



Monthly Newsletter

MARCH 2024 | Maria Santissima Lauretana Society – Arizona Chapter

Lenten Message

“That is why the Lord says, “Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping and mourning. Don’t tear your clothing in your grief but tear your hearts.”

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.” Joel 2: 12 - 13

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Article 5: The Festival

The festival of Maria Santissima Lauretana, now known as the festival of Our Lady of Altavilla Milicia, is the most famous in western Sicily. “I was never filled with more emotion and never was there a more picturesque image in seeing the many pilgrims and devotees climbing the hill towards Altavilla Milicia on the eve of the festival. They arrived continuously for days; walking barefoot, on horseback, in carriage, by train, by boat...” (Giuseppe Pitre – *Patron Festivals of Sicily*, 1890). Today, not much has changed. In the early



morning hours, before dawn, on the 6th of September, thousands of pilgrims meet at the train station in Altavilla Milicia, holding torches. They process from the train station, up the hill to the village towards the shrine; symbolically following the path that our Lady’s image took from the sea over 400 years ago. With the sun still below the horizon, a “river of lights” shines from Altavilla Milicia down to the train station. As they begin to arrive in the village, the sun begins to rise. Upon arrival of the congregation, a mass is celebrated; officially opening the religious festivities for the next three days. Masses are celebrated every hour over the next three days.

The period of the festival is rich in faith, popular piety and folklore that includes the entire community of Altavilla and the thousands that come from all over Sicily. The streets swell with people. They find rest and refreshments from the villagers who set up tables in the streets. Included also are stands where local specialties are sold; the most famous being the infamous sausage sandwich. One large attraction is the “Triumphal Chariot” or “Carru.” It is a three-story structure whose base appears that of a sail ship and in the middle is a tower with our Lady’s image at the very top. The “carru” symbolizes the ship on which our Lady’s image traveled to the shores of Altavilla Milicia and the tower signifies the glory and light which She brought to this little village.



The festival culminates on September 8th; on the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin. On that day, there are two important events. The first occurs at noon which is the procession of votive offerings. Hundreds of people process towards the shrine with symbolic gifts displaying either miracles received or miracles that they are praying for. At sunset, the solemn procession begins with the “vara.” There is no translation to the word. Loosely translated, the word can be referred to a

coffin, altar, or throne. The vara is carried on the shoulders of men who are referred to as the “Confraternita” or Brotherhood of Maria SS Lauretana. At three different times throughout the procession, couples of young children, dressed as angels, are suspended in the air, over the “vara,” as they chant ancient praises to Mary. At approximately 10pm, the procession returns to the shrine. Many crowd inside the church, each one wishing to say goodbye to Her and asking for her continued protection. After the concluding prayer, the image is placed back in its resting place above and behind the tabernacle as the emotion-filled crowd applauds. For those of you that have not been to Altavilla to see this beautiful festival, we recommend going at least once in your lifetime. It is truly beautiful.



**NEXT GET-TOGETHER
WILL NOT BE UNTIL
MAY 11TH 2024**

**MARCH 17TH
Annual St. Joseph Table
** See Page 4 for Details ****

**APRIL 28TH
Annual Picnic & Bocce Tournament
(Details in future newsletter)**

MEETING

March 20th 2023

7:00 PM

**St. Joseph Catholic Church
St. Joseph Hall
11001 N. 40th Street
Phoenix, AZ. 85028**

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any board member. Contact information is just below. Also, if you wish to email our general email, you may send it to mariasslauretanaaz@gmail.com

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING—March 23rd—5:00 PM

The Society of Maria SS Lauretana will have its **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP meeting** on Saturday, March 23rd at 5:00pm at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Ascension Hall. **PLEASE COME TO THIS MEETING.**

AGENDA

- I. Old Business**
- a. Profit & Loss Reports
 - b. Summary of monies donated by the Society
 - c. Year end 2023 Financial Report
- II. New Business**
- a. Ministry Fair Re-Cap
 - b. 2024 Dinner Dance Re-Cap
 - c. Upcoming annual picnic
 - d. Get-Togethers
 - e. Feedback on distributed 2024 calendars
 - f. Monthly meetings-general reminder
 - g. Feast 2024 Discussion
 - h. Membership update
 - i. Good & Welfare
 - j. Mission statement discussion
 - k. Yearly Membership Dues Discussion



St. Joseph Table – March 17th 2024

Our Annual St. Joseph Table will be on Sunday, March 17th 2024 at St. Joseph Catholic Church at 11001 N. 40th Street, in Phoenix. Below is the schedule of events:

The **Novena starts at 7:00 PM on Thursday, March 7th and ends on Friday, March 15th**. The location of the Novena will be at St. Joseph Church but will change between Ascension Hall and St. Joseph Hall. Please see below for locations by date:

March 7th: St. Joseph Hall
March 8th: Ascension Hall
March 9th – 15th: St. Joseph Hall



On **Sunday, March 10th** we will be baking bread. We need all the help we can get. We will be there between 9am and 5pm. Please come at any time to help.

On **Saturday, March 16th** we will be preparing the St. Joseph Table. We will be at Ascension Hall at 5:30PM and we hope to have it all set up by 10:00pm. If you can come and help, please do.

Finally, on **Sunday, March 17th**, the St. Joseph Table will be in Ascension Hall and overflow in the courtyard. That way, if you prefer, you can sit outside. **Times are 12:00pm to 5:00pm**. However, we will most likely be there are 10am to add any finishing touches.

If you would like to bring food to the St. Joseph Table or if you would like to donate anything, or if you have any questions, please contact Apollonia Scianna at 623-695-5254.

The food that will be prepared by the Board members is Pasta Con Sarde, Pasta with Tomato Sauce, Battered & Fried Vegetables, baked fish, bread and desserts. There will be other foods as well.

In reviewing the origins of the St. Joseph Table and that it was originally created to feed the poor, this year, the Board decided to donate 75% of our proceeds to St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry and the remaining 25% to St. Joseph Church. We hope to see everyone there!

St. Joseph Fish Fry – by Knights of Columbus



Every Friday during Lent, St. Joseph Church will be hosting fish dinners. It will be between 4:00pm and 7:00pm every Friday. Menu options are as follows:

Baked Cod with Herbs	\$12.00
3 PC Fried Breaded Flounder	\$12.00
5 PC Jumbo Fantail Shrimp	\$12.00
Baked Salmon with Sesame Soy Glaze	\$15.00
Combination Platter (1 Cod, 1 Flounder, 3 Shrimp)	\$16.00

Raffle tickets are being sold for \$5.00/each
Drawing will be on Friday, March 22nd at 6:30 pm

FIRST PRIZE:	\$500.00
SECOND PRIZE:	\$250.00
THIRD PRIZE:	\$100.00

All entrees served with coleslaw and your choice of french fries or wild rice. Lemonade, coffee and dessert served with all entrees. Come on down and support St. Joseph Catholic Church!

Toiletry Drive for St. Vincent DePaul We need your help!



Knights of
Columbus

TOILETRY DRIVE

The Society of Maria SS Lauretana is partnering with the Knights of Columbus to gather toiletries to donate to St. Vincent DePaul Society

Items needed:

- Facial wipes
- Deodorant
- Liquid hand soap
- Face cloths/towels
- Masks
- Feminine hygiene products
- Body wash

SEPT 1 -
SEPT 30

We are partnering up with the Knights of Columbus for a toiletry drive for the Society of St. Vincent DePaul. We are asking everyone to purchase and donate toiletries of any kind. (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, toilet paper, wipes, sanitary pads etc)

A drop off area will be set up for you to drop off any donated toiletries during the St. Joseph Table. You can look for it in the courtyard just outside Ascension Hall.

These toiletries will be combined with the Knights of Columbus toiletry drive and ultimately provided to St. Vincent DePaul

Thank you for your support!

St. Joseph Catholic Church Needs Adorers

St. Joseph Catholic Church has an urgent need for volunteers to spend an hour in Eucharistic Adoration. If you can volunteer, please call 602-996-5120 and leave a message and Ministry Lead will return your call.



Eucharistic Adoration

We still need substitutes & most Adoration hours need a second adorer. Please choose a time to adore and sign up by calling (602) 996-5120. Please leave a message and a Ministry Lead will return your call.

URGENT NEED FOR SECOND ADORERS

Mystery of the Eucharist Matters

Life is full of mystery, and mystery is a beautiful thing. At the heart of the mystery that is the Catholic faith is the Eucharist. We should hope with each passing year of our lives that we would desire to explore and embrace the mystery of the Eucharist more. The wiser we become, the closer we will want to be to God. And God wants to be close to us. St. Francis de Sales wrote, "In the Eucharist we become one with God." To be one with God is a beautiful thing, and whether we are aware of it or not, it is our deepest yearning.

We have an insatiable yearning to be one with God.

If you want to have a life-changing experience, come visit our Adoration Chapel. Sit there in the presence of Jesus for an hour. You will be amazed at how powerful Jesus' presence is, and how much he will teach you about yourself and your life in just one hour!

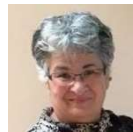
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Donate TODAY. Support our society. We take debit card, credit card via our website, (left) Zelle your donation using our email address, (left) personal check mailed to our PO box (left) or cash to one of our Board members