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

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (March 22, 2013) -- More than two thousand visitors enjoyed St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows celebration on Tuesday, March 19, at Mission San Juan Capistrano, enjoying the traditional, historic and festive atmosphere.

"It was a great day to celebrate our heritage and founding," said Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director of Mission San Juan Capistrano. "This year was marked by the installation of a new pope on St. Joseph's Day, as well as the celebration of Father Serra's 300th anniversary of his birth. Tradition rang loud with our bells celebrating the past and setting a tone of welcoming hospitality, not only for the birds, but for our guests from all over the world."

Visitors were able to enter the Mission grounds by walking through the beautifully renovated Gate House. The day's highlights included morning mass in Mission Basilica, crowning the King and Queen of the official Royal Court, 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, gave a lecture in the Soldiers Barracks and talked about the Mission's continuing efforts to lure more swallows to the birthplace of Orange County, including the use of a "Swallows Vocalization" project he developed.

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); \$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.