

## *Time for the Swallows*

The return of the swallows on March 19 to San Juan Capistrano, California, has been recorded since 1776. Located 60 miles southeast of Los Angeles, the city grew up around a mission founded there in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and named after St. John of Capistrano, a crusader. Although an earthquake ruined the mission church in 1812, the chapel is still in use daily.

The swallows return to the ruins of the church from their wintering grounds on March 19, although human pressures have reduced their numbers and make the date of their return less reliable. Tradition says they depart from California on October 23, the date of the death of St. John of Capistrano. Every March, people look for the swallows' return as a sign of spring.

God desired the spiritual return of the Israelites, even when they turned their backs on him and worshiped other gods. He urged them to respond to His discipline, repent of their sins and return to Him. Even after God scattered them among other countries, He promised to bring them back to Jerusalem if they would return to Him and obey His laws. (Nehemiah 1:9).

In the New Testament, Jesus tells a parable about a son who rebelled against his father's authority (Luke 15:11-32). The son realized his foolishness and sin after he ran out of money. When he returned home, he hoped to be received simply as a servant. Instead, his father welcomed him with joy and restored him to his position in the family. Sometimes, believers wander away from God, either through rebellion or failure to nurture their faith. But if we are His children, there is nothing that can keep us from returning to our Father, if we come in repentance.

We don't even have to wait until spring.

--Beecher Hunter