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HIGHLANDS DEDICATES GROTTO ON THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR MOTHER

Irving, Texas (September 11, 2009) – On September the 8th, the day the Church celebrated Mary's birth, Highlands students, alumni, faculty, and founders, along with Legionary priests and consecrated members of Regnum Christi, gathered together in celebration. Fittingly, they chose that day for the dedication and blessing of the school's newly constructed Marian Grotto. "The image and garden surrounding Mary was created as an act of love and passion so members of the Highland community may reflect on her love during their travels of the day," said Executive Director John Borley.

Father Alphonse Nazarro reminded the audience that Mary is famous for saying "yes" to God. "Every time we say yes to God, He will transform it into something beautiful." Before blessing the grotto and leading everyone present in a decade of the Rosary, he helped them to visualize the barren dusty spot that preceded such magnificence.

The exquisite grotto came to life through donations of money, time, and talent from countless generous hearts. The designer, Natalie Johnson, said it was "a project He wanted done." Mother of four and volunteer at The Highlands, Natalie has a passion for art and landscaping, but it's her love of Christ and Scripture that has driven this project. "This was a faith journey for so many of us. It wasn't me or any of us; it was the good Lord and Savior, because he wanted his sheep fed. It was hair-raising, how God had His hand on the whole thing!"

Everything in the breathtaking garden has some symbolic meaning and, according to Natalie, it was definitely inspired by the Holy Spirit. As you enter the Marian Garden, many of the plants reflect the arid beautiful Garden of Gethsemane. For example, a cluster of yucca plants, also called the Lord's Candle, stand at either end of the garden entrance. Fragrant rosemary can be found throughout the grounds and is thought to have provided shelter for the Holy Family on their flight to Egypt. If you were to sit next to Mary and look towards the base of the cross, you

see the Iris named Mary's Sword. Cobblestone was chosen as a pathway to lead us to Christ through Mary and remind us of the streets of Jerusalem. There is a rosary within the cobblestone pathway, and the Eucharist is placed in the garden's center. It is surrounded by the names of the twelve apostles that are engraved on the stones. Mary's back is to Christ Crucified; she faces the risen Christ in the Eucharist, because we look to Mary to direct us to her son. The water flowing from the cross represents the blood shed and the mercy poured out for all through Christ's ultimate sacrifice. At the bottom of the cross there is the representation of the multiplication of the loaves.

Landscaper James Scott with Blue Sky Landscape helped to make Natalie's vision a reality. However, the garden would not have been possible without the following financial donors who said "yes" without hesitation when asked for assistance: Mr. and Mrs. Eduardo Diaz, Drs. Marco and Gabriella Navarro, Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Sada, Mrs. David Welty, and Mr. and Mrs. Mike Dimmel. Also, \$1000 of funds raised during a school boosterthon last year went towards the completion of the garden.

Since the Church has designated 2009 as the year of the Priest, The Highlands has offered this labor of love as a symbol that unites all suffering to the Holy Mother Church. "We pray to the Holy Spirit to strengthen those who have said yes to the call to the priesthood—past, present, and to come."

About The Highlands School

Established in 1986, The Highlands School is a Catholic college-preparatory school. Offering grades Pre-K through 12th, the mission of The Highlands School is the development of the whole person through Integral Formation, consisting of a profound intellectual, human, apostolic, and spiritual formation. Personalized attention from faculty, staff, and religious provides each student with the maximum opportunity for growth.

For more information about THE HIGHLANDS SCHOOL, or to schedule an interview with John Borley, please call Chris Hannis, Director of Development, at 972-438-8218 ext 261 or email Chris at channis@thehighlandsschool.org.