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MISSION SAN JUAN CAPSITRANO EMPLOYEE HONORED F OR 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Rafael Gutierrez, Maintenance Technician at Mission San Juan Capistrano, celebrated his 40th year of service at the Mission on September 1st, 2009.

Rafael was 21 in 1969, living in San Juan Capistrano and attending church at the Mission San Juan Capistrano Parish when he started working as a custodian and groundskeeper at the suggestion of one of the priests.

Over the next 40 years, Rafael has performed jobs as varied as custodian, groundskeeper, caretaker/security, maintenance, bell ringer, and grave digger.

"Rafael has brought such a gentle sense of duty to his role at the Mission," said Mechelle Lawrence-Adams, Executive Director of the Mission. "He brings a work ethic that is unwavering and a willingness to do whatever it takes. He never complains about the workload or changes along the journey. He is like the Mission in that he has perspective, longevity, and has persevered in good and tough times. The Mission is better off having had him work here."

Rafael married his wife Socorro, going on 37 years, and had all four of his children baptized in the key building of the Mission, Serra Chapel. Rafael and Socorro even lived in a house where the Basilica now stands.

On Tuesday September 1, 2009, the Mission hosted a **surprise celebration** for Rafael, which included his supervisors taking him to breakfast in the morning. At 9:15 a.m. the Mission staff and fourth grade Mission Parish School Class stood at the corner of Camino Capistrano and Ortega Highway, chanted Rafael's name as he crossed the street and returned to the Mission, and then walked him back into the Mission to celebrate with cake.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and living museum that boasts of not only sensational exhibits and fine art pieces, but the beautiful and historic buildings that house them. Founded November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra, the Mission was the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year, over 54,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience as part of their California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported through generous contributions by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$5 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.

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