars and "Working Groups" (see below) meet individually to discuss and plan implementation of the MP (October 2016)
- Wider promotion of and preparation of Trinity House to local parishes and groups for retreats, workshops, etc. (Fall 2016)
- Begin "Eucharistic Thursdays" with adoration of Blessed Sacrament (Fall 2016)
- Initiation of Peace Garden, "Assisi Ecumenical Prayer for Peace" (October 2016)
- Identification of a "volunteer network" ("Shrine Ambassadors"). They could serve in a variety of capacities including, among many other possibilities, working the front desk, greeting retreatants, acting as tour guides for pilgrimages, hosting pillar events (registration, serving & preparing food, etc.). They can work across all the pillars and all the working groups and be a great resource for the Shrine.
- SAC, Pillars & Working Groups Discernment Retreat & Workshop: presentation of individual plans from entities, progress reports, discussion and appropriate adjustments (November 2016)
- "Founders' Day" Celebration (November 20-23): gathering of all the communities participating at the Shrine

2017

- Begin 9 month Apostolic Formation Program in English and Spanish (January 2017). This includes a curriculum of ecclesiological, missiological and pastoral material as well as aids for personal and communal prayer, regular spiritual direction and apostolic activity.
- Pillars and Working Groups begin to implement plans reviewed and approved in 2016
- Shrine Mission Advancement Working Group develops a "Shrine Partners in Mission" initiative to support works of Shrine. Such a group would develop ways to assure the long-term sustainability of the Shrine as well as its financial support and community with other missions of the Missionary Servants.

- Changes to Sunday Devotions to St. Joseph to include monthly healing service with Anointing (Lent 2017)
- New Youth/Young Adult Pillar sponsors 3-4 special events and/or retreats for youth
- Formal invitations to local clergy to use Shrine for personal days of prayer, etc. (January 2017)
- SAC meets bi-monthly to review MP, implementation, etc.
- Working Group heads and Pillar Servant Leaders meet bi-monthly for coordination and joint planning and implementation
- Increased participation in "Justice for Immigrants" project (Human Rights Pillar) and in Peaceworks as well as continuing and building on "Building Bridges to Peace" initiative (Peace and Reconciliation Pillar)
- All participating communities and groups at Shrine come together twice annually for prayer and celebration: Founders' Day (November) and Vigil of Pentecost (usually May)
- Both feast of St. Joseph (March 19) and St. Joseph the Worker (May 1) celebrated
- St. Joseph Mosaic Chapel completed (October-November 2017)

2018

- Pilgrimages promoted, renewed devotions and materials available on St. Joseph especially to immigrant communities in surrounding metro/urban areas not currently being reached
- Youth/Young Adult Pillar leaders more involved and committed to work and vision of Shrine: special support for and emphasis on reaching out to youth/young adults estranged from their faith. Retreats and formation programs for leaders of this Pillar to assure effectiveness in US pastoral and missionary context.
- Together with this, more programs for Youth/Young Adults relative to Peace & Reconciliation; Peace Garden completed
- Training program for spiritual guides in Missionary Cenacle Spiritual Exercises begins in both English and Spanish. The purpose of this program will be to specifically prepare people to lead the MC Spiritual Exercises as future guides and serve as spiritual guides in the Missionary Cenacle spirituality and traditions.
- Potential members of MCA (Missionary Cenacle Apostolate, lay branch of Missionary Cenacle Family) identified and invited to become candidates. This MCA formation program will be offered in both English and Spanish as well.

2019

- Group of 15 spiritual guides in Missionary Cenacle Spiritual Exercises (MCSE) prepared and commissioned. This will be done in conjunction with the Apostolic Spirituality Pillar.

- Invitation to enhanced potential audience of clergy and active lay leaders in surrounding metro areas to use Shrine as place for personal time of renewal and prayer. Structured program of MCSE and spiritual guidance could be offered.
- Continue to build on Shrine as place of encounter with God: sacraments readily available (Confession and Eucharist specifically), spiritual guidance, sponsored days of renewal, devotions, etc.
- Increased pilgrimages and days of renewal from surrounding metro area
- Program of Shrine Partners in Mission grows to enhance the mission.

2020

- Growing unity - "communion" - in Shrine community
- Numbers of St. Joseph pilgrimages and renewal days increase
- Growing number of local clergy and lay leaders using Shrine for time for personal spiritual renewal, spiritual guidance and availability of MCSE

The Mission of the Shrine of St. Joseph

**The Shrine of St. Joseph:
a sacred place,
where all,
especially those most on the margins of society,
are invited and welcomed
to encounter God,
be encouraged and renewed
and sent to bring
God's holy Love to the world.**

"Go forth and proclaim to the whole world the Good News!"

"I pray, Father, that they may be one... that they may be one in us!"

*"As often as you did it for one of these, the least of my sisters and brothers,
you did it for me!"*

Shrine Staff

- Director and Custodian (*Fr. Dennis Berry, S.T.*)
- Associate Director (*Ms. Peggy Lunsmann*)
- Assistant Custodian (*Fr. Enrique Arango, S.T.*)
- Missionary Cenacle Treasurer (*Fr. Aro Varnabas, S.T.*)
- Missionary Servant Community (*10 - 7 priests, 1 Brother, 1 transitional deacon*)
- Sacramental/Liturgical Ministry (*Frs. Conrad Schmitt, Ralph Frisch, Joseph Keenan, S.T.*)
- Recovery Ministry/Director, Winter Wheat House (*Br. Joseph Dudek, S.T.*)
- Worker Rights Advocate/OSHA Safety & Health Trainer (*Fr. Charley Piatt, S.T.*)
- Sister Servants Community (*7 Sisters: 5 on Shrine Staff*)
- Shrine Gift Shop (*Sr. Sophie, director; Sr. Sophia, asst. director*)
- Kitchen/Food Preparation (*Sr. Stephanie*)
- Household care & Sacristan – Trinity House (*Sr. Helenka*)
- Sacristan & Household Care – Shrine Residence & Chapel (*Sr. Krystyna*)
- Coordinator, Hispanic Ministry Outreach (*Mrs. Luz Bazalar*)
- Communications/Social Media (*Mr. Juan Lopez, MCA, Missionary Volunteer*)
- Maintenance and Custodial Care (*Mr. Joseph Adams, Missionary Volunteer*)
- Accounts Receivable (*Mrs. Catherine Bush*)
- Scheduling (*Mrs. Christine O'Connor*)
- Receptionists (*Mrs. Carol Cilino, Mrs. Maureen Zellweger, Mrs. Bea Makara, Ms. Linda Bianco*)
- Trinity House Coordinator (*Fr. Aro Varnabas, S.T.*)
- Program and Facilities Director (*Mr. Ray Makara*)

The Shrine Advisory Council

The SAC is composed of representatives from all the various elements that constitute the Shrine community. The principal role of the SAC is to offer counsel to the director regarding the various activities, programs and projects undertaken by the Shrine as well as the finances. The members serve for two year terms. The present membership is:

Peggy Oblack, *Co-chair*; Marie Santana, *Co-chair*

Members: Kevin Ashton, Luz Bazalar, Alfredo Bazalar, Catherine Brewer, Richard Byrnes, Jonathan Campos, Ken Crowell, Norma Farina, Grace Leysa, Peggy Lunsmann, Ray Makara, Carl Maulbeck, Mercedes Mejía, Kathy O'Leary, Michael St. Pierre, Sister Sophie, Sister Sophia, Patrick Thornton, Jim and Mary Ann Wisecup, Fathers Enrique Arango, Aro Varnabas, Charley Piatt, Dennis Berry, S.T.

The Shrine Pillars

Apostolic Spirituality: based on the missionary spirituality of the Shrine's founder, Fr. Thomas Judge, this pillar offers programs designed to help individuals grow as missionary disciples with a special focus on those most in need – the marginalized, the outcast, the outsider (*Carl Maulbeck, Chair; Fr. Enrique Arango, S.T.*)

Peace and Reconciliation: promotes programs of education and insight into peace issues, practical ways to build bridges of peace between various cultural, racial, social, religious, economic and ethnic groups as well as a spirituality of peace in one's daily life (*Kathy O'Leary, Chair; Fr. Aro Varnabas, S.T.*)

Human Rights: rooted in Catholic social teaching, this pillar emphasizes advocacy on behalf of people affected by issues of justice and human dignity such as immigration, workers' rights, education, food security, and poverty as well as forming collaborative ties with other Missionary Servant missions in the US, Mexico and Latin America (*Luz Bazalar, Chair, Fr. Charley Piatt, S.T.*)

Recovery, Healing and Health: offers retreats and programs that foster physical, spiritual and emotional health and healing for all but, especially, for those who do not have ready access to these resources and for those suffering from the effects of addictions (*Jim and Mary Ann Wisecup, Chairs; Br. Joseph Dudek, S.T.*)

The Shrine Working Groups

(These are groups or committees that work in conjunction with the staff and are standing or temporary, depending on their particular focus and mission)

Shrine Mission Advancement (*standing*): this group is responsible for developing, organizing and overseeing the development of funds necessary to maintain and promote the mission of the Shrine.

Shrine Youth and Young Adult Outreach (*standing*): conscious of the gifts and challenges of today's young people, this working group would work in coordination with all the pillars to assure youth and young adult participation, leadership and input as well as offering retreats and programs to provide tools and opportunities to live out their faith even more meaningfully in their daily lives. (*Dr. Michael St. Pierre, MCA; Fr. Aro Varnabas, S.T.*)

Shrine Outreach and Extension (*standing*): this group works with the Shrine staff and the chairs of the various pillars to assure that the Shrine is effectively informing and inviting all the potential audiences in the areas served by the Shrine. It assists in promoting the social media and internet presence of the Shrine as well. (*Mr. Juan Lopez, MCA; Fr. Enrique Arango, S.T.*)

Shrine Liturgical Ministry (*standing*): this group works with the Shrine staff to plan and prepare for all the liturgical seasons and major celebrations as well as offer counsel to the director regarding the liturgical experience at the Shrine. (*Alfredo Bazalar, Sr. Krystyna, Fr. Enrique Arango, S.T.*)

St. Joseph Mosaic Chapel (*temporary*): this group is charged with oversight for the planning, funding, and construction of the St. Joseph Mosaic Chapel.

Shrine Peace Garden & Peace Education Project (*temporary*): this group is charged with oversight for the planning, funding, construction of the Shrine Peace Garden. (*Kathy O'Leary, chair*)

Shrine of St. Joseph Goals (2016-2020)

Pastoral Objective I: to promote the devotion to St. Joseph in ways that support the spiritual life of men and women today.

Missionary Cenacle Context: "The Cenacle spirit is a prayerful spirit. We recognize that only a spiritual person can lead an apostolic life, and that we cannot be spiritual without prayer....We have a special devotion to Mary, Queen of the Missionary Cenacle, to Joseph, an unfailing and powerful friend." (*Rule of Life #17,21*)

We honor "the riches which the Holy Spirit pours forth in popular piety by his gratuitous initiative, 'popular spirituality' or 'the people's mysticism' It is 'a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church and a manner of being missionaries;' it brings with itself the grace of being a missionary, of coming out of oneself and setting out on pilgrimage: 'Journeying together to shrines and taking part in other manifestations of popular piety, also by taking one's children or inviting others, is in itself an evangelizing gesture'. Let us not stifle or presume to control this missionary power!" *Pope Francis*

- ***Goal #1: By 2020, to triple the number of people currently coming to the Shrine on pilgrimage, for days of renewal, personal visits, Sunday devotions, Eucharist, sacramental confession, peace and human rights, health/healing/recovery activities and provide them with resources enhancing and promoting the devotion to St. Joseph as a model, guide and intercessor for the 21st century .***

Pope Francis on the importance and value of "popular spirituality": "I think of the steadfast faith of those mothers tending their sick children who, though perhaps barely familiar with the articles of the creed, cling to a rosary; or of all the hope poured into a candle lighted in a humble home with a prayer for help from Mary, or in the gaze of tender love directed to Christ crucified. No one who loves God's holy people will view these actions as the expression of a purely human search for the divine. They are the manifestation of a theological life nourished by the working of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5)." (*Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel #124-25*)

Pastoral objective II: to prepare men and women as missionary disciples to accompany others on their spiritual journey, assisting them in growing more fully as missionary disciples in their daily lives.

Missionary Cenacle Context: "Our specific mission is the preservation of the faith in those areas and among those people who are spiritually neglected and abandoned, especially the poor. Our chief effort is to develop a missionary spirit in the laity with the goal that every Catholic be an apostle." (*Rule of Life #5*)

"Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit... We need to practice the art of listening..., an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur.... Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives." *Pope Francis*

- **By 2020, to have at least 25 people trained as spiritual guides to accompany and direct people in a structured program of growth in an apostolic spirituality for at least 50 people per year with a special focus on all current and potential pastoral and apostolic leaders.**

"One who accompanies others has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without.... Someone good at such accompaniment does not give in to frustrations or fears. He or she invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel. Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow. Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization....Missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples." (*Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel #172-73*)

Pastoral objective III: to seek ways for the Shrine to be both personally and corporately an effective "power for good" in areas and aspects of life 'related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good.'

Missionary Cenacle Context: "We are to have an ardent zeal for the poor, for those desolate in all things spiritual and for victims of injustice. Charity urges us to action on behalf of justice as an integral part of announcing the coming of the kingdom." (*Rule of Life #6*)

"It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven...It follows that Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life 'related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good.' Consequently, no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society." *Pope Francis*

- **By December 1, 2016, the leaders of the four Pillars and associated Working Groups will develop a plan on how the Shrine, in collaboration with existing groups and agencies, can be an effective agent for change over the next four years (2017-2020) in these three areas of pressing need: 1) the rights of immigrants, including refugees and the victims of human trafficking; 2) health and safety conditions for workers; 3) recovery from addictions.**

"An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.... The Church 'cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.' All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ." (*Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel #182-183*)