

**Letter of loving gratitude and appreciation to the people of the  
beloved community of Santa Barbara.**

**from**  
**Fr. Larry Gosselin, O.F.M.**

*My dear cherished and precious friends of the community of Santa Barbara,*

*Life is filled with changes, and change means looking back with gratitude and transitioning forward in hope. So it is with a full heart of loving appreciation that I look back on the past 12 years that I have been honored to serve you in this our wonderful community of Santa Barbara. I will be taking up a new ministry at Serra Retreat House in Malibu, beginning November 1st. But actually I will be splitting my time between Old Mission Santa Barbara and Serra Retreat as I move into this new position. However, I feel it necessary to express and acknowledge the immense gratitude that I hold and carry for the privilege and joy of serving you in this community of Santa Barbara.*

*I came to serve in the parish of St. Barbara Parish at the Old Mission Santa Barbara in July, 2012. I arrived here at the Mission just the day before the Fiesta Pequena that was to take place at that time. It was on my beginning day that I was then told that my first official task was to co-host the Fiesta Pequena on the steps of the Old Mission with the wonderful and lovely, Paula Lopez, along with our Mission Guardian, Fr. Richard McManus, ofm. I entered unbeknownst that glorious night, with a yet unrealized anticipation of what awaited in store for me, into the most wonderful celebration that I could possibly have imagined. I was filled with immense joy and wonder in all the pageantry, dance, culture, grace, music, and beauty that I saw come alive on the steps of Old Mission Santa Barbara, and I was so easily absorbed in seeing that same beauty in all the faces of the people attending there and reflecting back the unique spirit of our community. I was “smitten with love at first sight” from the very onslaught of my entry into the life of Santa Barbara. Since then, I have never lost that initial first love, infatuation, and passion. I have had the joy of seeing firsthand the spirit and beauty of Fiesta come alive over the years, in the Spirits of Fiesta: Sabrina Ibarra, Corrie Jimenez, Talia Ortega Vestal, Alexandra (Alex) Freres, Alexis Simentales, Norma Escarcega, Jesalyn Contreras McCollum, Sophia Cordero, Alena Velasco, Ysabella Yturraide, Tara Mata, Jack Harwood, and Georgey Taupin. These wonderful Spirits of Fiesta and all of those, El Presidentes, La Presidentas, Directors, Volunteers, Sponsors, and supporters you made,*

*and continue to make, our Fiesta life so vibrant, colorful, joyful, and a true representation of culture and celebration of all that Santa Barbara is in beauty, history, and its life and love. Fiesta brings such joy, beauty, culture, and grace to the community, and to be a part of it, in whatever way I could play or participate, was for me a thing “dreams are made of.” I never envisioned, in my wildest imaginings before I arrived here, that I would ever be following in the footsteps of such great friars as Fr. Virgil Cordano, ofm, who was, and always will be, a living legend in my mind. And nothing could reach past unfathomed dreams of mine than in participating and riding on our Old Spanish Days' Float entry at the New Years' Rose Parade in Pasadena on January 1, 2014. This took place and realized under the vision and leadership of El Presidente, Dennis Rickard.*

*It is such a sacred privilege to have served in ministry here at Old Mission Santa Barbara, ministering in the parochial life of St. Barbara Parish through the Sacramental life of the Church, in Eucharist, marriages, baptisms, funerals, anointing of sick and ministering to the dying at Cottage Hospital, private homes, and other places, and in different reaching out in teaching and preaching opportunities.*

*I am equally so grateful to have ministered in serving on different Boards that benefit our local community and our greater world. These are some of Boards that I was privilege to serve:*

*Honorary Board Member, Old Spanish Days (Fiesta)  
Board Member, Catholic Charities of Santa Barbara County.  
Board Member, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF)  
Board Member, Villa Majella Maternity Home  
Board Member, Adam's Angels  
Board Member, Father Virgil Cordano Center  
Board Member, St. Francis Foundation  
(Former) Board Member, La Casa de Maria Retreat House  
Chaplain, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department*

*There are so many cherished memories of ministerial work here in Santa Barbara, which has been for me, that I hope for others, a sign and source of being accomplished in the grace of God as a “bridge building” endeavor. This vision and work was molded and motivated on the inspirational of Saint Francis of Assisi who sought to bring people together in empathy and care, as an “Instrument of Peace,” for living life in compassion and of “being one” with and for, one another.*

*I am so beholding to all that the people of Santa Barbara who have truly blessed me with your acceptance, love, and care, and have allowed and encouraged me to become more of what is possible to grow into, as a person, a friar, a priest, and a member of this community. I hold all of this self-actualization and inner revelations in a great indebtedness to this community that comes from a deeply grateful person, who holds all that you have given to me in profound gratitude. I am deeply honored in humility for knowing the goodness of the humanness that is Santa Barbara, and the beauty of our common community of humanity.*

*Looking forward to moving ahead, I want to continue to be “building bridges” that bring people together in a spirit of unity and love. I believe Serra Retreat House offers a great potential for this to happen. I see this new ministry in Malibu as a connection and an extension of all that Santa Barbara is in spirit and love; and I believe there is already “something at work” to become a bridge building connection that can bring these two communities together in a greater spirit of all that is loving, prophetic, and Christ-like in essence.*

*Beloved members of the Community of Santa Barbara, you have truly been “good, good friends” to me, and friendship is a very special gift of love; i.e. being and belonging together, as one. I know that I have always felt and carried a deep sense of belonging here with you, and being among you, from the very first day I arrived to Santa Barbara. I have always known a deep sense of belonging here, and being in the presence of friends when I am with you, or even when I am not with you, there is a bonding friendship that transcends time and space, and that will not change. The spirit of Santa Barbara is alive and I have been blessed with knowing it, and it is grounded in my spirit and soul. You have shown to me the rich beauty of our community in Santa Barbara, in all that you are, all that we can be, and in all that flourishes in a friendship that is faithful and is “family.”*

*Santa Barbara are “family” to me, and I am at home with you!*

*I am most lovingly and gratefully your brother,  
Viva la Fiesta!*

*Fr. Larry Gosselin, o.f.m.*