FIESTA DE LAS GOLONDRINAS

OVERALL SPONSOR

ST. JOSEPH’S DAY AND RETURN OF THE SWALLOWS TO SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

Mission San Juan Capistrano, under the leadership of Father St. John O’Sullivan (1874-1933) began celebrating the return of the swallows on St. Joseph’s Day, March 19th in the early 1930s.

THE LEGEND OF THE SWALLOWS

One day, while walking through town, Fr. O’Sullivan saw a shopkeeper, broomstick in hand, knocking down the conically shaped mud swallow nests that were under the eaves of his shop. 

The birds were darting back and forth through the air squealing over the destruction of their homes.

“What in the world are you doing?” O’Sullivan asked.

“Why, these dirty birds are a nuisance and I am getting rid of them!” the shopkeeper responded.

“But where can they go?” “I don’t know and I don’t care,” he replied, slashing away with his pole. “But they’ve no business here, destroying my property.”

O’Sullivan then said, “Come on swallows, I’ll give you shelter. Come to the Mission. There’s room enough there for all.”

The very next morning, Father O’Sullivan discovered the swallows busily building their nests outside Father Junipero Serra’s Church.

The arrival of cliff swallows to Mission San Juan Capistrano every March 19th is world renowned. Swallows migrate 6,000 miles from Goya, Argentina to San Juan Capistrano in groups of up to several hundreds, foraging as they move.

The number of cliff swallows nesting at the Mission has declined gradually over the years as urbanization simply gave the birds more options to build their nests. The Mission continues its quest to encourage the cliff swallows to nest again at the historic landmark like they had for decades. Cliff swallows expert, Dr. Charles R. Brown, a professor of biological sciences at the University of Tulsa, began an experiment at the Mission in efforts to lure the birds back to nest.

The newest phase of the experiment, the Nest Reenactment Exhibit, which necessitated the construction of man-made nests in a colony-like setting, showcases how the nests might have looked, as well as serving the secondary purpose of attracting new families to nest at the Mission.

Join us at Mission San Juan Capistrano for this historic celebration full of tradition, community, and festivity on Sunday, March 19 from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. marking the return of our famous swallows to Capistrano and the coming of spring – a time of renewal and rebirth. The annual celebration includes “Swingin’ with the Swallows” swing concert, tribute to our Nations Veterans with a flyover by WWII planes, ringing of the historic bells, community performances, special guest presentation on cliff swallows and more.

Tickets are $15 for Adults and $6 for Children (ages 4-11). Purchase tickets online today at www.missionsjc.com/swallows or by visiting the Gate House.

MARCH 19TH
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Designed to enhance your tour experience like never before.
Every visitor who downloads the app will receive FREE car bombs!
While supplies last

SAVE THE DATE
SWALLOWS DAY PARADE
Saturday, March 25, 2017 - 11:00 a.m.
Hosted by San Juan Capistrano Fiesta Association swallowsparade.com

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