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MISSION CELEBRATES ST. JOSEPH'S DAY AND RETURN OF SWALLOWS

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA (March 22, 2012) -- More than three thousand visitors enjoyed St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows celebration on Monday, March 19, at Mission San Juan Capistrano, reveling under blue skies and a smattering of cliff swallows who made the annual trip north from Argentina.

The day's highlights included the Ringing of the Historic Bells, live mariachi music, community presentations, Mission Basilica School performances, San Juan Elementary performances and the history of St. Joseph's Day and Swallows Legend.

Dr. Charles Brown, a renowned cliff swallows expert who traveled from Oklahoma where he is a professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Tulsa, spoke to a standing-room only crowd in the Soldiers Barracks.

"We were honored to host visitors from all over the world as they returned to the Mission in time for the annual return of the swallows to the Capistrano Valley," said Mechelle Lawrence-Adams, Executive Director of the Mission. "The event was crucially important with staff focused on retaining the meaning of

the day, and sharing with the world the vibrant and living history that is showcased at and in this landmark of Mission San Juan Capistrano. This year's Swallows Day was especially meaningful with the significance of the historic bell ringing combined with the tradition of the dances and festivities, lectures and so much more."

While many in attendance looked to the sky in the hopes of spotting the revered cliff swallows, Dr. Brown offered an idea that he feels will attract more swallows from the creeks where they have been re-establishing their nests as a result of the seismic stabilization of the Great Stone Church. Using strategically placed speakers on the Mission grounds, "the hope is to play calls and songs that will attract the interest and notice of passing cliff swallows," Dr. Brown said. "Once they see this site, there's a good chance they will be interested. It's a matter of attracting them in; we know they are overhead and in the area."

Dr. Brown said this process has worked with the Purple Martin, which is another type of swallow.

"The recording would be courtship songs that males use to attract females," Dr. Brown said. "And males would be attracted too because they are very social birds. A systematic program of playing it a few times a day, when the weather is good and during the times they would be foraging, I think there's a good chance they will come in."

Lawrence-Adams likes the idea.

"We appreciate Dr. Brown's recommendations and will enact a temporary program to give it a try and experiment with a vocalization program to see if that can do anything to redirect the swallows' migration pattern, specifically to the Mission," Lawrence-Adams said. "Recognizing, of course, they already come to the San Juan Capistrano Valley."

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.