

Father Joe's Legacy

# Guild

Servant of God  
Father Joseph Walijewski  
1924 - 2006

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

SPRING 2014

## The Mission of Fr. Joe's Legacy Guild

Fr. Joe's Legacy Guild is an association of people dedicated to furthering the cause of the Servant of God, Fr. Joseph Walijewski, and providing continued support for the legacy he left behind. Padre Jose's spirituality is rooted in seeing Christ crucified in everyone he met; especially the orphans, abandoned, marginalized and poor. "How can I go home to a comfortable bed," he would recall, "knowing there are thousands of children that are out there in the streets; sleeping outside in the cold, hungry, with no hope in their mind?" Unwilling to turn and walk away, Fr. Joe built parish

churches, soup kitchens and an orphanage to meet the basic needs of these people.

The missionary zeal inspired by Fr. Joe's legacy is passed on to us today. We are called to imitate Fr. Joe's heroic virtue, and respond by embracing the people we encounter representing Christ crucified in our everyday lives. In order to continue the work Fr. Joe started, Fr. Joe's Legacy Guild divides its tasks into three categories; outreach, membership, and financial. Each area will help ensure that the legacy will continue and his cause will be promoted.

**"...thousands of children that are out there in the streets; sleeping outside in the cold, hungry, with no hope in their mind?"**

### Guild Leadership

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

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

**Development Director**  
Brian Logue

**Communications Director**  
Jack Felsheim

## Father Joe's Years in the Jungle

By Jess Mollison, Director of Development for Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the opening of the Cause for Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Father Joseph Walijewski, we are pleased to update all Guild members on the work that has been started in South America. Part of that work involves interviewing those who best knew Fr. Joe throughout the many stages of his life.

Fr. Joe lived a very interesting life and carried out his missionary work in many different countries. Most people have heard of the Holy Cross Parish in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a few know of Villa el Salvador in Peru, and there are many who know about Casa Hogar in Lurín, but very few people have ever heard about his work in the jungle. We decided to begin our interviews in these far-reaching communities, which led us

on a twelve-hour journey to Oxapampa, Peru on the border of the Amazon rainforest.

Fr. Joe's bio reads that he spent his retirement and the last few years of his life in Oxapampa when in reality his time there was far from a traditional retirement.

Fr. Joe's first connection with Oxapampa was back in 1988, just two years after Casa Hogar was founded. What is most interesting about his work in this area is that it seems as if everything he did in his life is recapitulated during these years from 1988-2006.

The history of Fr. Joe in Oxapampa reads like an action novel packed with excitement of far-off places, threats of danger, and learning how to adapt to all kinds of impossible challenges.

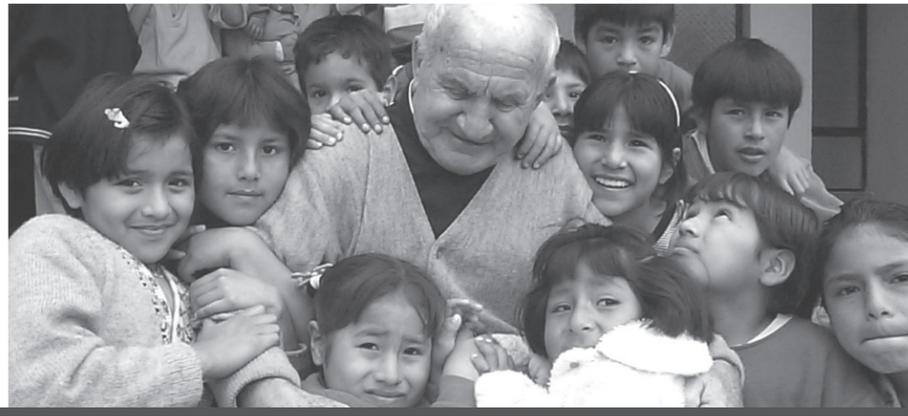
*continued on JUNGLE YEARS*



DIocese of LA CROSSE  
www.frjoesguild.org

"I do not know how long I will live, but while I live, Lord, let me give some comfort to someone in need by smile or nod, kind word, or deed."

- Fr. Walijewski



JUNGLE YEARS continued...

As director of Casa Hogar he was simultaneously building an orphanage for youth in Chontabamba, near Oxapampa. He began construction of the orphanage in 1988 and it was opened in 1991. At this time he also purchased a farm to be able to provide the youth with the opportunity to learn farming skills.

In 1992 a group of terrorists entered the city of Chontabamba, in search of Fr. Joe with plans to assassinate him. As God's providence would have it, the very day that they came looking to kill him, Fr. Joe was visiting Casa Hogar in Lurín. Had he been home when they arrived this story would have a very different ending. Due to the unstable state of the area under threats from the Shining Path, he decided to close the orphanage for two years.

Although he 'retired' in 2000 from Casa Hogar, Fr. Joe never slowed down his pace and his mission heart continued to carry him forward. His ministry included working at the chapel in Chontabamba as well as celebrating Masses in over ten different communities throughout the jungle. He opened soup kitchens in town and even started a pre-seminary for youth interested in the priesthood. One can only marvel at the missionary zeal that inspired and led him to reach out to so many of the poorest people.

In 2003 the orphanage in Chontabamba closed, but Fr. Joe still had one more dream to fulfill; to found a nursing home. Through a number of providential encounters he was put in contact with the Josephine Sisters of Charity. They agreed to convert the orphanage into a nursing home with a capacity for 18 people. The home is still in operation and currently is home for 11 elderly under the care of three sisters.

What impressed us the most while visiting these remote sites was once people learned about the canonization process, many came up to share their appreciation for all that Padre José did for them personally, for their families and for their community. We can truly be proud of all of his works but we can be especially inspired by this last chapter of his life which is a summary of his entire missionary life.

## Wisconsin priest's legacy lives on at Peruvian orphanage

By Ellie Gardner Catholic News Service

LURIN, Peru (CNS) – In 1975, Msgr. Joseph Hirsch spent a month living in Lima's slums as he backpacked through South America. Now he's back in Peru, working to prove a man he met that year is a saint.

But proving a man is a saint is no easy job, and it will take years of interviews, investigation, paperwork and prayer.

Father Joseph Walijewski from the Diocese of La Crosse, Wis., diocese died in Peru in 2006, after 35 years of serving the country's poor. On March 19, his sainthood cause was launched in La Crosse.

"Even if it takes 200 years to canonize him, I think his story is something that can impact us today," said Msgr. Hirsch, who is also from the La Crosse Diocese.

When young Msgr. Hirsch met Father Walijewski, the older priest was working in Villa El Salvador, a Lima slum. He dreamed of starting an orphanage to help the abandoned and abused children he saw daily.

In 1985, Blessed John Paul II visited Villa El Salvador. Father Walijewski shared his dream with the pope, who donated \$50,000. Father Walijewski named the orphanage Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II.

The orphanage started with two children, one volunteer and

one tutor. Today, Casa Hogar is home to 64 children. They live in a family style modeled after the Boys Town program. The children are divided into eight families, each with their own apartment, mother and father.

Alfredo Inigo, 21, moved to Casa Hogar when he was 8. He said Father Walijewski taught him friendship and kindness that he had never known in his own home. He lived there until he turned 18 and said he still prays to Father Walijewski.

"He was a very humble priest," Inigo said.

When asked what Father Walijewski was like, almost everyone mentioned this humbleness. They smiled and laughed, remembering his broken Spanish.

"He almost always spoke in the present tense," Msgr. Hirsch said.

They also talked about his childlike nature and love of singing. One of his favorite tunes was Old McDonald, and he had perfected the sounds of each animal.

And no one could pronounce his last name. Father Walijewski would joke and tell them to call him "Padre Whiskey."

Father Walijewski considered the orphanage his greatest work.

"The vision is to be able to transform society by teaching children how to live in families," said Msgr. Hirsch. "The transformation of a culture happens always within marriage and within the family."

In July, Msgr. Hirsch took over as executive director of Casa Hogar. He now lives in the

house where Father Walijewski once lived.

Msgr. Hirsch said he had dreamed of working as a missionary in Latin America since his high school days. He was ordained in 1986 and patiently waited to be sent to the missions. In the meantime, he led a handful of short mission trips to Casa Hogar. Finally, in 2013, he received his first post abroad, at Holy Cross Parish in Bolivia, a church started by Father Walijewski.

Just five months later, Msgr. Hirsch was sent to Peru, tracing the footsteps of his friend.

In addition to directing Casa Hogar, Msgr. Hirsch was appointed the promoter of justice in the cause of Father Walijewski. He will spend the next five years gathering testimony. One of the first interviews he conducted was about 600 questions long and lasted six hours.

"I look at this as an opportunity to be able

to learn not just the life but the spirituality of a very simple and holy priest who gave himself completely," Msgr. Hirsch said.

Father Walijewski is buried in the hillside overlooking Casa Hogar and the sea. Every Sunday, Msgr. Hirsch takes the families up there to pray. They touch the grave and ask questions about Father Walijewski; some of the younger children never met him. Msgr. Hirsch said he hopes through his stories of Father Walijewski, he can keep his presence alive at Casa Hogar.

Thousands attended Father Walijewski's funeral in Villa El Salvador. There, Msgr. Hirsch asked several people what it was like to know the priest.

Many told him, "This is the first saint that I've ever met."

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Walking in the footsteps of Padre Jose - Diocesan Pilgrimage to Peru

# June 20 - June 29, 2014

BECOME A PART OF OUR DIOCESAN MISSION

### Who is the pilgrimage for?

This trip is open to all adults of the Diocese of La Crosse.

### What is the focus of the trip?

This pilgrimage is designed to follow the path that led Father Joe Walijewski to found Casa Hogar. Tracing his steps, pilgrims will visit the parish at

Villa el Salvador and the soup kitchens founded by Fr. Joe. There will be plenty of time getting to know the children of Casa Hogar and offering work on a service project. In addition to visiting the tomb of Fr. Joe at the orphanage, a day trip is planned to Lima for a visit to the tombs of St. Rose of Lima and St. Martin de Porres.



Cost: Approx. **\$2,200/person**  
Registration Deadline: **Saturday, March 1, 2014**  
Full Payment Due: **Friday, May 30, 2014**

**For more information please contact:**  
Jen Mickschl at **608-791-0161**  
or [jmickschl@dioceseoflacrosse.com](mailto:jmickschl@dioceseoflacrosse.com).  
To learn more visit [www.frjoesguild.org](http://www.frjoesguild.org)

**REGISTRATION IS LIMITED. DON'T WAIT. REGISTER NOW!**

## Priestly Zeal and Heroic Virtue

Servant of God, Father Joseph Walijewski - Father Joe, Padre Jose, or Joe the Pole, as Richard Cardinal Cushing dubbed him in the '60s - is a hero of faith for our generation. Ordained in 1950 in La Crosse, Father Joe served as a parish priest in the

Polish-speaking parishes around Stevens Point. As a missionary for the Diocese of La Crosse, he fed the poor, sheltered the homeless, and ministered to the faithful who were among the most impoverished people of South America. He passed into God's hands days after Palm Sunday in 2006. His earthly remains rest on a hillside overlooking Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II, the orphanage outside of Lima, Peru,

which he founded with the blessings and support of Blessed John Paul II. During a visit to Father Joe's tomb in 2011, Bishop William P. Callahan was impressed and inspired by the love and devotion of the people most touched by this humble priest's dedication. It was this heroic virtue that led Bishop Callahan to take the steps necessary to open Father Joe's Cause for Canonization.

## First Anniversary Mass - March 16, 2014

Please mark your calendars for Sunday, March 16, 2014 at 10:30 a.m., when the first 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.

## Fun facts about Father Joe

### Father's Favorite Food

Barb Swieciak remembers that when Father Walijewski would come back to the US he would stay with his friend Msgr. Anthony Wagener at the Blessed Sacrament rectory. As the rectory's housekeeper, she would prepare and serve the food. One of his favorites was ice cream! Barb would ask, "Would you like some ice cream for dessert?" with a childlike twinkle in his eye and a big smile on his face he'd say "gather ye rosebuds as ye may!" (which of course meant YES!!!)

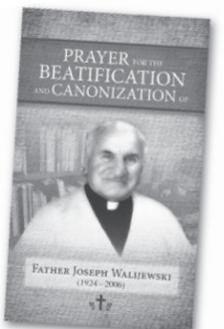
### Top of the morning to you!

Every morning he would greet everyone with a "Top of the morning to you!" and he'd wait for a reply. If you were not familiar with this greeting and didn't know how to respond he would help you by saying "And the rest of the day to you!"

### Prayer Cards

Prayer cards can be ordered through the Mission Office by contacting:

The Diocese of La Crosse  
Attn: Fr. Joe Walijewski's Prayer Card  
P.O. Box 4004  
La Crosse, WI  
54602-4004



**DIOCESE of LA CROSSE**  
[www.dioceseoflacrosse.com](http://www.dioceseoflacrosse.com)  
[www.frjoesguild.org](http://www.frjoesguild.org)



## DIOCESE of LA CROSSE

3710 East Avenue South  
P.O. Box 4004 • La Crosse, WI 54602-4004  
[www.FrJoesGuild.org](http://www.FrJoesGuild.org)

### 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 Guild  
at [www.FrJoesGuild.org](http://www.FrJoesGuild.org)**

### Fr. Joe's Prayer Box

You are encouraged to ask for Fr. Joe Walijewski's intercession. Fr. Joe Walijewski's Prayer Box has been established as a way for you to have your prayer intention remembered in a special way. Either by using the website or by sending it in the mail, you are able to submit your request. Once received, these petitions will be collected and kept in the chapel of Casa Hogar in Peru. Every day the children of Casa Hogar will pray for



the intentions kept in the box. Once a week, the box of intentions is carried in procession up to the tomb of Fr. Joe where a group of the children will offer prayers for your special intentions.

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If you would like to have your petitions included in Fr. Joe's Prayer Box please visit  
**[www.frjoesguild.org/prayer\\_request.php](http://www.frjoesguild.org/prayer_request.php)**

or send your intentions to:

The Diocese of La Crosse  
Attn: Fr. Joe Walijewski's Prayer Box  
P.O. Box 4004  
La Crosse, WI 54602-4004