



Women Seeking Holiness • Opus Dei Activities for Women • News, updates and resources Bringing God Into Daily Life

Avient 2024 | ENWLETTER NO. 261 | The Quarterly Newsletter of Walnut Grove

From the Prelate Opus Dei Formation from Rome

In honor of the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12, we present some excerpts from a homily given by the Prelate of Opus Dei, Mgr. Fernando Ocáriz, in the Basilica of Guadalupe during his 2022 pastoral visit to Mexico.

"Uniting ourselves with St. Josemaría's prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1970, we place in her hands all the needs of the world, of the Church, of the Work, of each one of us; all the joys and all the sorrows. We want this prayer of ours to be an expression of a living faith; a more lively faith that is the foundation of a more sure hope and a more intense charity. How consoling are the words that Our Lady of Guadalupe addressed to St. Juan Diego, and that she continues to address to each one of us today: 'Listen and understand, my son, my youngest son, that which frightens and afflicts you

is of no account; let not your heart be troubled. Am I not here, I who am your mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Aren't you resting on my lap? Nothing should take away our peace and joy.

"...Let us strive each day to give our ordinary life an ever-new apostolic meaning... and always, despite our weakness, with the joy of the daughters and sons of God, with the motherly protection and help of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"...As St. Josemaría used to do, I extend my hand asking for your prayers, through the intercession of Our Lady of Tepeyac, for me and for my intentions, which are those of the Church, those of the Work, and those of each one of you."



upcoming events: women

Click the underscored activity title for links to more information

Monthly Recollections
Pasadena • Orange County
Long Beach • Camarillo • San Diego
Las Vegas • Phoenix, AZ

Faith & Reason Class
January 4 • February 1 • March 1, 2025
1:30p - 3:00p • Beverly Cultural Center

Retreats
2025 retreat details
coming soon at the Walnut Grove Website

Mornings for Moms
"The Power of the Story - Nurturing Your Child's Moral Imagination"
Speaker: Jennifer Nieva
Saturday, January 11, 2025 • 10:00a - 12:00p

daughters

* Saturdays, 1:00p - 3:30p • Ater Study Center

6th & 7th Grades Creative Cuisine*

8th Grade Stitch & Design*

9th & 10th Grades Stepping up*

11th & 12th Grades College Prep*

College Age Women Catholic in College

Both programs teach practical skills while instilling confidence and a spirit of service.
Mentoring, discussion forums, and skill development
Guidance in applying for college and preparing for college life.
Meditations, retreats, pilgrimages, and more at Westfield Residence near the main UCLA campus.

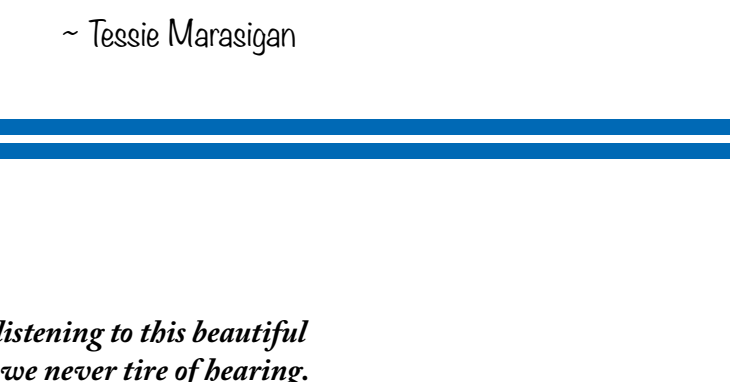
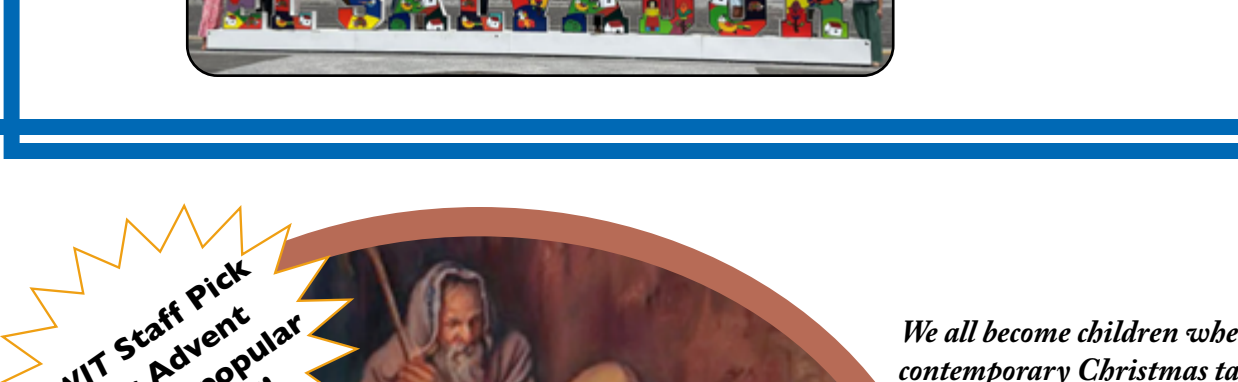
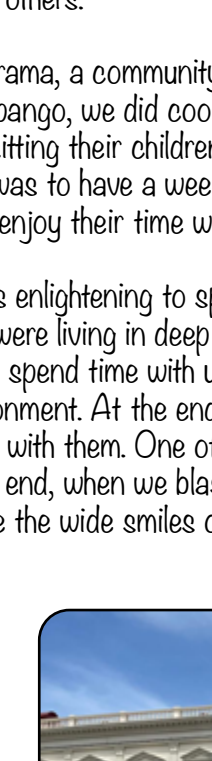
SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday, June 21, 2025, 10a
St. Josemaría Feast Day Mass
Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
50th anniversary of St. Josemaría's death

Add to your calendar: Seven Sundays Devotion to St. Joseph

Starts February 2

St. Joseph's Feast Day, March 19, is just a few months away. A beautiful way to honor this courageous saint is to pray the Seven Sundays devotion to St. Joseph, a custom of the Church. The devotion highlights the seven sorrows and seven joys of St. Joseph, enabling us to accompany him through the difficulties and wonders of loving and protecting the Holy Family.

The devotion traditionally begins on the seventh Sunday before St. Joseph's Feast Day, which, in 2025, falls on February 2. Add it to your calendar now, so you'll be ready when the devotion starts. Starting in January, you can subscribe through the St. Josemaría Institute to receive weekly prayers and readings for the devotion through email. You can also download a [free pdf](#) containing the prayers and readings. Take advantage of this opportunity to grow together with your family in devotion to St. Joseph through your observance of his Seven Sundays.



Smiles and Service in El Salvador

Ten of us high school girls from Southern California travelled recently to El Salvador for an eye-opening experience exploring a new country while serving its citizens. Led by Lucy Iglesias and Stephanie Mascari from Ater Study Center, we joined a larger group of El Salvadorian girls on a service project.

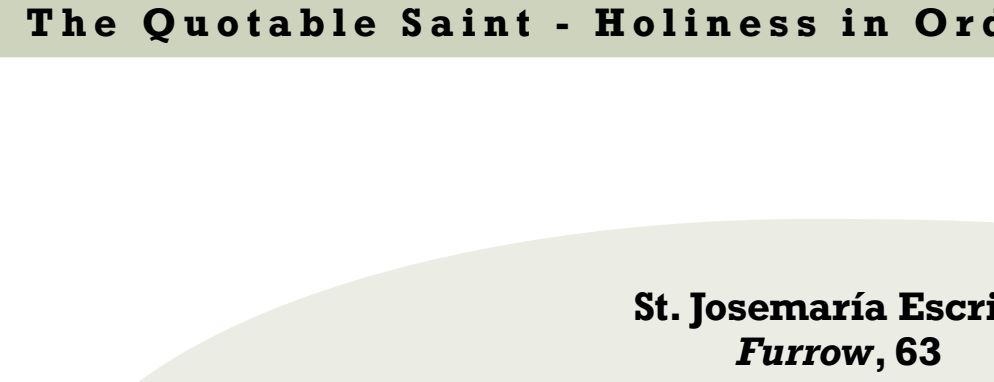
Every morning, we started with Mass, beginning the day with a cheerful attitude and a spirit of service. Having daily Mass, meditations, and opportunities for confession helped us remember that we were there to serve others.

At Sarama, a community center of Opus Dei located in the town of Soyapango, we did cooking, crafts and art with local women, while also babysitting their children and painting a mural in the nearby park. The goal was to have a week of relaxation and fun with the ladies, helping them enjoy their time with different activities.

It was enlightening to spend time with the ladies of Soyapango. Although they were living in deep poverty, they were so joyful. They loved to laugh, spend time with us, and enjoy each other's company in the warm environment. At the end of the week, they were grateful for the time we spent with them. One of my favorite times with the ladies was at each day's end, when we blasted music and danced with them. It was great to see the wide smiles on their faces as they loosened up and had fun.

While the ladies were grateful for our service, in fact, spending time with them all week was an incredible learning experience for us. It taught us to truly think beyond our own comfort and desires to experience the joy of serving others. El Salvador was an amazingly fulfilling experience brimming with friendship, laughter, and the joy of serving.

- Tessie Marasigan



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Again! Again! Again! "The Shepherd Boy's Tale" Returns!

Looking for a Christmas classic to add to the playlist that will enrich everyone this season? Then head to YouTube for Fr Joseph Evans' gentle reading of his own tale of Jesus' birth, driven straight to your heart by his humble South London accent. **"The Shepherd Boy's Tale,"** told from the point of view of a child, places the spirituality of this most beautiful Christian feast squarely in the truth of Jesus Christ and his love for us. It's a gift to the ears and soul that you'll be happy your children have on "speaker" and "repeat" this holiday season.

Be sure to also check out the podcast *10 Minutes with Jesus* for inspiration all year 'round!

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A Treasury of Indulgences for the Cooperators of Opus Dei

The members of Opus Dei and Catholic cooperators can gain several plenary and partial indulgences every year. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions... (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1471)

An indulgence is partial or plenary, depending on whether it frees part or all of the temporal punishment due to sins. To gain the plenary indulgence assigned to a specific day, it is necessary to have sacramental confession, receive Holy Communion, pray for the intentions of the Roman Pontiff, and be completely detached from all deliberate venial sin. These conditions can be met a few days before or after the indicated date. It is only possible to earn one plenary indulgence per day. With a single sacramental confession and a single Eucharistic communion and a prayer for the intentions of the Pope, only one plenary indulgence is gained.

The Prelate grants indulgences to the cooperators of Opus Dei, on certain solemnities, feasts, and memorials of the whole Church, and on dates related to the history of the Work, as follows:

- Plenary indulgences, under the usual conditions:
 - On the date of their appointment as a cooperator
 - February 14: Anniversary of the beginning of the apostolate of Opus Dei with women; of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross; and feast of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Fair Love
 - March 19: St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

- June 29: Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles
- September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- September 29: Sts. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels
- October 2: Anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei; Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels
- December 27: St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
- Whenever they attend a spiritual retreat lasting at least three days;
- At the hour of death, if they have habitually recited some prayers; or if, in that moment, they fulfill the conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence

Partial indulgences:

- When they attend a Circle for cooperators
- On the day they attend a day of evening of recollection
- Whenever they recite an aspiration while kissing the wooden Cross in the oratories of Opus Dei
- Whenever they say a special invocation during their work
- Whenever they say an aspiration while carrying out the spiritual work of charity or apostolate by which they cooperate in the works of the Prelature

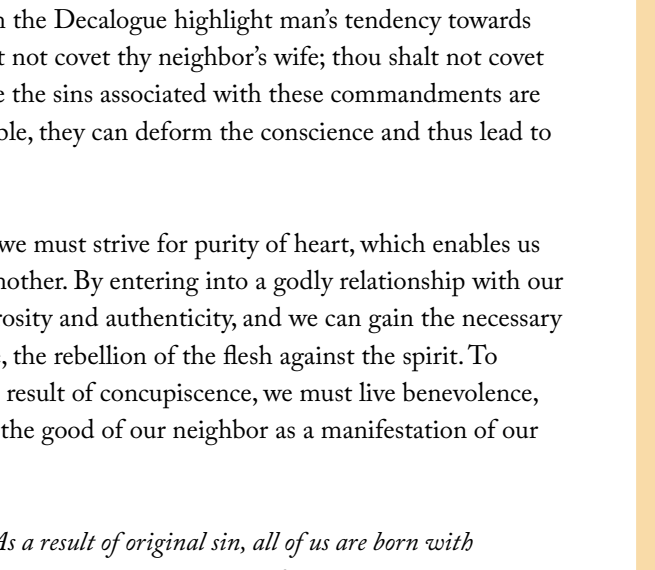
In addition, the cooperators share in the spiritual benefits of the Prelature and, at their death, in the suffrages which Opus Dei offers for its deceased. Also, all members of the Work pray for the cooperators every day.

- Jazmir Fajardo

Thank you, Lord, for our cooperators; please pour your graces upon them abundantly!

The Quotable Saint - Holiness in Ordinary Life

St. Josemaría Escrivá Furrow, 63



Christmas time. You write: "Together with the holy expectation of Mary and Joseph, I also impatiently wait the Child. How happy I shall feel at Bethlehem! I have a feeling that I won't be able to contain this joy without bounds. Yes! But with Him, I also want to be born anew."
— I hope you really mean what you say!

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love

Whispers in Stone: How Our Lady Speaks To Us Through Her Image

The beautiful statue of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love sculpted by Cody Swanson abounds in meaning and symbolism. During the ceremony in June of this year when the Prelate of Opus Dei, Mgr. Fernando Ocáriz, blessed the statue, Cody explained to those present the richness of the statue's iconography.

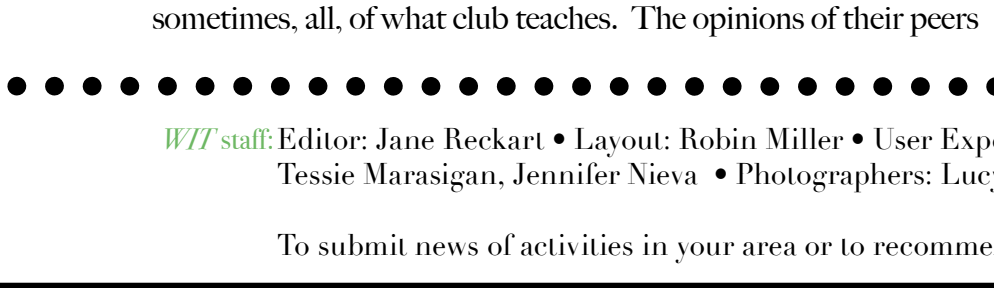
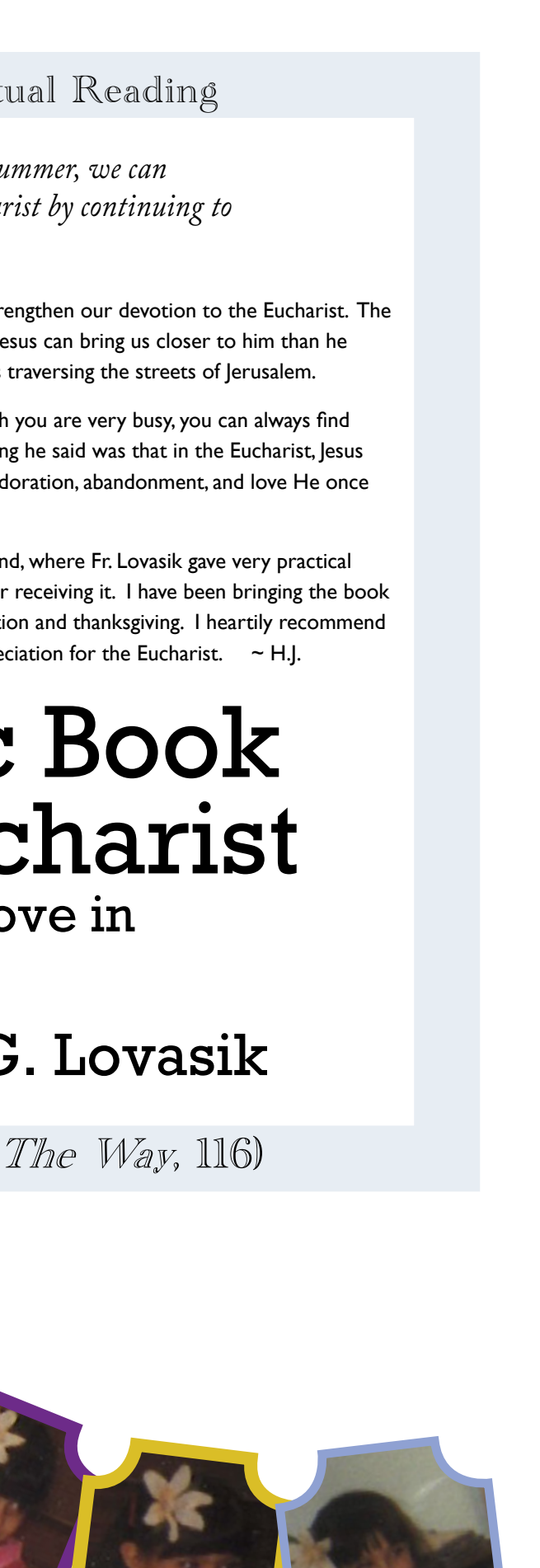
Cody crafted the statue in a classical style. His goal was to create a work that is universal, that would appeal to everyone, not only throughout the world, but throughout time as well. The statue depicts a young mother who is "warm, vibrant, and inviting," as Cody says, welcoming us to join in the love that she shares with her Son. While Mary has the honor of being the Mother of God, Cody portrays her full of maternal affection, affection that is accessible to all. Her flowing hair and the natural movement suggested by her pose make her feel very lifelike. Her outer robe is open as she balances her Son on her hip, making it easier for us to imagine her preparing dinner and caring for the Holy Family while holding Him.

One very touching detail is that Our Lady is offering us a rose, a symbol of Christ's Passion, with the thorns on the stem of the rose vividly reminding us that suffering is a part of love. With that rose and its thorns, she invites us to unite ourselves to Christ's suffering, while also encouraging us to persevere along our own path of suffering, knowing that Love triumphs in the end. We notice another elegant detail on her other hand. Our Lady is wearing a wedding ring, the symbol of the unity of marriage. With the ring, she highlights the importance of the commitment of marriage, a lifelong commitment that is necessary for marriages to flourish and families to thrive.

The rich symbolism of the statue extends to Cody's portrayal of the Christ Child carried by Mary. The right hand of the Child Jesus is raised in blessing, evoking his divine nature, while his left hand is lovingly resting on the hand of his Mother, demonstrating with that tender detail his Human nature. The Child is portrayed as a toddler - we can imagine him wiggling out of his Mother's arms to "go to Daddy; go to Daddy," as soon as he hears St. Joseph enter the room. A heartwarming fact - when Cody started initial work on the Fairest Love statue four years ago, his youngest son was the model for the Child Jesus. Now that the statue is finished, his son has grown considerably and has quite lost the baby fat that is so endearingly portrayed with the Christ Child.

The abundant symbolism evident in so many features of the Fairest Love statue will help all of us in our prayer and meditation to fall more in love with Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, and will help us to go frequently to her for all of our families' needs.

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, pray for us, your children, as we joyfully await your homecoming.



The Power of Beauty

At the Beauty Mornings for Moms workshop, Nicole Tittman shared wisdom and practical advice in her presentation, *Why Beauty Matters*. She first explored the secular, evolutionary effects on women, including the false assertion of empowerment through sexualization which subsequently led to the sexualization of women's fashion. From a young age, girls absorb the notion that dressing provocatively expresses rejection of the "patriarchy." It also leads them to conflate desirability with love. An emphasis on modesty has proved inadequate to combat these trends as it fails to provide a positive and resonating alternative to girl power. Emphasis on beauty, on the other hand, transmits a deeper and more complete affirmation of the feminine self.

Poet and author Dana Gioia wrote, "Why would God give us the ability to recognize beauty if it wasn't important? It is both powerful and meaningful. Beauty is far more than just being pretty. It is a participation in something greater, the entire person; therefore, our clothing should enable others to see our whole self. It shouldn't draw the eye to specific body parts, but should integrate our inner and outer beauty, and radiate it to others.

The second section of Nicole's presentation was an interactive and very fun deep dive into color theory. Participants learned the meaning of terms such as hue, value, and chroma, and they learned how to discern ideal color palettes for themselves and others.

Finally, Nicole explored the question, "Has the sexual revolution failed?" We Catholics know there is an answer: Our worth is established by God's selfless and all-consuming love - we have been given dignity by being His daughters. She concluded with a quote from Dostoevsky, "Beauty is mysterious and terrifying. God and the devil are fighting there, and the battlefield is the heart of man."

How a correct understanding of femininity empowers women of all ages inside and out

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- Jennifer Nieva

REAPING TREASURE FROM THE OPUS DEI WEBSITE

THE COMMANDMENTS, PART 2: GOD'S MASTER PLAN FOR A HOLY LIFE

Welcome back as we continue our considerations drawn from the *Opus Dei website* on discussing the Ten Commandments with teens.

The most important gift we can bestow on our kids as they grow and prepare to leave home is a solid understanding of our Catholic faith, so they can hold their ground in any challenges of why they believe what they believe. Fully understanding the Ten Commandments, a pinnacle of Judeo-Christianity, is a great place to start. The [doctrinal articles](#) on the Opus Dei website offer in-depth summaries of these commandments for teens and adults alike. Here is the second in our two-part series on how to talk with your teens about the Ten Commandments so that they can discuss naturally with others God's great guidance for us.

TOPIC 32: THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT
The sixth commandment, thou shalt not commit adultery, invokes the faithful to love as Christ loves us - selflessly and wholeheartedly. God did not create human sexuality to be shameful, but rather to be a fruitful and faithful gift of self. Since the human person is body and soul, the marital embrace requires full participation of body, affections, and spirit.

Original sin has obscured this link between the gift of self and the conjugal act in our minds, creating opportunities for abuses of this gift, like infidelity or promiscuity. To follow this commandment, we must embrace chastity, the moderation of the indulgence of the sexual appetite. God knows our hearts are made for love, and he does not wish to deprive us of human love and connection.

But by properly ordering and moderating our desires, we can cooperate with God's holy will and carry out his plan for human love - love as it was meant to be given and received.

Discussion points for teens: These chastity, doesn't take a bad rap. How can we lead by example and help our peers see that chastity doesn't take freedom away, but ultimately, makes us more free?

TOPIC 33: THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH COMMANDMENTS
The seventh and eighth commandments relate to the common good and respect for others. To uphold the dignity of our fellow man, we must respect both his belongings and his reputation. Both commandments can be fully lived by practicing the virtues of temperance, prudence, and especially humility - seeing things as they are, as God sees them.

We were not meant to follow our greed into the abyss, letting our ambition or desire for reward drive our actions. Nor are we meant to live communally, with no privacy, no incentives, and without ever seeing or enjoying the fruits of our labor.

In our relationships with others, we must be truthful; however, original sin has tarnished our love for the truth. But with God's grace, we can learn to live truthfully again, and fully embrace sincerity with ourselves, with God, and with each other. In loving our neighbor as ourselves, we neither shield them from uncomfortable truths nor let their pride and tempting us to speak insincerely about them.

Discussion points for teens: It's easy to see how stealing someone's property can have direct and devastating consequences. But what happens when you engage in or even listen to gossip about others? What would you steal from others in that instance?

TOPIC 34 - THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS
The final commandments in the Decalogue highlight man's tendency towards the vice of envy - thus shall not covet thy neighbor's wife; thus shall not covet thy neighbor's goods. While the sins associated with these commandments are internal and not always visible, they can deform the conscience and thus lead to external malice.

To open our hearts in check, we must strive for purity of thought, which enables us to keep our envy to one another. By entering into a godly relationship with our neighbor, we embrace generosity and authenticity, and we can gain the necessary tools to fight concupiscence, the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. To fight against envy, often the result of concupiscence, we must live benevolence, a virtue by which we define the good of our neighbor as a manifestation of our love for them.

Discussion points for teens: As a result of original sin, all of us are born with concupiscence. What role does concupiscence play in your life, and what are some practical ways you can fight it? How can we be benevolent at work, school, and in our free time?

Conclusion
While the Ten Commandments have guided us towards happy and holy lives for millennia, diving deep into the "whys" behind the Decalogue can help us embrace our Christian identities fully and wholeheartedly. God is a loving father who wants the best for us, gives us total freedom, and calls us each by name to follow Christ's example.

For teens, it can help to see just how practical and realistic these guidelines are. Why not start your young adult life on the best foot possible, and inspire others to do the same in the process?

- Anna Livia Brady

Book Nook - Christian Formation through Spiritual Reading

Although the three-year Eucharistic Revival ended this past summer, we can prolong the revival's effect of deepening our love for the Eucharist, by continuing to read on the subject. This book allows us to do just that!

This book is full of heartfelt, practical advice on how to strengthen our devotion to the Eucharist. The author, Fr. Lovasik, reminds us that through the Eucharist, Jesus can bring us closer to him than he would have been able to if we had been alive when he was traversing the streets of Jerusalem.

One gem of advice that was quite convincing: "Even though you are very busy, you can always find time for prayer if you really want to." Another striking thing he said was that in the Eucharist, Jesus "...offers Himself again to His Father with all the acts of adoration, abandonment and love He once offered to Him on the Cross."

My absolute favorite parts of the book were toward the end, where Fr. Lovasik gave very practical advice for preparing for communion and going thanks after receiving it. I have been bringing the book to Mass with me to better help me with my own preparation and thanksgiving. I heartily recommend this book to anyone who yearns to grow in love and appreciation for the Eucharist. -HJ.

The Basic Book of the Eucharist

God's Covenant Love in Sacred Scripture
by Lawrence G. Lovasik

"Reading has made many saints." - St. Josemaría (The Way, 116)

girls' club corner

WIT spoke recently with Ann, a mother who has been involved with several girls' clubs through the years. Here are Ann's thoughts on how girls' club helped supplement the education of her daughters:

We have three daughters who I wanted to have the girls' club experience, not only as young girls, but also as counselors. We live far from centers of Opus Dei - the nearest one is a day's drive away - so the activities I provide are the only Opus Dei activities in the area.

Thank to be both girls' club four different times, giving each daughter a chance to be a girls' clubber and a counselor. I ran the club for our first daughter; she ran it for daughter #2; #2 ran it for #3; and #3 ran a club for the younger sister of a friend.

When the girls are young, they are like sponges, happily soaking up the formation they receive in clubs. They are grateful for the attention they receive, and they're excited about learning growth-up skills, like making their own lunches and doing laundry by themselves.

While it can be exhausting, working with the younger girls is quite straightforward - give them a fun activity, delicious snacks, time with their friends, and they will learn whatever you put before them.

The older girls, the counselors, are more complex. I think they actually need club more than the younger girls. They are in high school, steeped in an environment that runs counter to much, or sometimes, all, of what club teaches. The opinions of their peers

matter a lot to them, so to admit that they spend a Saturday every month teaching little girls how to be responsible, caring, and generous can be socially challenging. To recruit friends to help as counselors, they have to be brave and unafraid to push against the current flowing around them. However, to the experience of doing that, and knowing that the younger girls look up to them, is so formative.

All of our daughters wrote about being a girls' club counselor in their college applications. Taking the initiative to help form younger girls, to strengthen them for the challenges of being a teen, and to give them skills to use in adulthood helped our daughters tremendously as they grew up.

I also benefited from our experiences with girls' club. When I was pregnant with one of our younger daughters, the club moms gave me a baby shower. Years later, when another of our babies was ill and in the hospital, a club mom organized weeks of dinners for our family. Aside from these generous acts of moms grateful for the formation of the girls' club, I also learned to be more intentional about finding fun ways to teach our children about service and leadership. By the way, the definition of leadership I used was, "Doing the right thing, every time, no matter what the cost."

Girls' club, with its focus on friendship, leadership, and service, has tremendously benefited our family, and it is an experience for which I will always be grateful.

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To submit news of activities in your area or to recommend future articles, please email us at trecks@cox.net.