



## Carmelite Spiritual Center to Host 2016 Joliet Cursillo Weekends

The Joliet Cursillo has entered into agreement with the Carmelite Spiritual Center of Darien, IL to host five upcoming Cursillo Weekends. These will be the first Joliet Cursillo Weekends to be held at the Center. The dates are as follows:

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Women's 122<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>November 12 - 15, 2015</b> |
| <b>Men's 131<sup>st</sup></b>   | <b>April 7 - 10, 2016</b>     |
| <b>Women's 123<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>April 28 - May 1, 2016</b> |
| <b>Men's 132<sup>nd</sup></b>   | <b>Nov. 3 - 6, 2016</b>       |
| <b>Women's 124<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Nov. 10 - 13, 2016</b>     |



*The Center is located at 8419 Bailey Road, just west of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Darien.*

"We are thrilled to be working with the Carmelite Spiritual Center for our 2016 schedule of Weekends," stated Marta Spiezio, Assistant Lay Director and Co-Three Day Chair for the Joliet Cursillo. "Their facility is first class and they have a great deal of experience in supporting groups throughout the

diocese with their spiritual needs." **(Continued on page 2)**

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### From the Lay Director—Tim Moore

I am pleased to announce that **Wally Pinas** has accepted the call to be Rector for the Men's 130th Cursillo Weekend!

Wally is a member of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Darien and has been an active Cursillista since attending the Men's 115th Weekend in April of 2008. Wally has previously served on eight Weekend teams including twice as Assistant Rector.

"I am thankful and humbled to be chosen by our Lord to be his instrument. Please pray for me, the team and most of all the candidates as we undertake this journey," stated Wally. The Weekend will be held from Thursday October 1st through Sunday October 4th at the Dominican Retreat Center in Justice, IL.

**(Continued on page 3)**

## Two Guys You CAN Reason With! (by Robert Barron)

*An Interview with Two Catholic Men and A Blog authors, Joe Pusateri and Ben Butera*

*You've seen those ubiquitous moving vans, 'Two Men and a Truck', the name of the company being its marketing slogan as well as implying its proposition - a low cost move providing you all you really need to get yourself from here to there. In much the same way, two Catholic men, Ben and Joe, through their blog are helping many get from faith to reason and back and see the ways that science and logic actually make the case for God's existence and the teachings of his pilgrim Church on earth. **(Continued on page 8)***

# Carmelite Spiritual Center to Host 2016 Joliet Cursillo Weekends

(cont. from page 1)

The Carmelite Spiritual Center re-opened in its current configuration on January 18<sup>th</sup> of this year. Prior to that, a smaller facility operated for over 30 years.

The Center features 59 double-occupancy rooms, each with a private bath and a desk. There are also two chapels, two large meeting rooms, numerous smaller 'break-out' meetings rooms and beautiful surrounding grounds. Additionally, the Center is well noted for the quality of meals they offer in their amply sized dining room.



“The Staff’s experience and thoughtfulness in providing for all the needs of the groups it hosts will make this a truly wonderful experience for the Teams and Candidates of forth-coming Weekends”, remarked Thom Brandolino, Co-Three Day Chair for the Joliet Cursillo.

The Carmelite order dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is currently headquartered in Rome. The Joliet Cursillo and the Carmelites have a long association with a number of Carmelite Priests serving on Week-ends over the life of the Movement. This includes the late Father Kevin Shanley who served on more than fifty Cursillo Weekends.

The Center is next to the National Shrine of St. Therese. The Shrine features a chapel, museum and gift shop dedi-

cated to celebrating the life of St. Therese who was a Carmelite nun in Lisieux, France during the 19th Century. The Shrine is currently closed for renovations and will re-open in the Fall of 2015.

To learn more about the Carmelite Spiritual Center and the plans for Joliet Cursillo Weekends, please email one of our Three-Day Chairs:

Marta Spiezio ([spiezio.marta@gmail.com](mailto:spiezio.marta@gmail.com))

or Thom Brandolino ([tbrand5370@aol.com](mailto:tbrand5370@aol.com)).



*Each double occupancy room features a desk and it’s own private bath.*



*There are two chapels in the Carmelite Spiritual Center.*



*Two large meeting rooms are available.*



*Windows of the chapel—above and above left.*

## Carmelite Spiritual Center to Host 2016 Joliet Cursillo Weekends



*(At left) The carpeted dining room lends itself to conversation and fellowship during meals. The Center is renowned for the quality of their food service!*

*The grounds of the Center afford many quiet places for conversation and contemplation. Near right is one of the stations of the Cross. At far right is a stream which runs near the central gazebo.*



*The entrance lobby to the Center is pictured at left. The Center is host to over a hundred groups a year.*

### From the Lay Director—Tim Moore (Cont. from Page 1)

"I'm grateful that Wally will serve the Movement as Rector for the Men's 130th Cursillo Weekend," added Fr. Matt Pratscher, Spiritual Director for the Joliet Cursillo. "May the Holy Spirit guide him and the team in leading the candidates into a deeper friendship with Christ with the help of the grace offered through the Church and Her sacraments and the assistance of group reunions and Ultreyas."

Wally has discerned the following Bible quote from James 1:22 as the theme for the Weekend:

***"Be Doers of the Word..."***

Formation will begin in mid-July. Further information on

the times and place of team meetings will be forthcoming shortly.

If you feel called to work on this Weekend, please pray about it and consider joining Wally's team. To work on a team, you must be in ***active Group reunion and willing to commit to being in attendance for 10 weeks of formation meetings.***

Peace,

Tim Moore  
Lay Director  
Joliet Cursillo



# Haiti Ankò!

That's Creole for "Haiti Again". That's appropriate as I have just finished my sixth trip to the island over the past seven years.

In that time I have been blessed with the opportunity to be of service to the Haitian people in a variety of ways. A few years back, myself and another Cursillo brother, Mike Kuppinger with a lot of help from local residents, were able to construct a waiting shelter-structure for a medical clinic that had been erected previously. (See [clinic](#) for this story.)

I have become involved in this effort through a charitable organization, Haiti Marycare ([www.haitimarycare.org](http://www.haitimarycare.org)) which is headquartered in Connecticut and was established by my brother Tom and his wife Mary Lou, an ER nurse. For seventeen years, Haiti Marycare has been organizing medical aid for Haiti, supplying doctors, nurses and dentists along with equipment, supplies and other useful donated items. Haiti Marycare's 'man on the ground' in Haiti is Father Joseph Ernst Dorcin.

I met Fr. Dorcin during my first visit to Haiti in 2009. Fr. Dorcin was the priest in Jackzi when Haiti Marycare began work there. Father quickly impressed Haiti Marycare as a very engaged priest who had his fingers on the pulse of the community and effectively communicated the community needs to us back at Haiti Marycare and also in turn shared our needs with the community. Fr. Dorcin was and is such a good community priest that Haiti Marycare quickly realized he would be a valuable asset and a great spiritual guide to the ongoing success of their mission and thus asked him to join their board.

For this particular mission, the task was to aggregate supplies and equipment which could be used in two medical clinics. As a complimentary objective, I was also on the look-out for anything that could be used to supply and furnish Fr. Dorcin's rectory in the town of Pillette.

Starting in the Spring of 2014 and working with Haiti Marycare contacts, we canvassed the Chicago-area for donations of medical supplies and equipment. It took several months to collect the donated items - crutches, wheelchairs, bandages, vitamins, ointments and you-name-it medically speaking. In addition, friends, neighbors, parishioners and Cursillistas from around the diocese donated all sorts of items which would be instrumental for the completion of Father's rectory. They do-

nated beds, desks, tables, chairs, lamps, dishes, glassware, lights, linens and more. We also received 150 gallons of paint and two tons of wall and floor tile. Perhaps most critically, the cash donations provided would allow us to purchase in-country the tools, solar panels, deep well-water pump and reservoir assembly which would be instrumental to creating a supply of fresh water for the community.

Now to get all this assembled loot to Haiti! Other Haiti Marycare volunteers on the east coast were making plans to contract for a forty-foot ocean shipping container which would depart from Virginia for Port-au-Prince in the summer. With help from another Cursillo brother, Rick Higdon, we rented a 24' straight-truck and loaded up the items and headed out for Virginia.



***No room at the bin...***

Upon arrival we helped to pack the container. Every square inch of that container was jamb-packed with something that would be useful in Haiti. We squeezed anything and everything into the container, including a Toyota truck donated by a church in Tennessee. We could barely fit in another item before its doors were finally latched shut. The container arrived in Haiti in Sept. 2014.

Fast-forward to this past March. I joined a Haiti Marycare mission trip team comprised of doctors, nurses, dental hygienists and several other volunteers that were heading to Haiti. Once there, the mission team distributed and assembled the various items that had arrived on the sea container. Thanks be to God, everything arrived in good working order, including the Toyota truck!

About that water. The aforementioned equipment including the solar powered pump is now providing clean



***With joy you will draw water. (Is 12:3). The solar panel which powers the water system for Pilette.***

water for the Pilette community. The water is distributed to Fr. Dorcin's rectory and from there to the local church, a medical clinic and two local schools. For me this was one of the more rewarding projects I worked on while in Haiti as this is now the only fresh, clean water available

to this community – a major accomplishment.

Thanks to everyone that planted a seed or two. The seed may have been an item, some money, a bit of encouragement, a little praise or just a prayer. All were and are appreciated beyond words. Most importantly, everyone's effort is what makes a difference. The beautiful people of Haiti get to enjoy the fruits of everyone's generosity. I am a bit overwhelmed that I get to be at the forefront and receive credit for an effort that represents so many, many wonderful, generous, kind and loving people. ALL glory be to God!

If you would like to learn more about Haiti Marycare and their efforts to help the Haitian people, please visit [www.haitimarycare.org](http://www.haitimarycare.org).

Ultryea!

**Bob Larkin**

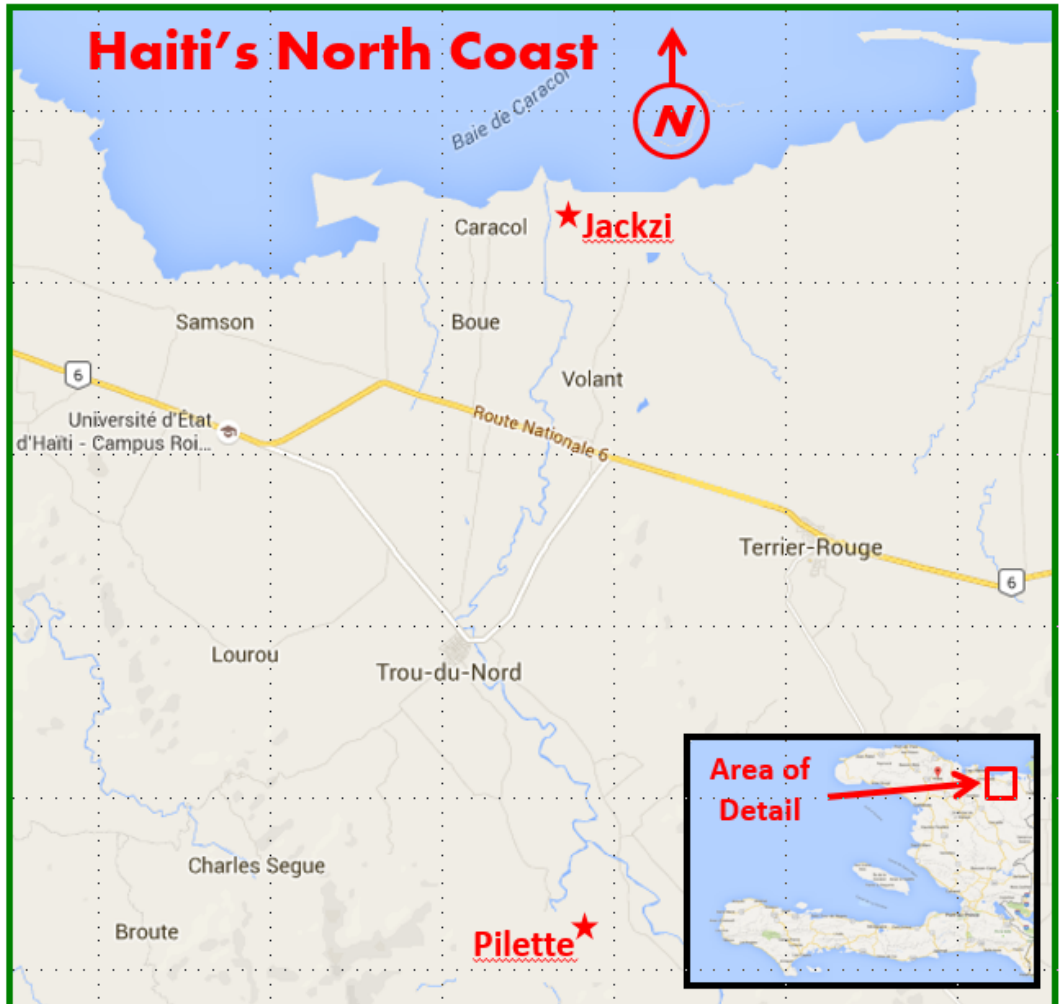
**Bob (Men's 95th Cursillo) is a member of St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Naperville.**



### **The Fourth Day wants YOU!**

Do you have a story about how you are living your Fourth Day? Does one of your Cursillo Brothers or Sisters have an interesting and inspiring Fourth Day story to share? Please let us know! We would love to feature these stories in future issues.

Contact:  
**Robert Barron**  
630-460-6962  
[robert\\_barron@comcast.net](mailto:robert_barron@comcast.net)



# And Now a Word For Our Sponsors! (by Robert Barron)

The two recently completed Men's 129<sup>th</sup> and Women's 120<sup>th</sup> Weekends were a smashing success. Fifty new Cur-sillistas came closer to Christ through the efforts of the Teams and the sponsorship of the Fourth Day. Our deepest thanks go to all of you who were sponsors and most importantly to the Holy Spirit who moved these folks to attend.

It is hard to imagine a time in our lives in which the Cur-



sillo method could be more relevant that it is now. We should continue to expect that candidate interest in attending Weekends and embracing the Cursillo method will continue at this 'filled-to-capacity' pace.

This then is an opportune moment to review some of the basics of the Cursillo application and sponsorship.

First, we have a revamped Cursillo Application. It is available on the website in several locations. (The current revision is May 3, 2015) It covers all the necessities of applying for a Cursillo Weekend. I ask you to use this application going forward. Any changes in Pre-Cursillo Chair contact information will be reflected and updated here. Therefore it is important to always use the most current application from the website.

There are five pages to the application. I will describe each and its importance:

## **Page 1: Candidate Application for a Cursillo Weekend** –

This overall cover page gives a very brief overview of the Cursillo Movement and indicates where to send the completed application and fee. There is also a

contact phone number and email if there any questions.

**Page 2: Candidate Application** – This page is to be filled out by the candidate and returned to you, the sponsor. This is the **only page** the Candidate should be responsible for and thus the only page you should give to your Candidate. (There is also a note about the \$20 fee. If the candidate is able to afford the Weekend, please ask them to include a check with this completed page to you. If not, you can cover the fee for your candidate or speak to the Pre-Cursillo Chair about financial aide.)

**Page 3: Sponsor's Information Sheet** – This sheet contains important details about the responsibilities of the sponsor. It is important to read it, sign it and return with the application. Very often, it has not been included with the application. I ask all of you to carefully consider this page, pray about the requirements it describes regarding Palanca, the candidate's eligibility to attend and most importantly your willingness to walk the journey with your candidate for a year to facilitate their entrance into small group reunion and Ultreya. Please sign it and return it with the completed application.

**Page 4: Sponsor's Evaluation** – This sheet has been simplified to a check-box format for many of the questions traditionally asked. It also has a place to describe any special needs your candidate may have. This is a good place to elaborate on any information your candidate provided about their special needs on the **Candidates Application...** page. Please remember we are providing a retreat-like environment and requests such as a single room and/or special dietary needs should be made **only** if there is a medical necessity for this.

**Page 5: Pastor's Evaluation and Approval** It is your responsibility as the sponsor to obtain the Candidate's Pastor's signature on this sheet. It is not the job of the candidate to obtain their Pastor's approval. Further, it needs to be the Pastor, not the associate, another priest or a deacon. Why is this?

**A)** By obtaining the Pastor's signature, we are showing respect for the Pastor as the Bishop's representative to the Parish. The Bishop has placed the Priest in charge of that congregation of which the candidate is a member. Many Pastors are well-

acquainted with Cursillo and what we do and so fully support us. Others are less familiar with the movement. In both cases, it is essential that they be consulted and asked to approve the application.

**B)** By visiting the Pastor, you as an experienced member of the Fourth Day can answer any questions the Pastor may have about the Movement and the Weekend. Your candidate is not equipped to answer these questions.

**C)** By visiting the Pastor, you have a chance to demonstrate to the Pastor how the Holy Spirit is working in his Congregation through the Cursillo Movement. If there is a difficulty in obtaining the Pastor's approval, advise the Pre-Cursillo Chair immediately. There are exceptional circumstances in which the signature of a Priest other than the Pastor may be acceptable (e.g. illness, extended absence, vacancy). The Pre-Cursillo Chair will consult with our Spiritual Director to work out a solution in these cases.

We love our deacons, but a deacon cannot sign a **Pastor's Evaluation and Approval** page.

***To review, a properly completed application will have FOUR pages and the signature of the Candidate, the Pastor and you the Sponsor, twice.***

In most cases the application can be mailed to the Joliet Cursillo PO Box in Lisle. If the Weekend is only a few weeks away, it is appropriate to scan and email the application to the Pre-Cursillo Chair. Be sure to explain this in the cover email. You can follow with the application fee check in the mail to the PO Box or bring it to the Weekend with your Candidate.

It is essential that the application be sent to the Pre-Cursillo chair and not to the Rector or Rectora. The Pre-Cursillo chair is the ONLY one in a position to advise whether space is available for a given Weekend and thus make a commitment of space for a given candidate. The Rector/Rectora does not have this information. The Pre-Cursillo chair will be in near continuous contact with the Core Team during the weeks leading up to the Weekend to insure they are aware of Candidates and their requirements. Collecting applications is not the responsibility of the Rector/Rectora. Their job is to lead their Team through the formation process and conduct a fantastic Weekend with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ.* No doubt you have all heard that many times. A friend is someone we go the extra mile for. A friend is someone

we don't hold back from in terms of giving of our time, our energy and our treasure to help. Much of what I described above is different from what we have historically done. There are good very reasons for us to follow these guidelines. It will mean a little more effort from all of you as sponsors – to visit the Candidate's Pastor, to collect all the parts of the application and to mail it in to the PO Box.

Jesus commanded us as follows (John 15:12-13) - *This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

I am not asking for any or commitment as drastic as this! I am asking you to go the extra mile for your friends and for the Cursillo Movement.

To download an application, go here: [Application](#).

***Ultreya!***

## Cursillo Picnic!

Please join us for a day of Mass, fellowship, good food and fun.

**When: Sunday July 19th**

**Where: Round Barn near Manhattan, IL**

**What: Mass, food, fellowship and fun!**

For more information and to register, follow this link: [Picnic](#)



***Picnic area for Cursillo Picnic***

## Two Guys You Can Reason With (cont. from page 1)

*TFD traveled to visit them recently and talk about their blog, the Universe, the existence of God and just about anything else the discussion led to.*

**TFD:** Whose idea was this?

**Joe:** So it was my idea. Ben likes to send emails to our small group with interesting ideas or thoughts or reflections and so I said to him, we should write those down. Why don't you put them in a blog then we can have a record of all that you have done? He's said, 'yeah let's do that, can you set it up?' So I set it up and then he said, 'why don't you do it with me?' So then I got pulled into doing it with him.

**Ben :** The only thing I would add is that I said to Joe, 'what's a blog?'

**TFD:** So it started out as reflection to your small group. You make a lot of references in the blog to troubleshooting and the like...

**Ben:** Yes, I was certified [by my employer] to teach a class to engineers and techs on problem analysis and decision making, a pure logic kind of process. I was kind of stunned how some aspects of this could be applied to faith. Actually in terms of looking for contradictions or if someone has an objection to make it clear or to dig down and determine, what are you objecting about really when you say it's dumb or it doesn't work or whatever it might be, to break it down and separate and clarify what you are talking about.

**Joe:** It also identifies assumptions. It calls them out

**Ben:** Yes, it helps you identify what you are assuming and what you are not.

**TFD:** What did you both study in school?

**Joe:** Computer science.

**Ben:** Printing technology with a minor in Engineering. As an elective I once took a class called *The Philosophy of*

*Religion.*

**Joe:** I took logic courses as part of the computer science curriculum, which has helped me.

**TFD:** Engineering, math, IT aren't that far apart. Logic is common to all of it.

**Joe:** Isn't it interesting how the sciences really lay the foundation for philosophy and for religion?

**TFD:** Do you know how many posts you have done since starting?

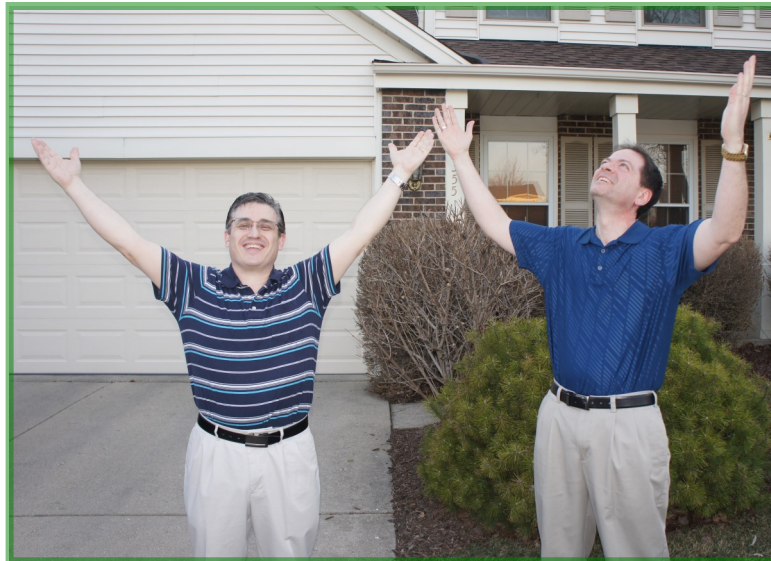
**Joe:** About 150 or so since starting in the Fall of 2011.

**TFD:** Do you have a certain frequency of posting you try to adhere to?

**Joe:** I try and get something some-time! No, we are trying to get once a week or twice a week if possible.

**Ben:** I have read where successful blogs are daily.

**Joe:** When I get something good, I know I want to do it and I get it out.



*Joe Pusateri and Ben Butera are the two St. Walter's Cursillistas behind [Two Catholic Men and a Blog](#).*

**Ben:** I try to do a couple per month. It's usually not planned. I am always reading and studying things. Sometimes I notice that whatever I'm studying connects with something else I read in the past or even some problem at work. It could relate to a way of thinking and then some ideas pop into my head and I put a few paragraphs together, a couple of pictures, and that's a post.

**TFD:** I notice that the topic that has the most 'tags' [an indexing tool on the site] is 'Does God Exist?' There are some 22 post that reference this topic.

**Joe:** It's because many in the culture are looking for that.

**TFD:** I like that you cited an example of two hikers hiking through the woods stumbling upon a cabin. [[A Cabin from Nothing – April 10, 2014](#).] In this post, one hiker assumes that something with intelligence created it. The companion counters that it is a result of random forces.



**Joe:** It's like the ['Watchmaker Analogy'](#) [from [William Paley](#), British apologist of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He argued that design implies a designer. Hence a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker.]

**TFD:** I read recently that a philosopher named [Hume](#) tried to de-bunk the watchmaker analogy. Has anyone de-bunked this de-bunker?

**Ben:** One of [Hume's] de-bunks is that if you can accept a naturally ordered God, a self-ordered God, why not just accept a self-ordered universe or the world around us? My problem with that is that we know man came first then cell-phones and buildings came after. We know how that all came together. Before man, we didn't see how the earth or universe came together. If we start making assumptions that we're the center of the universe, that how that came together must have been an accident, because WE do everything. You don't know that, it's kind of an assumption. It's actually more reasonable to say that something as complex as the fine-tuning of the universe, or how the planet works or even how things evolve, something that complex - is designed as opposed to being of randomness.

**TFD:** Hume was complaining that we have all seen someone make a watch but we've never seen someone make a universe.

**Joe:** Another one of his [Hume's] arguments is that things we make don't look like nature. So there they are different as if nature isn't as good as something we make. And just because they are un-alike has nothing to do with whether it was made or not.

**TFD:** There was an editorial [regarding the science of the universe] in the Wall Street Journal on Christmas Day 2014 [by [Eric Metaxas](#)] that both of you guys touched on in your blogs which is that there are so many factors that have to be just exactly 'so' for life to exist that the odds of there being other life-supporting planets are getting longer all the time.

**Joe:** Yes and none are determined by anything else. It's not like any one has a particular value and so that one has to be that number or in a particular range. As far as we know, they are all completely independent "dials". We discovered them as constants, such as gravity, it's a constant. The strong and weak nuclear forces, they could be anything. But the way they are now supports what we have. The question becomes whether some other life could have been supportable with a different set, but we don't know that. You can't nail it down because we don't know everything.

**Ben:** Sometimes I'll receive a comment [the blog allows for readers to post comments] and Joe will too from an atheist who might be on the blog and somebody in that regards had said to me that, 'it's no more amazing that a

puddle fills a hole perfectly, what are the odds that the water fills every little nook and cranny? It just does it. The same with the universe, it just fits perfectly.' I replied the reason that the water fits the puddle hole perfectly is that there are certain laws of water, the physics of water and of gravity, there are a lot of laws in place that make it that way. It doesn't have to be that way, actually. That was his reasoning, it's just the way it is, just like a puddle fits into a hole, the universe fits. It comes from nothing.

**TFD:** Are you serious?

**Ben:** It gets worse than that!

**Joe:** I have a lot of fun responding to comments.

**TFD:** Can you each give me an example of a really wonderful comment that you received?

**Ben:** There is a teacher at some Catholic High School who just said, 'congratulations, thanks for wasting days of my time going through your blog for material for my class!' He meant it as a compliment.

**TFD:** How about a couple of really egregious ones?

**Ben:** We delete them.

[laughter!]

**Joe:** No we don't delete them.

**Ben:** Only if there is name-calling.

**TFD:** I noticed that there was some good back and forth between you and a fellow who posts as "Rationalist1".

**Joe:** He was challenging at first and then I think he had changed his tune for a while.

**Ben:** He started getting more and more open.

**Joe:** Open and more polite.

**Ben:** Maybe he converted.

**Joe:** Maybe...

**TFD:** I have heard Father Robert Barron say that his posts attract a lot of atheists. Do you get that too?

**Ben:** Oh yeah, some. They think they have the higher ground intellectually. They think that, you need religion like an opiate so that you feel better about the world and how you're going to die. If anything it's more about the material world, material reality. A lot of the blog talks about two parts of reality, the spiritual reality and the physical reality. Someone who studies a lot of the material world, the physical part of our world becomes

**(Continued on page 10)**

## Two Guys You Can Reason With (cont. from page 9)

blind to the spiritual part. Unless you exercise that other eye to look the other way, you don't get that three-dimensional vision of what reality is. It's both physical and spiritual.

**TFD:** Do you ever feel like you run out of ideas?

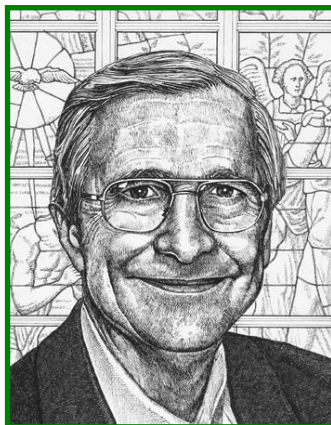
**Joe:** I do. [laughter] I read a lot, although a lot of the stuff I read I am not able to put into something. I am omnivorous in my reading, I read in a lot of different directions. So I don't actually find it easy to say, 'so I've read this bit and I can put it in a blog.' The Mercy one I did most recently [[Mercy: How God Loves, January 1, 2015](#)], it really hit me, 'oh I have got to tell this story'. I really like that. Other things I am reading right now, I am reading a [Peter Kreeft](#) book [Professor of Philosophy at Boston College and author of 75 books on Christian

Apologetics], [Socrates meets Kant](#). I get what he is saying but it's really hard to digest that to a post. OK, I am going to have to put that aside and pick up something else. So my son brought me some books from school which included Peter Kreeft's [Pascal Pensees: Edited and Explained](#). I haven't read the Pascal original, but I guess I'll read Peter Kreeft. It's just hard to put it into something I can write about easily. In my formation (as a Deacon) we are reading the Bible and so we are reading the Old Testament and doing the Historical Critical method which in part is looking at the scriptural documents apart from religion. So I can't write about that because that's not anything that makes sense for the blog. So I have been planting in arid ground and not getting any seeds coming up.

**Ben:** Yeah I do run out of ideas. Sometimes I repeat myself a little bit, but just when I think I am out of an idea, I come across something, perhaps from another blog or a book I am reading or a reflection I read, I put it together and something comes up.

**Joe:** Ironically I think we try and stay apolitical but the political posts are actually the more loved ones. I don't like to blog about politics.

**Ben:** I don't either.



*Professor and author,  
Peter Kreeft*

**Joe:** When you say you repeat yourself, you are just connecting things.

**Ben:** Re-connecting things?

**TFD:** I loved your blog [Pro-Life or Social Justice](#) [October 22, 2011].

**Joe:** It's an arbitrary split and actually we are on different sides of the aisle on those options. The Republican side is pro-life and the Democratic side is social justice. I know a lot of Catholics on both sides of this arbitrary aisle and they actually do split along those party lines, but it's crazy because we are really on the same side.

**Ben:** You kind of vote for the party because even if you think you are voting for the man, even if they go against the party, eventually they will get knocked back in or knocked out.

**TFD:** Who is your favorite living theologian, philosopher or apologist and who is your favorite of all time?

**Joe:** Dr. Scott Hahn is probably my favorite theologian. Peter Kreeft is a philosopher. I don't know that I would change my answer for the past. I think Dr. Hahn is my favorite because he writes the way I think. I don't have to translate as I am reading, it just goes right in and I think, 'I get it, I get it'.

**Ben:** A lay-apologist, [Frank Sheed](#) who has passed away. His first book [Theology and Sanity](#), the title sounded interesting to me. I read and it blew me away. Very clear and very simple to understand.

**Joe:** The first book of his that I read was [Theology for Beginners](#) and that was for me foundational. Because it went, 'What's the Trinity? Just tell me. What's an angel?'

**Ben:** And another one by him is [The Map of Life](#).

**TFD:** And he died?

**Joe:** He died in 1982. He was from Australia.

**Ben:** As far as living, Peter Kreeft. His name is Dutch, but he was born in New Jersey.

**Joe:** He comes from a different angle. He comes from the 'beauty angle'. There is an argument from beauty.

**Ben:** Why is it beautiful? Why would you say that?

**Joe:** The fact that it strikes us as beautiful, that's where he comes from. He still gives talks and can be found on CDs from [Lighthouse Media](#).

**Ben:** It could be that a few posts are inspired by a book. I'll give credit where credit is due. I don't just copy what they say, I'll do my own work.

**TFD:** Have you either of you thought about writing a book?

**Joe:** Thought about it, but I am never going to be able to do it.

**Ben:** Two Catholic Men and a Book?

**Joe:** That would be a best seller!

**TFD:** I noticed that your blog was linked to the [National Catholic Register](#)?

**Ben:** There is an editor there named Tito Edwards, he runs something called [Big Pulpit](#), where he takes a lot of different blogs every day and puts up things two or three times a day. I will email him the posts and if he really likes it he will put it on the [Register's Best in Catholic Blogging](#).

**Joe:** So we've been connected to both of those.

**TFD:** Does that expand how many subscribers you have once your blog gets posted?

**Joe:** The hits. There's no subscribers, just who reads the blog. Google does a good job in Blogspot to say where they came from, what country, such as China, Brazil and Russia and who the referrer was.

**TFD:** So I gather Putin must be watching?

**Joe:** The Chinese are watching...

**TFD:** So you can see how many people have looked at your blog? What is it usually for a week or for a month?

**Ben:** If we have just posted it can be a hundred a day.

**Joe:** I've seen more than a hundred a day for a brand new post. But it averages less than that per day. One post that was on the National Catholic Register was over a thousand a day.

**TFD:** What was the most difficult one to write?

**Ben:** Some just flow really easy. Some, you have ideas started but then it gets bogged down and it's hard to finish. I still wanted to finish it.

**Joe:** I have to say that the problems I have pretty much end up with no posts. So if I have a really hard time, you won't see a post. The posts that I can do – are the ones I want to talk about and I just do it. I don't remember struggling over getting one that I already knew what I wanted to do out.

**Ben:** I recently read a book. It was kind of a difficult read. It was called, [A Meaningful World](#). It's about how you can find meaning in creation. Everything seemed to be planned together the way everything flowed through and there's a lot of biology and science and stuff in there. They talk about the first cell and how complicated a cell is. That one was difficult to write because of the biology

– I wanted to get it right without copying what they say in the book and say it in my own words.

**Joe:** I guess when you said that it reminded me about the one on quantum physics. That was difficult.

**Ben:** Oh, the non-negotiables?

**Joe:** Yeah.

**Ben:** We don't have a background in physics, but we still want to talk about it in general terms.

**Joe:** And we don't want to look stupid.

**Ben:** And some physicist happens to be looking and says, 'now wait a minute...'

**TFD:** That would be embarrassing!

**Joe:** Right, that would be embarrassing.

**TFD:** Has that happened where somebody's taken you to task?

**Joe:** Well they try!

**Ben:** This is an example of an assumption people have such as, 'well everything is evolution.' The very first life form – there was nothing to evolve from. Everything was dead. At some point, something was alive. Whether you want to call it a cell or a virus or a thing. So passing on your genetics, passing on your traits – the first one, isn't evolution. And how complicated even the simplest life form is, science is learning now that it's immensely complicated.

**TFD:** Darwin postulated how we got all these different species, he never postulated ...

**Ben:** The origin of life? No.

**TFD:** Like going from the first inanimate to animate...

**Ben:** Nobody knows how that happens.

**TFD:** One of your readers went back and forth with you on that.

**Joe:** We had to pin him down in the right place, because he was mixing that and saying it was all evolution. We said you can't go back before this moment and say it was evolution. It was chance before that because there was nothing alive to self-motivate. The more you dig into life it's interesting, because we don't just have life, we have 'factories'. It would be one thing for a whirlwind to bring into being a house, what would be the odds of a whirlwind that makes a factory that makes houses? That's what we have. That's what a cell is. It's a factory that makes other factories. How is that possible to randomly have a factory that makes other factories?

**Ben:** The book [A Meaningful World](#) talks about a car.

(Continued on page 12)

## Two Guys You *Can* Reason With (cont. from page 11)

A car is not just parts in a certain location. Things are integrated together. Battery, alternator – it's a system that goes together. So no matter how lucky you are that the parts landed in the right locations, tires, battery? They are still not integrated. So even the first cell or first living thing or virus or whatever you want to call it, it's like an integrated little system.

**TFD:** So many Catholics don't understand that [Monseigneur Georges Lemaitre](#) was the author of the '[Big Bang Theory](#)' of the creation of the universe.

**Joe:** The 'Big Bang' name was an insult from one of his contemporaries who argued with him.

**Ben:** One of my favorite books and many of my posts are based on is [The Savior of Science](#) by [Fr. Stanley Jaki](#). You look at Europe and why did science come out of Europe? You learn about science and physics, you're not studying about ancient China. You go to Japan, Assyria, Babylon, ancient Egypt, whatever it was, why did science start in Europe? It's from the premises of Catholicism.



*The late Father Stanley Jaki, OSB and Professor of Physics at Seton Hall University.*

Where it all started from is that if we have a rational creator, God - the creation must also be rational. If we're made in the image and likeness of God, we should be able to understand it. Instead of nature being some kind of like wild animal that we have to appease.

**Joe:** Or if nature itself is God, you're not allowed to experiment on those cows. They're sacred cows, they're God. If there is a separation between God the spiritual and created reality...

**Ben:** There's no difference fundamentally between a pebble and the Moon. They're just things. You can study them. The Moon is not just some 'thing' watching you around the sky. Those all come from Catholic premises. So when did science get going, from the middle ages and beyond, those premises got ingrained in the culture and in everyone – 'this is how it is'. So now it's ironic that

one of the premises has been reversed in that the universe is very intelligible, but it must be an accident. That's the premise. Where it used to be the premise that since the universe is intelligible, it must have come from something intelligent. Now it's exactly opposite.

**TFD:** A book came out in the 1990s, [How the Irish Saved Civilization](#), have you heard of that one? It talks about how Irish monks were the repository of learning.

**Joe:** I've read [How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization](#). The middle ages were not dark ages at all. After the barbarian incursion, the Catholic Church was the place where all that knowledge was kept and saved and then re-discovered from the Muslims, the ancient Greek philosophy that they had taken that Rome lost, came back. But even then, they were learning and learning so that the enlightenment bore the fruit of the growth of the middle ages. That's really different than the story we're told that, nothing happened, we couldn't do anything and then suddenly we able to do everything because we suddenly got smart. Why does that make sense to anybody? And it's not upheld by facts.

**Ben:** So the false assumption that the Church is against science.

**Joe:** The Church funded science through schools. Universities and hospitals came from the church. There would be no hospitals if it weren't for the Catholic Church.

**TFD:** That's something people just don't realize is that the first hospitals were Christian institutions. Have you heard of [Occam's razor](#)? [Medieval English Franciscan Friar William of Ockham who devised a problem solving principle which states that among competing hypotheses which predict equally well, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected.]

**Ben:** That's part of the trouble-shooting we do at work which related to the more assumptions you need to make something true the more unreasonable it becomes, the less likely your theory is correct. A lot of what people do is trouble-shooting by trial and error based on experience. But what's the most reasonable theory? The one with no contradictions at all or some apparent contradictions, but there are some very simple assumptions to explain them. Whereas another theory requires this list of odd assumptions. It's not that you've proved either one 'yes or no', but when you can prove one is more reasonable. So you've got to go in that direction.

**Joe:** Now essentially the other side says regarding 'The Big Bang', well if there was a beginning of the Universe,

there must have been something outside of the universe that started it. So we start there and say there must be something other than the material universe and we debunk materialism. Then they say, 'what if there were other universe's before ours?' An infinitely regressive bounces – expanding and contracting. Well then they discovered that the theory of entropy will still hold and there would have to be a first one of those even. Well then they say, 'what about the [multiverse](#)?' Well the 'multiverse' you can't get from one to another, so there's no way to verify that empirically. Again Occam's razor would wipe that out saying, you've imagined something that you can't prove – how is that different than a God you can't see? You just debunked one of the worst theories.

**TFD:** Somebody who brought that up that maybe there are multiple universes. Occam's razor would be really good to actually debunk that.

**TFD:** In the [January 22, 2012 blog](#), "Pro-choice and moral blind-spot", one of you wrote: "*Scientifically, human life begins at conception as an objective fact. To say the first stage of one's life or one's personhood begins at some other threshold of consciousness or viability is subjective; a matter of opinion. To declare something as important as this on something subjective is irrational, especially when something objective is available.*" Did you write that?

**Joe:** No.

**Ben:** I've heard things like it. It's just the way it is. I've read different things like that and put it in my own words.

**TFD:** You distilled that.

**Ben:** It makes it more distinct and clear.

**Joe:** That's yours, Ben. It puts it concisely.

**TFD:** The New York Times had an article talking about how our country's [birth rate is dropping](#). Our birth rate is falling below the replacement rate.

**Joe:** We all grew about or near the same time where the sentiment was that "we're going to overpopulate the earth and we're not going to have enough food." All the people in the world could fit into the state of Texas with about an acre each. [Overpopulation is a Myth](#) is a website that explains this with different videos that show how we can feed everybody.

**TFD:** That has been a fallacy.

**Joe:** It wasn't always a fallacy. There was time when the projections would show us going off the charts. The thing is that the cultures have changed and this is no longer true but no one is singing the new song, no one is giving us the new information.

**TFD:** [Thomas Malthus](#), a Protestant Minister back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century said we will run out of food due to population growth.

**Joe:** My kids are still learning about him and he thought it was going to happen right away.

**TFD:** So anybody who thinks like that is called 'Malthusian – Malthusian Projections'. He and his intellectual descendants put no faith in human ingenuity to come up with...

**Joe:** ...better ways to feed people.

**TFD:** Of the debates with pro-choice people, is that something that recurs when you put anything out about that?

**Joe:** I think it's mostly defensive, that "I've made this decision, this is where I stand, and if you challenge me, I'll be wrong, and that's bad." Kind of a reflexive defense. You can't push your religion on somebody.

**Ben:** I don't mention religion anywhere. I don't talk about religion, I'm talking about facts. I like to make it a little personal, I ask, "When did you become a person?" Show me the data. I can if it's genetic and show you when the genes came together and at an exact, observable point. You can look at the data to see when you started.

**Joe:** It's like [Hunger Games](#) with abortion. Only the kids will fight. Who makes that law? The adults. They'll never be kids again. They don't have any skin in the game. They can legislate anything they want for everyone else. Since it doesn't apply to them, it's OK. Same thing with abortion – they'll never be a fetus again.

**Ben:** The fetus can't complain about it, or cry, or scream.

**Joe:** That's what's interesting. As you get older, you get more freedoms and less restrictions. So that, logically, when you're younger you should have fewer freedoms, more restrictions and more protection. But we've decided, at that point, we've reversed everything and there's no protection at all.

**Ben:** Now we have the term "non-person", so you're not a person, you're not human.

**Joe:** 'It's part of my body!' Yes, but it's not a toenail...

**TFD:** They can say, 'if we make abortion illegal, it will be back-alley abortions – there's no more stigma these days over having a baby out of wedlock.

**Joe:** Back alley abortions - that's a bad thing. But you'd have fewer dead people.

**(Continued on page 14)**

## Two Guys You *Can* Reason With (cont. from page 13)

**TFD:** Joe when did you discern for the diaconate? Did doing this blog help that?

**Joe:** I did this blog to work with Ben. The diaconate came out of a long involvement with the church.

**TFD:** Is there a topic you haven't addressed that you think you want to address?

**Ben:** There was one that I did that was a little controversial, that is homosexuality as a deviation, something abnormal. Not really talking about theology, looking at facts and how things are designed. How we would call a deviation at work, compared to how it's designed and just doing the same thing with the human body. I did a post about that and got some comments.

**TFD:** Did that get a lot of comments?

**Ben:** Yeah. Anything nasty, I deleted.

**Joe:** Evangelization is where I like to think about, so I think we all could do an evangelization whether we are thinking about it or not. Probably better to be conscious evangelists than unconscious de-evangelists.

**Ben:** That's a good topic!

**TFD:** What do your wives make of what you are doing? Do they have an opinion about it?

**Ben:** My wife checks typos for me. She also has ideas for me from time to time and sends items to me.

**Joe:** Maria doesn't worry about it too much. I think she likes it that it keeps my mind going.

**TFD:** Are you ever worried you will repeat yourself?

**Ben:** The blog is a good database. Did I ever read that or say that before? You can use the search and it might pop up.

**TFD:** I am so glad you did that because the blogs are short and to the point and explain things in terms I can understand. It's off-putting to think about going to some of the original source material.

**Ben:** One of the keys is try to make it brief and succinct.

**TFD:** They are like [Fr. Burke's posts](#), short and to the point.

**Joe:** His are more homiletic. He asks reflective questions at the end. I have got to learn how to do that. 'How are YOU doing this today?'

**TFD:** What was it like to group with Fr. Dennis (Spies)?

**Joe:** He was really good to group with. I was really awed.

**TFD:** I have worked several Weekends with him and his talks are just amazing.

**Joe:** He's always had it. He and Fr. Burke roomed together in Seminary and they were buddies and they played off each other's strengths.

**TFD:** Fr. Dennis teaches a seminary class in the summer-time.

**Joe:** I had started to read [The Interior Castle](#) (by St. Teresa of Avila) and I told him, I'm not grasping it. He said it's because you are reading a 300-level book and you're in a 100-level class. So I thought, "Okay, now I understand, it's just I haven't gotten there yet."

**Ben:** Reading some books with a lot of science can be a bit much for me, but if I force my way through it, an act of will, I will still get something out of it in the end. So I don't give up on it even if I am noticing that this is beyond me.

**Joe:** I might.

**Ben:** Father Robert Spitzer's book, [New Proofs for the Existence of God](#) is packed with physics.



**Father Robert Spitzer**

**Joe:** He runs the [Magis Center of Faith and Reason](#). He promotes the 'Big Bang' and talks a lot about how it is reasonable and the [Guth](#) theory that any universe that is expanding on average must have had a beginning and that it doesn't matter

what kind of universe it is, or physics, if its expanding on average, then it must have had a beginning. He's kind of the load-stone for that science. He has audio you can listen to as well.

**TFD:** In a recent post you listed all the different Biblical quotes that pertain to salvation. You pointed out, which one do you want to pick? Is it all of them?

**Joe:** Yes.

**TFD:** One of the times it was an apologetic defense against our evangelical brethren. Have you thought about doing more in that vein?

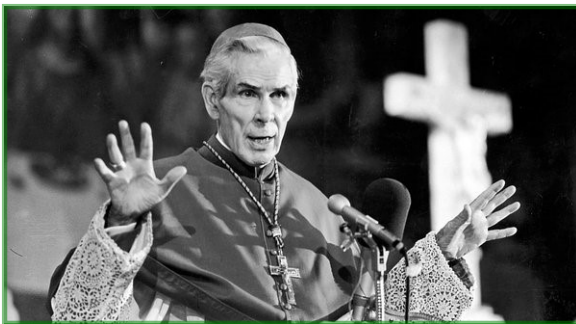
**Joe:** I come from that area. I would suggest that it is not "against" anyone. As fellow Christians, I think we Catholics have good answers. One on one with somebody I think I have what I need to talk with them

intelligently. But what ended up happening for me is that I have been hit with atheists. It doesn't matter – Catholic or evangelical – the question is, does God exist? That's where it got really hard. I could use [Thomas Aquinas](#) or I could use [John Calvin](#) - who do I want to fight with?

**TFD:** Now Calvin becomes an ally.

**Joe:** Right. I read a lot of Protestant stuff, because I didn't really care - Catholic or Protestant, early on in my own re-conversion. But they (the Protestants) have a lot of good facts that help. [The Case for Christ](#) (by Lee Strobel) is one of those books that is really good. He has four books and I have read all of them and I realized that these are really good facts. [The Case for God](#), [The Case for the Resurrection](#) - it's all foundational. Its rock-solid stuff against atheists who ask did it even happen. Not how did it happen in Luke vs. Mark. That kind of quibble, that's not really that interesting to me. It's, did HE exist? What did he do? That's the stuff that people are really upset about now.

**Ben:** An interviewer asked Pope Benedict about faith and reason and said, "Why don't you just believe?" He said faith and belief, there are reasons behind it. One thing I got from [Bishop Sheen](#) is that everyone has a philosophy. Everyone has a world view – a belief system. Everyone, even an atheist who's view is that everything comes from nothing for the purpose of nothing. Even for non-Catholic Christians, the Bible is the source of everything. Why is that? Where did you get that from? It's



**Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**

actually not in the Bible, by the way. So what are the base premises? And you do that with Catholicism and you keep asking why? What are the base premises – it all ties together and there are no contradictions.

**Joe:** We talk about whether it's more probable or likely – none of it makes any difference if it isn't true. All I care about is whether it's true or not. But if I can't find out whether something is true, I can only go to the closest approximation. It has to be consistent, it has to fit as many facts as possible and if it's self-contradictory, you throw it out. But it's got to be true for me to care. If I

have a wonderful theory that's proved to be false, I don't care about it anymore. I am not married to that. It doesn't matter. I mean that's what Hume made a big splash in saying, 'You can't know'. There's no way for you to know. Just because when I poked this it moved doesn't mean that my poke caused it to move because you didn't see the energy transfer. You didn't, right? You expected that to happen when I poked it, right? This action was conditioned by your pre-conception that when I do that, this would happen because you've seen it before.

**Ben:** That's why illusionists can do illusions because you're making certain assumptions about things.

**Joe:** The expectations are drawn. And he's saying, "You can't know that that's what caused that." Maybe something was under the table that pushed it just as it got there. All of that stuff, right? It's true. Well, [Kant](#) came back and said,

well you can know because of the way you're conditioning your brain to think about how things interact with the actual reality. For me the philoso-



phers of how we got here is the most interesting because that helps to figure out well...why are people arguing about same-sex marriage, why are people arguing about abortion, why is life less valued? All of those undergirded by world views that are undergirded by philosophies.

**Ben:** That you can't prove, at least by scientific method.

**Joe:** And there's where you go. Scientific method and logic are the only tools we have. And people are throwing out logic and saying "If I can't prove it by science. "Where have you seen God? Have you experienced God?" That's [empiricism](#), that's Hume, right? The empiricists are the ones who say that's it only what you can see and can prove that you can say anything about. Everything else is just fluff.

**Ben:** On a practical standpoint, at the end of the day I gotta make a decision. If I see someone do this and I ask, "How did that happen?" I'm going to say the finger caused it. Even if I can't prove it, that's the direction I'm going to go.

**TFD:** Thanks guys and please keep it going!

**Ben Butera (Men's 113th) and Joe Pusateri (Men's 107th) are members of St. Walter's Parish in Roselle.**

# My Back Pages

## Thank-you, Thank-you Very Much...

To our contributors, Bob Larkin, Joe Pusateri and Ben Butera.

## National Encounter 2015

Please consider attending the National Encounter in Villanova, PA (outside Philly) this July 23rd to 26th. If you are planning to attend, please let Barb Linek ([blinek29@gmail.com](mailto:blinek29@gmail.com)) or Tim Moore ([tmoore@wideopenwest.com](mailto:tmoore@wideopenwest.com)) know of your plans. For more info go here: [Encounter](#)

## Parish Coordinators (STILL!) Wanted.

If you discern you can help in this effort in your parish, please contact "YT" at [whitehouse1728@gmail.com](mailto:whitehouse1728@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Weekends for 2015

August 6-9th at The Port

Oct 1-4th at the DRC

Nov 12-15th at the Carmelite Spiritual Center

Women's 121st

Men's 130th

Women's 122nd

Rectora: Jennifer Hoge

Rector: Wally Pinas

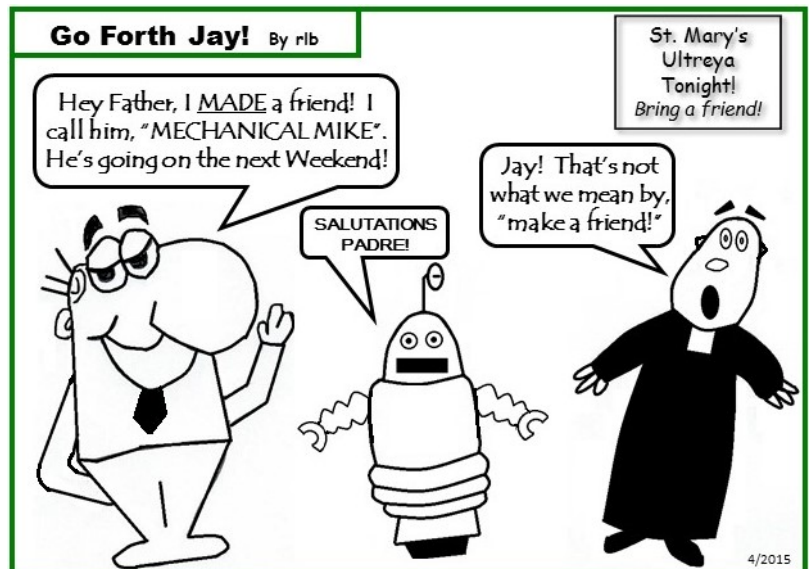
Rectora: TBA

## Fechas de los Cursillos del 2015/16:

- Cursillo de hombres: Diciembre 3 - 6 (Fecha Limite: Nov. 23)
- Cursillo de mujeres: Enero 21 - 24 (Fecha Limite: Enero 11)

## Summer Fun!

- Sept 19th: Chicago Fire Soccer game and Mass
- July 19th: [Cursillo Picnic](#)



## The Joliet Cursillo

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