



Mission San Juan Capistrano Celebrates St. Joseph's Day & Return of the Swallows on March 19

Flyover by WWII, North America AT-6 Planes to Mark the Mission's 250th Anniversary

San Juan Capistrano, Calif., (February 20, 2026) - Mission San Juan Capistrano's annual St. Joseph's Day and Return of the Swallows festivities will be held on the historic Mission grounds on Thursday, March 19. To commemorate the Mission's 250th anniversary, a special flyover by WWII, North America AT-6 planes will take place between noon – 12:30 p.m. (weather permitting). The world-renowned return of the swallows is marked each year on St. Joseph's Day, a liturgical feast day recognized in the Catholic Church.

The celebration includes the ringing of the historic Mission bells, Native American stories, music and dances, live mariachi music, Flamenco dancers, historical presentations, local food, crafts for children and traditional presentations by Mission Basilica and San Juan Elementary schools.

"Walking these grounds on this special day, you feel the weight of history and the promise of tomorrow. That is the gift of 250 years. Our work doesn't end at 250—it begins anew. Preservation is a promise to future generations and public programming like St. Joseph's Day and the Return of the Swallows is a tradition in joy that helps to keep the Mission alive to new generations," said Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams.

St. Joseph's Day also features interpretive station tours led by Mission Docents, Legacy of Saint Serra Exhibit, Mission Treasures Exhibit, live lecture by world famous swallow's expert Dr. Charles R. Brown and St. Joseph's Day Altar, an ecumenical effort to feed those less fortunate hosted by Mission Preservation Foundation board member Vicky Carabini.

St. Joseph's Day Celebration Tentative Schedule

8:30 a.m.	St. Joseph's Day Mass at Mission Basilica
9:00 a.m.	Historic bell ringing upon the Mission's opening in honor of Saint Junipero Serra; Live music by <i>Mariachi Tapatio</i>
9:55 a.m.	Welcome by Mission Executive Director, Mechelle Lawrence Adams
10:05 a.m.	Ringling of the School Bell and Mission Basilica School procession
10:10 a.m.	Vocalist Renée Bondi performs <i>When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano</i>
10:15 a.m.	Mission Basilica School performs traditional songs and dances
11:15 a.m.	San Juan Elementary School performances
Noon	Historic bell ringing in honor of St. Joseph and the Return of the Swallows

- 12:15 p.m. Journeys to the Past: California Native American Stories and Dances
1:00 p.m. Bird & Tushmal Singers, Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation
1:30 p.m. *Duende Flamenco* dance performance
2:00 p.m. *The Swing Dolls*: America's premier tribute to *The Andrew Sisters*
2:00 p.m. Swallows Lecture and Q & A: Swallows expert, Dr. Charles Brown

For more details and advanced reservations, visit www.missionsjc.com/swallows. Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Old Mission Road, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675.

About St. Joseph's Day/Return of the Swallows and Mission San Juan Capistrano

St. Joseph's Day is a feast day marked by the Catholic Church which has been celebrated on March 19 since the 10th century. Mission San Juan Capistrano began celebrating the Return of the Swallows on Saint Joseph's Day in the 1920's when then Mission resident priest Father St. John O'Sullivan wrote the legendary swallow's story on St. Joseph's Day, which happened to be his birthday.

The Mission's swallows migrate 6,000 miles from Goya, Argentina to San Juan Capistrano in large groups. Some cliff swallow colonies number more than 3,500 nests found under the eaves of the Mission. The gourd-shaped nests are made of mud pellets consisting of sand, silt and clay while the nest chambers are lined with grass and feathers.

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features exhibits, five-language audio tour, festivals and public programming. As Orange County's only mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, the Ruins of The Great Stone Church (circa 1796) and original padres' quarters.

Founded on November 1, 1776 by Saint Junipero Serra as the seventh of 21 California missions established by Spain, Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and receives no church or state funding. The Mission Preservation Foundation, comprised of business and community leaders, is its fundraising entity committed to ensuring education, preservation and its long-term historic and religious significance.

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