

Saint John of Capistrano and a reminder of spring time



The Oct. 23 feast of the Franciscan friar Saint John of Capistrano (1385-1456) reminds me of the springtime and the miracle of the swallows. It is pretty ironic that I am thinking spring today since it is chilly outside and we have a freeze warning here in Harford County for tonight.

Are you familiar with the Franciscan missions (San Juan Capistrano) named for today's saint in Southern California and in San Antonio? The Mission in Southern California was founded by Father Junipero Serra in 1776 to spread the Catholic faith to the Native Americans. But it is now most widely known for the "miracle of the swallows" each year on the March 19 feast of Saint Joseph.



According to their visitor website, the cliff swallows winter each year in Argentina and then arrive back each March to this famous Franciscan mission. They make their nests in the eaves there until October when their migration cycle starts again. People from all over the world are known to visit, especially on the March 19 feast day of Jesus' foster-father when these small birds return at dawn to settle back into their mud nests at the ruins of the Great Stone Church. Damaged by the earthquake of 1812, this Franciscan church is now famous for housing these birds. On the feast of San Juan Capistrano, Oct. 23, the small birds are known to take flight again for their winter destination.

More information can also be found on the website for the local San Juan Capistrano community [here](#).



Photo by Diana L. Guerrero

Today's Saint:

Saint John, born in Capistrano, Italy, was dedicated to the practice of law in the courts of Naples until he was appointed the Governor of Perugia at the young age of 26. After being a prisoner of war, he joined the Franciscans at Perugia in 1416. He studied under St. Berardine of Siena, who inspired him to spread the practice of devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary.

He was known to be an outstanding preacher, and travelled all over Europe preaching the Gospel of repentance and establishing Franciscan communities. At the age of 70 he was commissioned by Pope Callistus III to lead a crusade against the Turks at Belgrade. He led an army of 70,000 Christians to victory, saving Rome and Vienna from attack, thus earning his nickname as “the soldier saint.” He died shortly thereafter in Hungary in 1456.

He is considered the patron saint of military chaplains and jurists.



Excerpt from “Mirror of the Clergy”

—St. John of Capistrano

“Those who are called to the table of the Lord must glow with the brightness that comes from the good example of a praiseworthy and blameless life. They must completely remove from their lives the filth and uncleanness of vice. Their upright lives must make them like the salt of the earth for themselves and for the rest of mankind. The brightness of their wisdom must make them like the light of the world that brings light to others. They must learn from their eminent teacher, Jesus Christ, what he declared not only to his apostles and disciples, but also to all the priests and clerics who were to succeed them, when he said: You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor? Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

Jesus also said: “You are the light of the world.” Now a light does not illumine itself,

but instead it diffuses its rays and shines all around upon everything that comes into its view. So it must be with the glowing lives of upright and holy clerics. By the brightness of their holiness they must bring light and serenity to all who gaze upon them. They have been placed here to care for others. Their own lives should be an example to others, showing how they must live in the house of the Lord.