

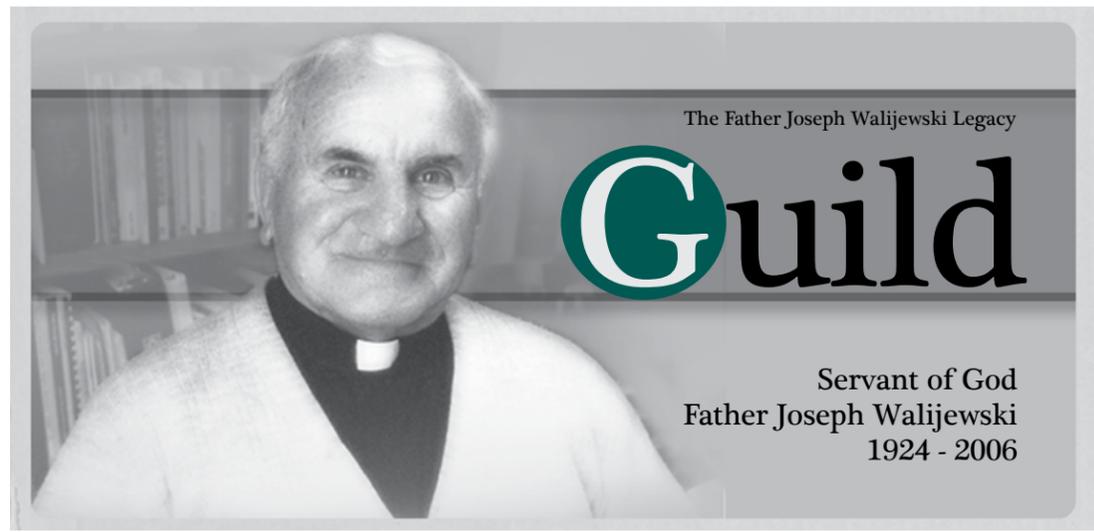


# Diocese of LA CROSSE

3710 East Avenue South  
P.O. Box 4004 • La Crosse, WI 54602-4004  
www.FrJoesGuild.org

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"I am just a pencil in  
Our Lord's Hand"  
- Fr. Walijewski



SPRING 2016

## A Great Witness of Mercy

By Bishop William Patrick Callahan

I am often reminded of what a tremendous mystery and gift the Roman Catholic priesthood is for the Church and for those of us so blessed to have been called by Jesus into this sacred fraternity. I think often of my dear departed priests whose ministry and life has deeply touched so many men and women, and whose legacy is quite alive.

the lived mystery of the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy (Mt. 25).

I CAME TO  
**KNOW HIM**  
THROUGH OTHERS AND  
**THROUGH HIS**  
**WORKS OF CHARITY**  
AND **KINDNESS.**

The Fr. Joe Walijewski Guild, now in its third year of advancing the Cause of Fr. Joe for Beatification and Canonization, continues to garner support from various parts of our country. Fr. Joe is a person of interest for those who strive to find ways of validating the Catholic faith in today's world.

While I did not know Fr. Joe personally, I came to know him through others and through his works of charity and kindness. Today, I think of him as an ideal model for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, a man who embodied

People have come to recognize in Fr. Joe's Cause the reality of a man who did not use his extraordinary talents or attributes for the advancement of this world's wealth. Rather, they are seeing and hearing more and

See REALITY on next page

### Guild Leadership

**Episcopal Moderator**  
The Most Rev.  
William Patrick Callahan  
Bishop of La Crosse

**Spiritual Director**  
Msgr. Roger J. Scheckel

**Communications Director**  
Jack Felsheim

## My Father Joe Pilgrimage Reflection

By Dan Foor

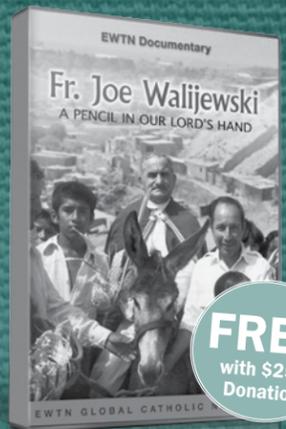
Providence. That was the word that Jack Felsheim used to describe the chance meeting we had that eventually led to me joining nine other diocesan members on a pilgrimage to Peru to follow in the footsteps of Father Joseph Walijewski. Providence. Not a word one hears every day. It is defined as "divine guidance or care." I think Jack was right; here's why.

In January of 2015, I was traveling to Phoenix for business. While waiting in the gate area of the La Crosse Airport, I noticed two men conversing about a book on Pope Francis. At that time, I was somewhat of a newly minted Catholic, having been confirmed, baptized and received my first Eucharist the Easter prior (joining my wife and three daughters in the faith). One of the gentlemen looked familiar to me, but I couldn't quite place the name with the face. With the help of my smart phone and Google, I determined that one of the gentlemen was none other than our Bishop, William Callahan. Excited for the opportunity to meet the Bishop, I introduced myself.

As it turns out, Bishop Callahan and Jack were traveling to Lima, Peru to conduct some work for the Cause of Father Joe. In our brief

See Providence on next page

"I'll not care how long I'll live if  
I can give and give and give."



Father Joe Walijewski

### A Pencil In Our Lord's Hand Broadcast Schedule

In celebration of the 3rd anniversary of the opening of Fr. Joe's Cause of Beatification and Canonization, EWTN and Catholic TV will show the documentary.

EWTN: Sunday, April 10, 2016 at 10:00 p.m. ET 9:00 p.m. CT  
Catholic TV: Friday, April 15, 2016 at 9:30 p.m. ET 8:30 p.m. CT  
and Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. ET 12:00 p.m. CT

A PENCIL IN OUR LORD'S HAND  
**PADRE JOSÉ**



Diocese of LA CROSSE  
www.frjoesguild.org

REALITY continued...

more about a man—a priest—who lovingly fulfilled another facet of Christ’s teaching from the Gospel of Matthew: “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6:21). Fr. Joe’s treasure was found in the lives of children alone in the slums of Lima, Peru; his heart, being touched by the spirit of Jesus, was moved to their care. His priestly action is a sign even today of the grace of Christ working in our world.

As the Guild gradually gathers new members, the message about Fr. Joe is resonating with new people interested in his life and in the Cause of his Beatification and Canonization. Testimony continues to be gathered in both North and South America from those who knew Fr. Joe personally. Testimony is documented (in triplicate) in order to be sent to Rome and reviewed by the Congregation for Saints and ultimately, the Pope.

Guild members have helped promote the Cause by allowing us to spread the news by sponsoring screenings of the video “A Pencil in Our Lord’s Hand” in Thorp, Stevens Point, Wausau, and La Crosse.

Donations have been used to sponsor a “Pencil Drop,” where we handed out pencils inscribed with the phrase: “I’m just a pencil in Our Lord’s hand” to all the children in our diocesan Catholic schools. This was done in celebration of the Solemnity of All Saints.

We receive requests for prayer cards every week. 10,000 cards were distributed in 2015 alone! Also in 2015, the Diocesan Pilgrimage tracing the footsteps of Fr. Joe was a remarkable experience for those involved. You can read more about the experience of one of the pilgrims, Dan Foor, in this newsletter.

I am often asked how I feel about recommending a priest of my Diocese for sainthood. I am blessed. What a gift Fr. Joe is for all of us! Let us continue to pray that his Cause will one day return him to us as a Saint of the Church!



## Reading from the “pencil in our lord’s hand:”

By Students from St. Joseph Academy in California

In San Marcos, California, a class of High School Juniors is busy delving into the life and work of Father Joseph Walijewski. They were introduced to the mission of the inspirational priest from the Diocese of La Crosse by their writing instructor, Helen Weir, who has been serving as a freelance correspondent for the diocese since the mid-2000s. What started out as a simple assignment has evolved into a journey of spiritual enrichment, original research, and active participation in Father’s Joe’s cause for canonization.

“I first heard of Father Walijewski during a class while viewing the documentary, ‘A Pencil in Our Lord’s Hand,’” said Saint Joseph Academy student, Angie A. “On top of his touching story, I recognized his saint-like qualities of selflessness, devotion, and virtue. Throughout the documentary and later research, I found him to be as lovable and relatable as a grandparent.” Angie is collecting stories of orphans whose lives have been changed by the loving environment of Father José’s Casa Hogar.

“Father Walijewski demonstrated, through the course of his life, his actions, and his works, the true meaning of what it takes to be a saint, a servant, and a pencil enclosed in God’s hand. I was particularly struck by Father’s willingness to cross between Bolivia and Brazil when building the church of the Holy Cross,” remarked Michael D. “The Amazon rainforest is no easy terrain to traverse,” he concluded. Michael’s research encapsulates Father José’s work in the South American continent, with particular regard to

the priest’s effort to build the church of the Holy Cross in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

“In this modern age the saints have gained an almost ‘legendary status.’ We often view their lives as irrelevant to ours since they lived so long ago,” said Nicholas D. “Father Walijewski was different; he only died a few years ago. He gave us a story we can relate to.” Nick’s area of interest is learning about the experiences of those who were close to Father.

As a class, the students were impacted by Father Walijewski’s life in many ways. Alexa M. was drawn towards the way Father Walijewski brought the Faith to the Asháninka, while Anthony G. was fascinated by the way the people considered him the Mother Teresa of their area. John Paul M. remarked, during the Year of Mercy, on how Father Walijewski models the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Clare S. and Madison T. were intrigued by the influence he had on other people and the statement, “He’s not human,” quoted in the documentary. Several of the students expressed interest in how his mother’s wishes were granted due to his devotion to following God’s will, and particularly admired how Father Walijewski worked extensively to help other people whether they were old or young.

The Juniors of Saint Joseph Academy are in the process of composing research papers on the various facets of Father Walijewski’s charism. When the students complete their research, the papers will be shared on [www.frjoesguild.org](http://www.frjoesguild.org) and Father Joe’s Guild Facebook page.

PROVIDENCE continued...

discussion, I shared that prior to moving to La Crosse in 2011, I had spent three years in Latin America as an ex-patriate worker for a large multi-national agricultural company. I offered to them that if I could be of service, given my fluency in Spanish and familiarity with Latin culture, that I would be happy to help. Jack texted me photos during their visit to the Casa Hogar orphanage and invited me to pray and reflect to understand God’s intentions for me to get involved.

I was somewhat familiar with Casa Hogar due to the connection between St. Patrick’s elementary and Jhon, one of the orphans there. Living in Bogota and Mexico City also gave me an appreciation for the poverty and challenges that the less fortunate deal with every day. And as I learned more about the good work that Father Joe had begun and that continues today under Monsignor Hirsch, I made the decision to participate in the pilgrimage in August of 2015.

To say the experience was life-changing would be a significant understatement. As mentioned earlier, living and working in Latin America had given me an awareness of the poverty there, but as an expat, neither my family nor I were ever fully immersed in that section of those societies. Casa Hogar receives 64 children from the area, who are divided among 8 families, each with their own parent-teacher couple who act as a surrogate family for the young children aged from babies to 17 years old. They have an organized development program, modeled after Boys Town, which greatly influenced Father Joe in his youth and became the basis of his desire to help the impoverished to have at least a chance of living a better life than their biological families could provide.

On the pilgrimage, we spent time at Father Joe’s tomb overlooking Casa Hogar,

visited area churches and a soup kitchen founded by Father Joe, as well the tombs of Saints Martin de Porres and Rose of Lima. The most powerful experiences for me was the time spent with the families at Casa knowing that the spirit of Father Joe permeated the facility and the determination of his ambition visible all around. Another was an afternoon our group spent walking the beach nearby where Father Joe himself used to go when the weight of the circumstances became quite heavy. There he could seek solace and guidance on his mission.

The children at Casa are happy knowing that they are loved. Monsignor Hirsch is the rock of the orphanage and brings a zest for life while patiently cares for his flock both at Casa and around the area. I recall a question I asked him that went something like, “Father Hirsch, isn’t it frustrating knowing that while the work being done here is good, that the impact is so small relative the larger problem?” You see many of the kids that eventually leave Casa find themselves back in the unfortunate situation that they are so desperately trying to escape. He looked at me and said, “Our job is to prepare these kids for battle for the day they leave the safety of Casa Hogar. If we’re able to help just one kid have just one more day away from the terrible things that are out there, that makes all of this worth it.”

It was indeed Providence that led Father Joe to be ordained in the La Crosse Diocese, move to South America and to establish the safe places where the poor and desperate can find hope and faith. I believe that it also called me to Lurin, Peru last year. And by God’s continued Providence, and the support of our catholic family, the good work there will continue.



## Third Anniversary Mass

Please mark your calendars for **Sunday, March 13, 2016** at 10:30 a.m., when the third anniversary Mass to honor the opening of the cause of Beatification and Canonization of Father Joseph Walijewski will be celebrated at St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse.

## Father Joe’s Circle of Prayer

The following Masses will be celebrated to mark the third anniversary of the opening of the cause:

### Sacred Heart, Nekoosa, WI

Sunday, March 13, at 10:30 a.m.  
celebrated by Fr. John Swing

### St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Lansing, MI

Friday, March 18 at 9:00 a.m.  
celebrated by Fr. Mark Inglot

### SS. Cyril & Methodius Seminary, Orchard Lake, MI

Sunday, March 13 at 11:00 a.m.  
celebrated by Msgr. Thomas Machalski

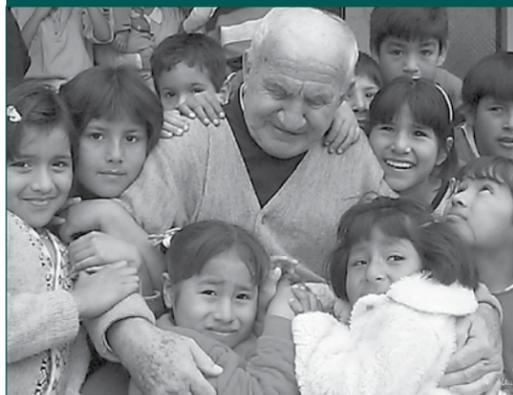


[www.facebook.com/FrJoesGuild](http://www.facebook.com/FrJoesGuild)

## moviereview

## A PENCIL IN OUR LORD’S HAND

By Monica Organ



A Pencil in Our Lord’s Hand brings to life the love, humanity, and deep divinity that are at the core of Father Joe’s charism. The rich history, powerful imagery, and personal reflections from people who actually knew him, all enhance your belief in Fr. Joe’s cause for sainthood, and shows the immense impact that Fr. Joe had on every life he touched. Through what can only be described as Divine Providence, Father Joe overcame obstacles and was able to discern God’s call among constant difficulties. The line “Joe Walijewski may not be the most intelligent priest but he will be a holy priest,” stays with me because it reminds me that we are all blessed with talents, and even if they don’t fit the mold of what some call “success” you can still do great, and some may even say saintly, works.

SHOWING ON:

**EWTN**

Sunday, April 10, 2016  
at 10:00 p.m. ET  
9:00 p.m. CT

**Catholic TV**

Friday, April 15, 2016 at  
9:30 p.m. ET 8:30 p.m. CT  
and Saturday, April 16,  
2016 at 1:00 p.m. ET  
12:00 p.m. CT

## Prayer for Beatification and Canonization

Holy and Good God, your servant and priest, Father Joseph Walijewski, through priestly zeal and heroic holiness, defended innocence against the sadness of evil, especially to broken families and helpless children.

Imaging the Compassionate Christ, he led others to the font of sacramental life and the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their True and Only Savior.

Heavenly Father, we humbly pray You to raise up Your servant, Father Joseph Walijewski, whose joyful priestly heart was resolute in the Heart of Christ Jesus, to the courts of heaven; and, through Your Holy Spirit, who guides and leads the Church, give him to us as a saint and hero of this generation.

Through his example may there be a new urgency of souls for Christ. Through

his intercession, I humbly ask (make your intention here) through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Bishop William Patrick Callahan, OFM Conv.  
Diocese of La Crosse, Wis.

Please report any favors received through the intercession of Father Joe to The Father Joseph Walijewski Legacy Guild at [www.FrJoesGuild.org](http://www.FrJoesGuild.org)