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CONTACT: Joe Haakenson
JUVE Creative, Inc.
(714) 841 9600
joe@juvecreative.com

ST. JOSEPH'S DAY AND THE RETURN OF THE SWALLOWS CELEBRATION

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA. – March 7, 2011 – Mission San Juan Capistrano's world-renown celebration marking the onset of spring and the return of the swallows is almost here.

St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows will take place on Saturday, March 19 at historic Mission San Juan Capistrano, an all-day festival filled with fun, food, song and dance for all to enjoy, while recognizing the Mission's rich history.

The swallows migrate to Goya, Argentina every October, and return to their spring and summer home in San Juan Capistrano each March. The swallows celebration began nearly 100 years ago when Mission Pastor Father St. John O'Sullivan observed that the birds' return roughly coincided with St. Joseph's Day on the church calendar, March 19. The celebration has achieved international prominence since then.

"People from all around the world come to the town of San Juan Capistrano to share in the rich tradition that defines St. Joseph's Day at Mission San Juan Capistrano," said Mechelle Lawrence-Adams, Executive Director of the Mission.

"We are grateful for our swallows history as a means of welcoming the public and sharing this incredible historic resource with them and invite the public to take part in all that we have to offer — dances, entertainment, bell ringing, exhibits, and the opportunity to connect with family and friends."

The celebration begins with the ringing of the historic bells followed by performances from Renee Bondi, Mission Parish School, Ballet Folklorico and Mariachi Capistrano. Visitors can go to the historic bell wall or campanario to hear authentic Acjachemen Prayer songs from Tushmal Singers just before the day's official noon bell ringing. The bells will be rung at 10 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.

In the Central Courtyard, award-winning and Native American teacher Jacque Nunez will carry out her highly engaging Native American story telling performance. Later, the Mission's docents host "Are You Smarter Than a California 4th Grader?" followed by dance performances by a Native American dance duo and La Sole Flamenco.

The day also features a special afternoon lecture by Dr. Charles R. Brown, a professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Tulsa who has studied swallows since age 11. Dr. Brown is considered the preeminent expert on swallows and their migration patterns. This year marks his second annual lecture.

On Saturday, March 26 the Mission continues to recognize the meaning of the swallows to Capistrano by participating in the Fiesta de las Golondrinas and the annual Swallows Day Parade festivities by offering mariachi music immediately following the parade. The parade begins at 11 a.m., and the Mission is open throughout the day offering tours and other daily hands-on activities. The streets downtown will be closed as early as 10 a.m. and reopen as late as 3 p.m. Visitors can view the parade schedule and available parking at swallowsparade.com.

FULL SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 19: St. Joseph's Day

9:30-9:55 a.m. — Front Courtyard: Mariachi Capistrano

9:55-10 a.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Welcome & Introduction: Executive Director, Mechelle Lawrence-Adams

10-10:05 a.m. — Bell Wall: Ringing of the Historic Bells in Honor of St. Joseph and the Swallows Return

10:05-10:15 a.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Renée Bondi and Mariachi Capistrano

10:15-11 a.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Mission Parish School Student Performances

11-11:30 a.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Ballet Folklorico

11:30 a.m.-noon — Central Courtyard Stage: Mariachi Capistrano

11:45-11:55 a.m. — Bell Wall: Tushmal Singers: Ajachemen Prayer Songs

11:55 a.m.-noon — Bell Wall: Official Bell Ringing Ceremony

12-12:05 p.m. — Bell Wall: Ringing of the Historic Bells in Honor of St. Joseph and the Swallows Return

12:05-12:15 p.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Renée Bondi and Mariachi Capistrano

12:15-1 p.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Journeys to the Past Native American Stories with Jacque Nunez

12:30-1 p.m. — Soldiers Barracks Gallery: Docent Society: Are You Smarter than a California 4th Grader?

1-1:15 p.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: Native American Dance Performance

1-1:45 p.m. — Soldiers Barracks Gallery: Living History Volunteers: Historic Fashion Show

1:15-2 p.m. — Central Courtyard Stage: La Sole Flamenco

2-3 p.m. — Soldiers Barracks Gallery: Swallows Lecture by Dr. Charles R. Brown, Univ. of Tulsa

3-3:05 p.m. — Bell Wall: Ringing of the Historic Bells in Honor of St. Joseph and the Swallows Return

Saturday, March 26: Swallows Parade Day

11 a.m.-2 p.m. — Downtown San Juan Capistrano: Mission San Juan Capistrano Parade Float, featuring Mariachi Capistrano

2-4 p.m. — Front Courtyard: Mariachis Perform Inside Mission Courtyard

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the “Jewel of the Missions,” Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres’ quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County’s only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County’s only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.

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. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.

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