

JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS

August Newsletter

Message from the Board

Greetings Journey to Damascus Community:

We hope that this greeting meets you in a good place. If not, know that this Community is always in prayer for our troubled world, and for all those that are suffering and in pain.

In these times that we are living, we definitely need to be aware of what is going around us, including the recommendations of our country's leaders & then implementing as a first priority best practices to maintain the safety of our immediate families including sanitizing our living environments, exercising social distancing, and wearing face coverings in public settings to protect both you and others.

As a second priority, we should continue being aware of the needs of others. While we may not be able to physically go see others in need, we certainly can CALL them on the telephone, to find out how they are doing, and see if there is anything we can do for them. A person that is lonely, ill, or is grieving, will always appreciate a phone call and a kind word to show that someone is thinking about them.

A third priority, as always, is to pray for someone besides yourself. This simple action can take your mind from your own burdens, and temporarily shift the focus to someone else's needs. If you are hurting or in need, ask others, including your Reunion Groups, to pray for you. If we can get in the practice of always praying for somebody else, everyone should be in the prayer chain. Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am in their midst.

While there is no new information from the Diocese of Corpus Christi or Pax Christi at this time, understand that your Board of Directors are in regular communication with them. We understand that new information and guidance on retreats is expected to be publicized from the Diocese in September 2020. When this information becomes available, your JTD Board will relate that to the Community.

Until next month, Stay Safe & Make the Best of Your Isolation,

Board of Directors - JTD Corpus Christi

Paul Pilarczyk

SAVE THE DATES!

All of the weekends have been moved to 2021 and these are the dates we have scheduled with Pax Christi:

2021 Weekends

**Corpus Christi
Men's
March 4 - 7**

**Corpus Christi
Women's
April 22 - 25**

**Corpus Christi
Men's
June 17 - 20**

**Corpus Christi
Women's
July 22 - 25**

**Corpus Christi
Men's
September 16 - 19**

Board of Directors - JTD Corpus Christi
J2damascus@yahoo.com
 General mailbox for JTD Board of Directors

Website & Pilgrim/Team Applications

The links for online applications are updated!!! The Website is still under construction, but the current Website is still active! Let's go Fishing!

Christ is counting on you!

This time last year, we all were living in different chapters in our lives. You and I were flipping through our pages at different paces. Today though, we are on the same chapter: "The Coronavirus Chapter." Additionally, we are flipping the pages at the same slow pace. We all are or have been affected either directly or indirectly by this virus. You may be working in the front lines and are extremely exhausted day in and day out. Or you may be working from home and are confined to the walls in your safe haven. Perhaps you have lost your job due to the pandemic and worried where you are going to find a new one when this chapter is over. Is your line of work considered essential and you're still going to the office checking your temperature upon arrival? It is safe to say that we all can fall under one of these scenarios or one very similar and we are all as equally going crazy. Now let's add knowing someone infected with the Coronavirus or worse, someone passing away during this pandemic to the equation. I personally experienced losing my mother during this pandemic as did a dear friend of mine. A week apart our mothers passed away during a time that gathering is prohibited and we are fearful to hug each other. These elements can create a perfect storm and drive anyone into a state of depression. Together, we can carry each other through this chapter. Together, we can mend the broken hearts that we have endured. Together, we can realign our focus back to Christ. Together.

I am grateful that my reunion group sisters and my JTD community are carrying me through this traumatic experience in losing my mom during this pandemic. I share this intimate reality with you because I would like to personally ask each and every one of you to **reach out**. Step out of your comfort zone and reach out to a friend. The following is what has helped me and continues to, so I want to ask you to do at least one of these frequently:

- When you've lost your prayerful voice, ask your friend to pray for you. Although, take comfort knowing that Jesus is interceding for you.
Romans 8:34
- Ask if your friend needs anything.
- Ask your friend to let you cry on the phone with them for a minute.
- Schedule a virtual gathering on zoom.
- Send your friend a hug emoji via text.
- Send your friend a small note.
- Call your friend and ask how they are doing.

Corpus Christi
 Women's
 October 21 - 24

2021 Weekends
 JTD - Austin

Check back for more
 information!



Contact Us

Corpus Christi
 Journey to Damascus
 PO Box 948
 Corpus Christi, TX 78403
j2damascus@yahoo.com

- Text your friend emojis if you don't know what to say, let them know you're thinking of them.
- Keep texting even if they don't respond.
- Share what has helped you grieve, moreso
- Share your faith with your friend in need and let them see Jesus in you.

"Being a disciple of Christ is to reach out to others...be hospitable," (Rev. Paul, St. Pius X Catholic Church, August 15,2020).

May The Lord bless you with courage and inspiration to be the friend you are meant to be.

Peace be with you,
Mariza Rodriguez
JTD Board Member

Updates from the Lay Directors

Janie Riojas

JTD #204

"Show me your ways Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God My Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psalm 25:4-5

I have contacted team members that have been approved by the Board and all have confirmed as to serving in October 2021.

Our Agape list is still in process of being updated to include any additional items that might be needed to disinfect tables, doors, and other areas at Pax Christi to assure everyone's safety from Covid19.

Prayer Vigil has been created but will need to be updated with new dates and year.

Reunion Groups

On behalf of the 4th Day Committee, I wanted to impress upon the JTD Community the The Patriarchs JTD Reunion Group Zooming Through Tough Times

It has been 21 years since my pilgrim experience on JTD #3 in July 1999. While I have been fortunate since to have participated in multiple JTD weekends as a team member, my 4th day continuous involvement in the ministry has been first and foremost through my weekly reunion group meeting with my fellow JTD brothers. The Patriarchs Reunion Group was born on or around December 1999, when I and a few members of JTD felt a need to expand the reunion opportunities available to new pilgrims. After securing permission to meet in the upper room at St. Patrick's church, we have met pretty faithfully for on Thursday mornings @7am each week. Barring vacations, and some holiday breaks, our group of 4-9 men have met, opened with a prayer invitation to the holy spirit, proceeded with each taking a turn to share their week's experience on the order of reunion card and most importantly

on been physically and emotionally present to each other during both good times and times of personal distress and challenge. Our sessions usually involve a combination of tears and hoots and hollers all in the context of lifting up each other's efforts (and holding each other accountable) to live a Christ centered life. My weekly experience with my reunion brothers reminds me so personally of the message emphasized on the JTD weekend of the value of reunion experiences for "stoking the fire" we ignited on our pilgrim weekend. We have been together (both newer and older) JTD alum through personal losses and personal victories for all these years— At least until our current COVID 19 global pandemic curtailed our normal plans to connect weekly.

At that same time, (more than coincidentally), as a college professor I had been challenged to adjust my courses to online format which I realized might also be a way to continue meeting with my reunion brothers. So...after some experimentation, I suggested that we continue our weekly meetings via ZOOM. I wasn't sure our group as a whole would be willing and learned quickly that most were all for it. After a couple of weeks beginning in April, we were pretty much up to full attendance; even welcoming previous members who had not attended in a while.

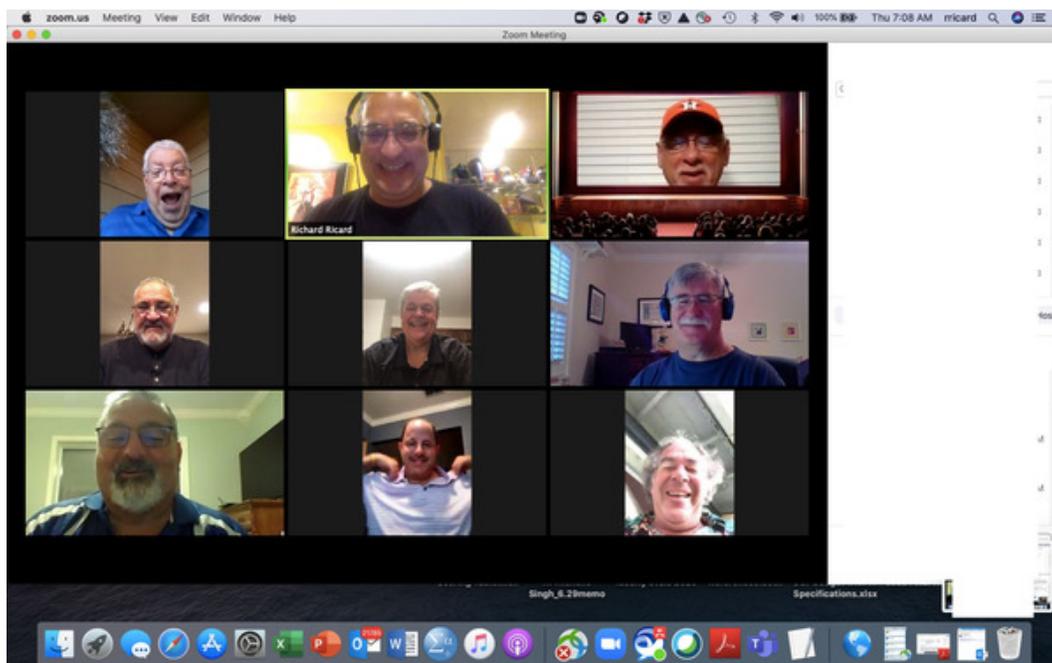
While we certainly look forward to in person meetings again (mostly because after the meeting we usually adjourn to a taqueria for post-reunion fellowship), we have been able to spend precious and deeply meaningful time with each other—in this time where we need it the most.

I would highly recommend this to other reunion groups and note that it isn't difficult to arrange. Our group meets via Zoom, but I know there are other programs (e.g., facetime). Here are a few pointers specifically related to zoom:

- A free Zoom app is easily downloaded to computers or mobile device (phone, tablet, laptop). Download @ <https://zoom.us>
- Anyone with the downloaded app can host a meeting
- It does not take up so much room or require much bandwidth to work well.
- A free Zoom account limits you 40 minutes of time, however a \$15/mo provides unlimited time
- Meeting confidentiality can be assured by required password entry if groups desire

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about setting up a virtual meeting for your reunion group. I wish you the best and welcome you to zoom with us on any Thursday morning.

God bless you and De Colores,
Ric Ricard JTD #3



Some Words from the Wise

Brought to you this month by Fr. Eric Chapa

Sons and Daughters of the Heavenly Father,

There is so much hanging in the air right now! There are questions, fears, and doubts. Every single question that is possible to ask is circulating around us. The who's, the what's, the where's, the why's, and the how's are fierce. *Who* carries the virus with them? *What* can stifle it? *When*, dear God, *when* will it be over? (This can safely be said sincerely and not profanely, for it has no doubt been a prayer said very much in earnest by many a tongue!) *How* and *why* any of this right now?! "*Where did it come from? Where did it go?*" (Cotton-eyed Joe reports the news, apparently!) That's silly, I know, but our secular world and so much of the nauseating chatter it deems "news" is just that: silly. The poet TS Elliot wisely mused: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

Where is wisdom? You know exactly where it is and exactly where it is not. Those questions that hang in the air are not bad questions. It's just that the polluted secular air is not the place to find answers that truly *matter*. St. Paul told the newly converted Ephesians in his letter to them that they once followed "the course of the world" and "the prince of the power of the *air*" (Ephesians 2:2), but not anymore! Here, he considers the power of the "air" to be the human, worldly realm, far from the wisdom of the heavens. Our present "air" is polluted with Godlessness, and our answers to *nothing of Eternal consequence* will come from it: no secular political ideology and no government. It doesn't matter if that government is red or blue, or green, yellow, or orange. It doesn't matter if it's D or R, or A, B, C, D or E. It's all the realm of the "air", and as St. Paul reminds us: *we don't look there for answers anymore!* We don't breathe in a worldly air. We breathe in the Holy Spirit Himself!

Over the past year, I've been reckoning with a bold and abrasive visitor in the form of a severe migraine, and all that it's brought on. I've been hospitable to it, don't you

worry! I figured if it *seems* to have been allowed to visit by God Himself, I owe it AT LEAST my hospitality as long as it insists on crashing on my couch. And it has tamed slowly, but steadily. I like to think I'm rubbing off on it! One of the things it's produced has been a darker life on my part. I don't mean morally or spiritually darker. I very much literally mean physically darker: I can't handle a lot of brightness because of some light sensitivity. Most people would deem it "too little light" that I have, but at this point I have to say that it's not that I have "too little" light around me. It's just that everyone else has way too much of it! Truly! I have *just enough: all that I need!*

With the current pandemic situation, the very same thing has happened to you. At least I hope and pray it has. Many lights have gone out in your life. Many unnecessary, distracting lights have powered down. Many "lights" that once lit your old routine have given out. You have perhaps learned that the lights the world offered for your guidance has proven weak and incapable, or at least insignificant. Lights of old habits have probably dimmed: you simply can't do all that you once did, or all that you may still want to.

Here's the only point: the *only* light that has not left you is Christ. Can I be so bold as to suggest that, with all other lights out, the light of Christ has perhaps gotten stronger for you? Answer that honestly. If He's the only light in the room, we notice Him more than before, don't we? Just like me, you can say: *I have all the light I need. I didn't need the others. I don't have "too little", I have just enough! And it is far from darkness!*

Breathe in the Holy Spirit and breathe Him out to the one's you care for and protect. Christ is all that needs to light our way through *all* of this. Better yet, even when the other lights of old ways can be powered up again as normal, *still* keep Him as your one and only light. *Just enough!* "For God, who said 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

I'll pray for you, if you pray for me. That's a steal of a deal!

Many blessings,
Fr. Eric Chapa
fatherericchapa@gmail.com

Agape Appeal

GOAL

Due to an increase in food and lodging costs over the last few years, the Annual Agape Appeal will be used to off-set these increased expenses for the Team and Pilgrims.

The Annual Agape Appeal's goal is to:

- Never turn anyone away by making the weekend affordable for **ALL**.
- Provide a sustainable, annual fund to insure the continuation of JTD for **ALL**.

The intent of this appeal is to assist those who need monetary support in order to attend this Christian weekend. No one should be turned away due to financial need.

By joining our resources, we can insure JTD's continuation for friends, family and strangers.

AGAPE DONATION

Suggested donations:

- \$5.00 each month
- \$60.00 Annually
- \$30.00 Semi-annually
- \$15.00 Quarterly
- \$100.00 Husband and wife

Or... Whatever you can GIVE

It's not about how **MUCH** each one can give.

It's about how **MANY** will give.

Only \$5.00 a month folks!

UNITY

With God all things are possible.
And by uniting together, we can change the world!

Please sign up for the JTD News Letter at:
www.journeytodamascus.org
All the information on how to send your Annual Agape Appeal will be available.

Please make checks Payable to Journey to Damascus and write **JTD Appeal** in note section of check. Please include your name, address, email address and phone number.

You may send it to **JTD Appeal**, P.O. Box 948, Corpus Christi, TX 78403.

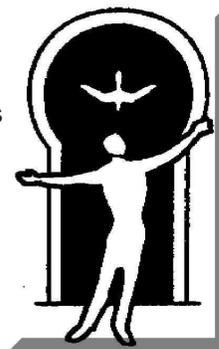
Please help spread this opportunity by word of mouth or social media to encourage **all** the JTD community members to participate in this appeal.

De Colores

[Click here to view the PDF version of Annual Agape Appeal](#)

Sr. Angela Murdaugh Scholarship Fund

We are also very pleased to announce the establishment of the Sister Angela Murdaugh Scholarship Fund. The goal is to be able to pay the weekend fee for one pilgrim per JTD weekend from this scholarship. To raise money to fund this endeavor we are selling JTD car emblems. The cost of the emblems is \$10. If you would like to order emblems for yourself, as gifts for your Reunion group please contact Dale Hernandez at dale_hernandez@yahoo.com.



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