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**ST. JOSEPH'S DAY AND RETURN OF THE SWALLOWS CELEBRATION  
TO INCLUDE FREE CONCERT, NEW EFFORTS TO LURE SWALLOWS**

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (Feb. 24, 2016) -- Mission San Juan Capistrano will host its world-renowned St. Joseph's Day and Return of the Swallows celebration on Saturday, March 19 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The Mission's annual celebration of St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows, a tradition recognizing the annual return of the famous cliff swallows to Capistrano, was started by Father St. John O'Sullivan in the 1920s and is carried out each year on March 19th.

The day begins with St. Joseph's Day Mass at Mission Basilica beginning at 8:30 a.m. Mission doors open at 9 a.m. with the daily ringing of the historic bells in honor of Saint Junipero Serra.

This year's celebration includes something new: An afternoon concert "Swingin' with the Swallows" featuring the "Swing Cats Big Band" from 2-4 p.m. The concert is free with paid admission to the festival.

There also will be ringing of the historic bells, live mariachi music, community presentations, a special presentation on the cliff swallows by Dr. Charles Brown (1 p.m. at Great Stone Church), dance performances, community groups, local food vendors, and more.

The celebration also is highlighted by the unveiling of Phase II in the Mission's quest to encourage the cliff swallows to nest again at the historic landmark like they had for decades. The number of cliff swallows

nesting at the Mission declined gradually over the years as urbanization simply gave the birds more options to build their nests.

Dr. Brown, a cliff swallows expert and professor of biological sciences at the University of Tulsa, implemented Phase I -- the Vocalization Project -- in 2012, in which recorded courtship calls were played through a speaker on the Mission grounds to lure the cliff swallows that were flying overhead.

While Phase I continues, Phase II -- the Swallows Nest Reenactment -- involves using a stationary nest wall arch near the Great Stone Church. According to Dr. Brown, anecdotal evidence suggests the vocalization playbacks at least occasionally bring in passing cliff swallows that fly over the site but do not stay to nest. The goal of Phase II is to increase the stimulus being presented to these passing birds by creating the nest wall arch. Research has shown that cliff swallows prefer to re-use existing nests where possible, as this saves time and energy in building a nest from scratch.

Once the birds notice the plaster nests and begin using them, spillover or additional settling birds likely will lead to them building nests on the walls of the Ruins of the Great Stone Church. And once nests are built, the artificial wall arch would no longer be needed.

"Dr. Brown's recommendation is not only an extension of his previous experiment we've been carrying out for the past few years, but also a great opportunity to re-introduce generations to the past," said Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director of Mission San Juan Capistrano. "This reenactment allows us to show people the scope and extent of what it was like when the swallows were nesting here in abundance.

"While it's an experiment rooted in science, it's also an opportunity to celebrate history and to promote the historic journey of the swallows' return from Goya, Argentina. We are grateful Dr. Brown is helping us make a difference in preserving the past, as well as celebrating it."

The wall arch is made of a wood frame and adobe and/or plaster. The actual nests are made from molds and dental plaster, each nest weighing between one and two pounds.

It is about 15 feet at its highest height of the arch and about 15 feet wide, allowing for approximately 40 nests, about 16 centimeters in diameter, stacked along the top of the perch.

Dr. Brown will be available for interviews at the Mission on St. Joseph's Day.

St. Joseph's Day tours include the seasonal "Swallows Walk & Talk" tour, which includes history of the swallows; Saint Serra's Legacy: History tour of Mission church sites; docent-guided interpretive station tours where Mission docents stand ready to tell stories of Mission history at the Serra Chapel, the Ruins of the Great Stone Church and other stations throughout the Mission; and the audio tour in six languages.

Tickets for St. Joseph's Day and Return of the Swallows celebration are available for purchase online now -- [missionsjc.com](http://missionsjc.com) -- or at the Gate: \$15 adults, \$6 for kids (4-11) and tickets are free for Active Mission Preservation Society Members.

***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 18<sup>th</sup> 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); \$6 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](http://www.missionsjc.com).*