

FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC



Growing up in Naro, Italy, on the island of Sicily helped to form strong family bonds for Joseph Rinaldo. His parents maintained a traditional home life for their children. His father was a farmer and a prominent figure in town who could always be counted on when there were people in need.

Joseph and his family witnessed the horrors of WWII while the Allies and Axis powers battled for control of his native island. The foundation of faith and commitment to the good of your neighbor was firmly planted into every part of Joseph's character and remains with him to this day.

After the war as daily life began to normalize, Joseph, his siblings, and cousins returned to school. He had one cousin

that was about the same age who had special needs. She was never without Joseph to be her protector and guide. This special relationship helped to foster his

attraction to the charism of St. Louis Guanella (1842-1915), the priest who founded the Servants of Charity Congregation, which cares for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as the frail elderly.

Once Joseph completed his primary schooling, he was able to go to Rome to attend pre-seminary schooling.



FORMER CEO AND LONG-TIME PRIEST AT ST. LOUIS CENTER IS RETIRING FROM THE CENTER. FR. JOE WILL BE SPENDING HIS RETIREMENT YEARS IN ITALY.

Once high school was finished, he decided to enter the novitiate to become a priest for the Servants of Charity, making his first profession in 1959. His next step was theology studies in Chiavenna in 1963.

Fr. Joseph was ordained on December 21, 1967. In September 1968 the Superior General, Fr. Armando Budino, decided to send him to America. So, Fr. Joseph made his way to Don Guanella School in Springfield, PA. In Springfield, Fr. Joseph helped to build a thriving community of services for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities that remains an important part of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's programming.

Fr. Joseph was assigned to St. Louis Center for the first time in 1980, discovering a facility with many needs. He got busy right away looking for creative ways to provide for the needs of the Center. New construction began, and St. Louis Center as we know it today began to take shape.

With the establishment of the Servants of Charity Vice-Province, Fr. Joseph was appointed as 1st councilor. A few years later, he was elected Vice-Province Superior. During the same time, he was also the treasurer which continued after the establishment of the Divine Providence Province until he retired from such duties. His duties as treasurer made it necessary to travel to faraway India, Philippines, and Vietnam on a regular basis but he remained the superior of the community in Chelsea MI.

When Fr. Joe wasn't traveling, he spent countless hours translating and publishing books for and about St. Louis Guanella and the Servants of Charity. For several years he was



the director of the Pious Union of St. Joseph in Grass Lake MI and editor-in-chief of *Now and at the Hour* magazine.

After celebrating his 50th Anniversary of Ordination, growing a large group of Guanellian Cooperators, and mentoring Fr. Franklin, Fr. Amal, and Fr. Leo Joseph, it was time for Fr. Joe to

step back and watch the next generation of Guanellian priests thrive in the places that he worked so hard to build. The congregation decided to allow Fr. Joe to return to Italy for his retirement.

On Sunday, March 21st there was a farewell gathering.

At the event, St. Louis Center received a generous donation from Michael Chirco's Living Trust that amounted to \$100,000, in Fr. Joe's honor.

If you would like to honor Fr. Joseph Rinaldo by contributing to St. Louis Center, contact Wendy Zielen at wzielen@stlouiscenter.org or 734-475-8430.



CORRECTION

In the Spring Spirit newsletter it was stated that "Sr. M&M died quietly on **January 18, 2021** at Mt. St. Joseph, Lake Zurich." This is incorrect. Sr. Margaret Mary Schissler died on **January 18, 2022**.