



Congregation of St. Pius V

IMMACULATA



Immaculate Heart Seminary

• www.congregationofstpiusv.com

• March 2026

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Some may be familiar with an event that took place in the late nineteenth century at the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The chapel was built in the late nineteenth century for the Sisters of Loretto.

The Order of Loretto was started in Kentucky in 1812. In 1852 at the request of Bishop Jean Lamy, the Archbishop of Santa Fe, a group of Sisters was sent from Kentucky to New Mexico. There, they established a convent. To help spread the Faith among the people of New Mexico, the Sisters started a school to educate the children. About twenty years later, construction began on a chapel next to the school. It was completed five years later in 1878. However, upon completion, the Sisters discovered that a mistake had been made. The chapel was patterned after Sainte Chapelle, the private chapel of King Louis IX in Paris. It was rather exquisite, but there was one problem: there was no way to get to the choir loft. Because the chapel was small, a standard staircase would have consumed too much space. A spiral staircase was the only practical solution. Several carpenters were consulted, but none felt capable of constructing one. The only alternatives were to rebuild the loft or use a ladder.

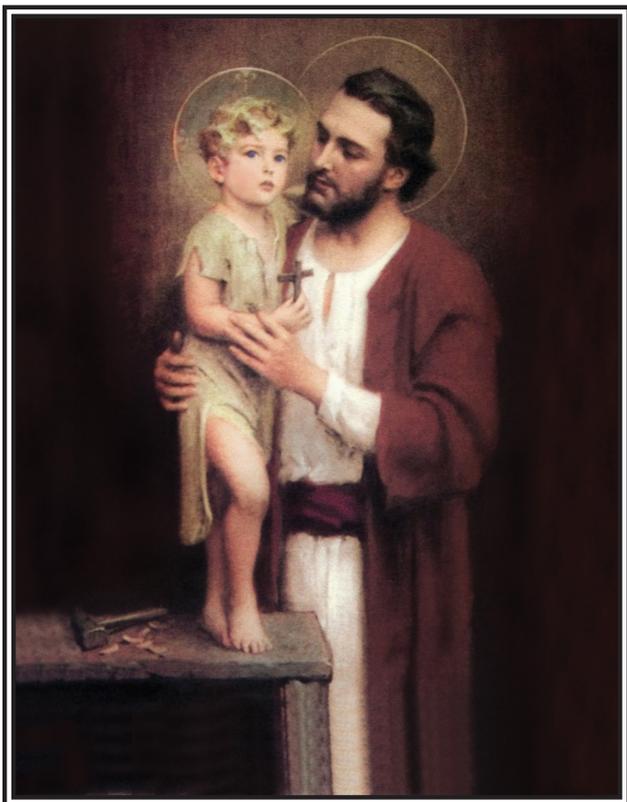


*The Loretto Chapel Staircase
Santa Fe, New Mexico*

Having already entrusted the chapel to Saint Joseph, the Sisters turned again to him and began a nine-day novena. On the final day, an elderly, gray-haired carpenter arrived with a donkey and a small toolbox, asking if he might help in any way. After hearing their predicament, he offered to build a spiral staircase.

Working alone behind locked doors, using only a saw, a square, and a hammer, he constructed a remarkable staircase of thirty-three steps rising twenty-two feet and making two full turns. It was built entirely with wooden pegs—no nails, no screws. Even more puzzling, the wood was not native to the region, and no record of its purchase could be found. A later wood analysis revealed that it was a species of spruce of unknown origin, eventually nicknamed “Loretto Spruce.”

When the staircase was completed, the carpenter disappeared without requesting payment. The Sisters searched for him but found no trace. It is piously believed that Saint Joseph himself answered their prayers. Another mystery remains: such staircases typically require a central support. This one has none. Engineers have



examined it and found no clear explanation for how it bears its weight. The Church has made no official declaration regarding the event, as she proceeds cautiously in such matters. Yet, the fact remains that the Sisters prayed a novena to Saint Joseph, and on the final day their answer came in an unexpected and extraordinary way.

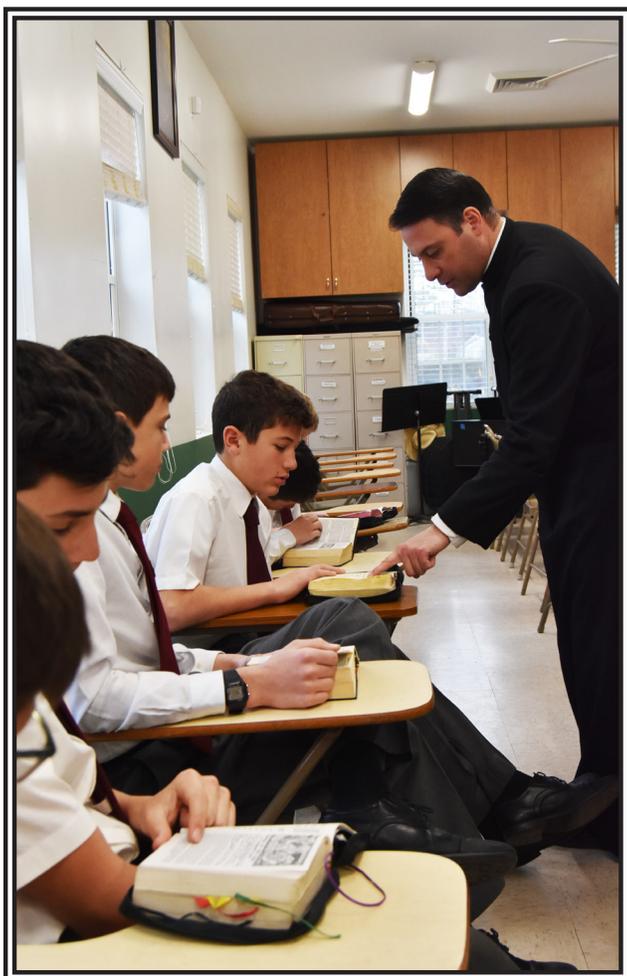
In many ways this is how Saint Joseph works. He operates quietly, behind the scenes, accomplishing what is needed without seeking recognition. During March, the month specially dedicated to him, let us renew our devotion to this great saint and patron of all the faithful. Whether the need is spiritual or temporal, whether we struggle with a trial of soul or a burden of body, let us go to Saint Joseph with confidence, bearing in mind these words of Saint Teresa of Avila: "I do not remember even now that I have ever asked anything of Saint Joseph that he has failed to grant. Nor have I ever known anyone to be truly devoted to him who did not notably advance in virtue, for he gives very real help to souls who commend themselves to him."

We are remembering you in our prayers to Saint Joseph, especially during this month. May he assist you in your spiritual and temporal necessities, and I kindly ask you to entrust all the priests, seminarians, and brothers to his care. God bless you.

In the Sacred Heart,

+James Carroll, C.S.B.V

The Most Reverend James Carroll, C.S.P.V



*Teaching the Students at St. Pius V School
How To Follow Mass in the Missal*



*The Procession Opening the Forty Hours' Devotion
in Round Top, New York.*