

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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'We Must Speak Up'



Pages 10-12

CHARLIE NEUMAN

UNITY: An estimated 1,500 faithful from across the region turned out for a vigil to pray for undocumented immigrants in downtown San Diego on Feb. 9, alongside priests, deacons, and religious women, as well as leaders from other faiths. Earlier, they had attended a bilingual prayer service at St. Joseph Cathedral, where they heard from Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and from immigrants sharing their testimonies.



Transition Time

What happens in San Diego after Cardinal McElroy's move to D.C.? **Page 2**



Finding a Home

More than 1,630 people — more than pre-pandemic — will become Catholic this Easter. **Page 3**



Lifelong Love

Couples celebrate lives together at Diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass. **Page 16**

A Shepherd's Legacy

SPECIAL SECTION
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**DIocese of
SAN DIEGO**

The Diocese of San Diego runs the length of California's border with Mexico and serves more than 1.3 million Catholics in San Diego and Imperial counties. It includes 96 parishes and 13 missions, 49 elementary and secondary schools, Catholic Charities and various social service and family support organizations throughout the region. It also includes five historic sites, the most well known of which is the Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá, the first mission established in California by St. Junipero Serra in 1769.

MORE FOR YOU

This symbol indicates where readers can go online to obtain more information about the subject at hand, including additional photos, video and other content.



Cardinal to Be Installed in D.C.

The Southern Cross



Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will soon be leaving San Diego to begin his new assignment as archbishop of the Archdiocese of Washington.

The cardinal is scheduled to relocate to the nation's capital during the first week of March, although he will continue to serve as San Diego's diocesan administrator until March 11, when he will be installed as archbishop of Washington.

The installation Mass will be live-streamed at 11 a.m. (Pacific) through the diocese's website, sdccatholic.org.

Cardinal McElroy's last public event in the Diocese of San Diego, which he has led for almost 10 years, will be the annual Sisters Appreciation and Jubilee Celebration. On March 1, he will celebrate Mass for the religious sisters of the diocese and join them at a lun-



cheon, where those sisters celebrating milestone anniversaries in religious life will be recognized.

On March 17, the diocese's College of Consultors will convene to elect another diocesan administrator, who

will shepherd the San Diego Diocese until Cardinal McElroy's successor has been named by Pope Francis and has taken possession of the diocese.

The College of Consultors is an 11-member body consisting of the three auxiliary bishops — Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido — and eight priests appointed by Cardinal McElroy to assist him in diocesan governance. These priests include: Fathers Efrain Bautista, Peter Escalante, Reynaldo Manahan, Devadhasan Masillamony, Lauro Minimo, Michael Murphy, Matthew Spahr and Edmundo Zárate Suárez.

Candidates for diocesan administrator are nominated by the consultors and voted upon by secret ballot. Candidates must be at least 35 years old and "outstanding in doctrine and prudence."

It's unknown how long it will take before the next bishop of San Diego is installed.



TRUTH AND BEAUTY: Visitors observe "The School of Athens" by Italian Renaissance artist Raphael in the Vatican Museums in this Feb. 15 file photo taken at the Vatican. On Feb. 17, representatives of Catholic cultural centers from around the world met at the Vatican.

Evangelization Through Culture



VATICAN CITY
— Evangelizing through culture is a challenge for the Church, especially in societies where faith is seen as "something alien," participants said at a Vatican-sponsored discussion on faith and culture.

"The Church needs to have a good relationship with the arts," said Stephen Callaghan, a playwright and director of the Archdiocese of Glasgow Arts Project during a Feb. 17 meeting of representatives of Catholic cultural centers from around the world at the Vatican.

The gathering, held at the Vatican as part of the Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture Feb. 15-18, brought together representatives of Catholic

cultural centers and Church bodies dedicated to culture.

"The Church is not a moral watchdog on the arts — it is the custodian of truth, beauty and goodness, and it is therefore of the utmost importance in restoring hope," he said.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, hosted the meeting on the theme, "Artisans of Hope," and underscored the urgency of overcoming the "divorce between culture and faith" identified in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World ("Gaudium et Spes").

A homily that Pope Francis prepared for the Jubilee Mass Feb. 16 in St. Peter's Basilica said that artists and cultural figures must be "custodians of the beatitudes," embracing their vocation to create beauty, reveal truth and

inspire hope in a troubled world.

"Art is not a luxury, but a necessity of the spirit. It is not an escape, but a responsibility, an invitation to action, a call, a cry," the homily said.

Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça celebrated the Mass with artists from more than 100 countries and read the pope's homily during the liturgy.

"To instruct in beauty is to instruct in hope, and hope is never separated from the drama of existence — it crosses the daily struggle, the fatigue of living, the challenges of our time," the homily said.

Pope Francis was unable to attend the Mass because he was hospitalized for treatment of a respiratory tract infection. He had also missed the audience he planned with artists and other Jubilee pilgrims Feb. 15.

Catholic News Service



Number Joining Church Keeps Growing

HOWARD LIPIN

ELECTION: Six individual Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion liturgies — one more than last year — will be held to accommodate the more than 1,630 catechumens and candidates who are preparing to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church this year. Five of the liturgies will take place at Good Shepherd Church, like this one from 2022.

By Denis Grasska



The number of people joining the Catholic

Church in the San Diego Diocese has exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

“The amount of people coming to our faith, to our Church, is just incredible and so inspiring,” said Leticia Trent, director of the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry.

More than 1,630 catechumens and candidates will participate in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion in March.

At the annual diocesan liturgy, those enrolled in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) process at local parishes are presented to the bishop and declared ready to receive the sacraments of initiation at their parish’s Easter Vigil.

Catechumens are unbaptized, while candidates are baptized Christians who have yet to receive First Communion or confirmation.

In 2020, for the last Rite of Election

before the COVID-era lockdowns, there were 1,242 catechumens and candidates.

This year’s numbers also represent a significant increase from last year, when 1,284 joined the Church.

“These numbers reflect that our faith is alive and thriving,” Trent said.

In total, more than 4,850 people are expected to attend this year’s Rite of Election. This includes sponsors and godparents, parish OCIA team members, and a limited number of ticketed guests.

To accommodate them, the diocese will be holding six separate ceremonies — one more than last year. The first will be held March 7 at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Imperial. Three will be held March 8 and two March 9, all at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa.

In the absence of Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, who will already be in Washington, D.C., preparing for his installation as archbishop of Washington, one of San Diego’s auxiliary bishops — Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido — will preside over each liturgy.

Seventy-six parish communities will

be represented at this year’s Rite of Election.

The largest groups will be coming from St. Mark Parish in San Marcos, with 19 catechumens and 75 candidates, and from St. Mary Parish in Escondido, with three catechumens and 77 candidates.

At the other end of the scale, the OCIA class at St. Brigid Parish in Pacific Beach consists of two candidates. St. Timothy Parish in Escondido has five candidates.

Trent isn’t sure how to explain the sizeable increase in catechumens and candidates, but theorizes that it could be “a reflection of what Cardinal (McElroy) and the bishops are doing.” She pointed to a diocesan emphasis on synodality, hospitality and inclusion.

Katy Resenbeck, of Guardian Angels Parish in Santee, was among the catechumens at last year’s Rite of Election.

“I was a bit nervous, but it was a welcoming environment and it was amazing to see, at that time, Cardinal McElroy,” she recalled. “I thought the whole thing was so historical and an ancient rite that I was blessed to be a part of.”

“It was even more special because my children got to participate with me in the whole experience,” said Resenbeck, whose husband, three children and mother also went through the OCIA process last year.

Resenbeck said that she did not “grow up with religion of any kind in my house.”

“It’s hard to explain God’s calling, but when you begin to hear it, you cannot ignore it,” she said. “I had many signs leading to the decision to join the Catholic Church. I knew in my heart I had to give my life to Jesus.”

She looked for ways to participate more at her parish, where she had started volunteering and taking classes as soon as she began OCIA.

Last October, she joined the parish staff. She’s currently the administrative assistant in the parish’s Faith Formation Office.

She began teaching catechism classes after completing the diocese’s Basic Catechist course.

“Everything just fell into place as soon as I let God’s will be done.”

Lent Begins March 5 with Ash Wednesday

The Southern Cross



The 40-day season of Lent will begin on Ash

Wednesday, March 5, and end at sundown on Holy Thursday, April 17.

Though not a holy day of obligation, many Catholics attend Mass on Ash Wednesday, where the Sign of the Cross is traced on their foreheads with blessed ashes as a stark reminder of their mortality and their need for

repentance and conversion.

The three pillars of the Lenten season are: fasting and abstinence, prayer, and almsgiving.

Catholics ages 18 to 59 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. (The latter, which commemorates the day that Jesus died on the cross, will be observed on April 18 this year.) They are permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The obligation to fast is dispensed for those who are ill or pregnant.



CNS/BOB ROLLER

Beginning at age 14, Catholics must refrain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays during Lent.

Many Catholics also voluntarily choose an additional sacrifice in the Lenten spirit of self-denial.

During Lent, Catholics are encouraged to go deeper in prayer, such as by attending their parish’s Stations of the Cross devotions on Friday evenings, and to help others whether through monetary donations or service opportunities.



CLOSING: Students who attended St. Katharine Drexel Academy found an innovative curriculum and a welcoming environment there. But low enrollment led to the difficult decision to close the school this summer.

SD Catholic School Closing This Summer

By Denis Grasska



Despite the school community's valiant effort to raise funds and increase enrollment, St. Katharine Drexel Academy (SKDA) will close its doors for the last time this summer.

The diocesan Office for Schools has offered a \$1,000 tuition discount for the 2025-2026 academic year to every student who finishes this year at St. Katharine Drexel Academy and will attend another local Catholic elementary school next year.

The Schools Office is also committed to helping the school's faculty and staff to find jobs at other schools, giving them priority as job openings arise.

St. Katharine Drexel Academy, which opened in fall of 2018, is a diocesan school formed through the merging of two parochial schools, Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, that were closed because of low enrollment.

Diocesan Superintendent Leticia Oseguera described it as "truly a beautiful little school," but one that also had struggled with low enrollment from its earliest days.

Oseguera said that, when Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart schools closed, they had a combined enrollment of 177 students. The diocese's goal was for St. Katharine Drexel Academy to have at least 200 — a goal that was never reached.

The school opened with 154 students and, by the end of its second year, enrollment had dropped to 110. It peaked at 130 students in late 2023,



MOVING ON: The diocese is offering a \$1,000 tuition discount for students who finish this year at St. Katharine Drexel Academy and attend another K-8 Catholic school next year.

before continuing to decline once again. As of January 2025, the school's enrollment had fallen to an all-time low of 94.

St. Katharine Drexel Academy has been running an annual deficit throughout its history. This year's alone is close to \$400,000. Next year's would be even larger.

The Diocese of San Diego has been providing support to the school in many ways since its inception, including through professional development for its teachers and the creation of partnerships between the school and the University of San Diego and Loyola Marymount University.

Since the school was established in 2018, the school has received subsidies from the diocese and from the founding parishes in excess of \$1 million.

"St. Katharine Drexel Academy is a great school, a wonderful school, with engaged families and a dedicated fac-

ulty," said Oseguera. "While it's tempting to blame St. Katherine Drexel's closure on the diocese's bankruptcy proceedings, the unfortunate fact is that there aren't enough students to keep the school open. Enrollment has continued to decline and the deficit has only grown."

"In the end, it's just not sustainable," she said.

Along with Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and the diocese's three auxiliary bishops, Oseguera made the "very difficult decision" to close the school at the end of the current academic year.

Joined by Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham, she addressed a gathering of school parents last Oct. 24 inside Blessed Sacrament Church.

"During the meeting, the parents spoke very passionately about the school and their desire to be given an opportunity to try to save the school," Oseguera recalled.

She and Bishop Pham relayed their request to the cardinal, who agreed to grant them additional time for a last-ditch effort to save the school.

St. Katharine Drexel Academy was given until Feb. 1 to raise \$500,000 and to enroll another 30 students for next year.

"They were grateful for the opportunity to try to save their school," said Oseguera, "but at the same time, understood ... how difficult of a task this was going to be."

In a Feb. 5 letter addressed to the school community," Oseguera shared that these two "critical benchmarks" had not been met.

The school raised \$114,000; this included about \$12,000 raised "through valiant parent efforts," as well as an additional \$102,000 that Principal Maria Guadalupe Hernandez was able to raise through major donations, Oseguera said. No new students were enrolled for next year.

Oseguera shared that a school fair will be held on campus; parents will be able to learn about other local Catholic schools where they can enroll their children for next year. She also promised that the community would have "ways to celebrate the history and legacy of SKDA and what it represents to so many."

"We can both mourn a loss and celebrate the legacy of SKDA, of Blessed Sacrament Parish School, and of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart," she wrote. "Let's make the next few months a time of unity, love, faith, and celebration for all the wonderful students, parents, teachers, and administrators who played a role in that incredible history."

National Awards for Local Student, Priest

The Southern Cross



ARLINGTON, Va.
— A student at the Academy of Our

Lady of Peace and a retired priest who serves on the school's board of trustees have both been honored by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA).

Frances Aguilar, an OLP junior, is one of 10 recipients of the NCEA's 2025 Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision Award. Msgr. Richard Duncanson, a retired priest of the Diocese of San Diego, is among six recipients of the NCEA's 2025 President's Awards.

Aguilar has completed more than 800 hours of community service while at OLP. Inspired by her older brother who has cerebral palsy, she has promoted inclusion, awareness and advocacy for people with disabilities through her Girl Scout Gold Award Project.

She founded a Best Buddies chapter at OLP, has demonstrated a passion for supporting others through the GIVE Club, and has been an altar server at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch and at OLP. Over the summer, she volunteers as a teacher's aide for special education students.

"Frances truly embodies unifying love for the dear neighbor without distinction, and her beautiful cooperation with God's love for all of humanity



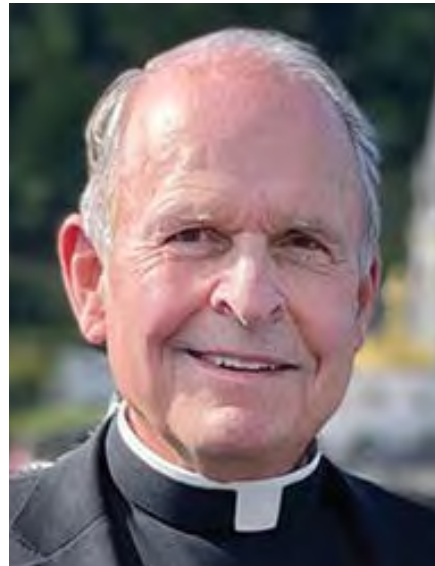
Frances Aguilar

touches and inspires OLP students, faculty and staff alike," said Ryan Martin-Spencer, OLP's director of mission integration.

Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision Award winners each received a Chromebook and protective cover.

The NCEA President's Awards are five awards honoring past NCEA presidents and conferred in the names of individuals and organizations that display the significant virtues of contribution, support, leadership and development to impact Catholic school education in the United States.

Msgr. Duncanson received the Msgr. John F. Meyers Award, which recognizes an individual who has significantly supported Catholic edu-



Msgr. Richard Duncanson

cation through contributions in development, public relations, scholarship programs, financial management or government relations.

The monsignor said that he was "truly honored and taken totally by surprise to have been selected."

Over the years, he has served on the Diocesan Commission for Catholic Schools, on the board of trustees of the University of San Diego, and on the boards of directors of Marian Catholic High School (now Mater Dei Catholic High School) and Cathedral Catholic High School. He was the first chairman of the board of Cathedral Catholic High School when it opened in 2005.

He has been serving on OLP's board of trustees since 2020. It's his second

tour, having had a previous stint on the board from 2008 to 2015.

Martin-Spencer described Msgr. Duncanson as "a most worthy recipient of an NCEA President's Award." He noted the monsignor's "vital role" in the complete renovation of OLP's two main academic buildings and the creation of its new St. Thérèse Library and Performing Arts Center.

"His dedication to and impassioned support of Catholic education," he said, "has guided and informed all of the recent renovation and new building projects undertaken on our campus, securing the establishment of infrastructure to serve young people for decades to come."

As a pastor, from 1990 to 2019, Msgr. Duncanson also provided leadership at five Catholic elementary schools: St. Charles School, Imperial Beach; St. Rose of Lima School, Chula Vista; St. James Academy, Solana Beach; Nazareth School, San Diego, while he was pastor of the neighboring Mission San Diego de Alcalá; and The Nativity School, Rancho Santa Fe.

"Because the Catholic Church has so generously provided me with my education," he said, "I have always wanted others to benefit as I have from the rich Catholic educational tradition."

More information: [NCEA.org/YVVV](https://www.ncea.org/YVVV) and [NCEA.org/PresidentsAwards](https://www.ncea.org/PresidentsAwards).



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Killer of Teacher Sentenced to Life in Prison

The Southern Cross



The murderer of a beloved teacher and coach from Cathedral Catholic High School has been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, plus an additional 25 years to life.

Last March, a jury found Jesse M. Alvarez, 34, guilty of first-degree murder, including the special circumstance of lying in wait, for killing Mario Fierro in early 2021.

“The defendant ambushed the victim and repeatedly shot him to death in a most cowardly and cruel manner,” San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan said in a Feb. 5 statement.

Alvarez planned and committed the murder after discovering that Fierro was engaged to his ex-girlfriend, who was a teacher at the high school.

On the morning of Feb. 1, 2021, Alvarez arrived at Fierro’s home, ready to kill him. After waiting one hour for Fierro to come out of his home, Alvarez ambushed him, shooting him six times.

The killing stunned the tight-knit school community, which held special events to commemorate his life and established a scholarship in his name.

Fierro, 37, was an alumnus of the University of San Diego High School. He graduated in 2002 — three years before the school transitioned into present-day Cathedral Catholic High School.

He joined the faculty of Cathedral



IN MEMORIAM: A memorial to Mario Fierro, beloved teacher and coach, is seen at Cathedral Catholic High School on Feb. 27, 2021. Fierro’s murderer has been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, plus another 25 years to life.

Catholic in 2016 as a social studies teacher.

He had served as an assistant track-and-field coach at the school for about 10 years. But, about three years before his death, he decided to focus on coaching football.

Four years ago, amidst the shock of

his death, Fierro’s colleagues shared with *The Southern Cross* their insights into his devout Catholic faith, his dedication to his work, and his personality.

“Mario was ‘all in’ on life, and he lived a short life, but he lived a great life,” Cathedral Catholic President and Interim Principal Kevin Calkins said at

the time.

“He cares — truly cares — about everybody he comes in contact with,” said Head Football Coach Sean Doyle, whom Fierro served as an assistant coach. “He enjoys life, he enjoys what he does, and he enjoys it to the fullest. He does not do anything halfway.”

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Get On The Bus

Center for Restorative Justice Works is a 501c3 nonprofit. Get on the Bus is a program provided by CRJW which is a dynamic, annual event serving 13 California State prisons. Our mission is to reunite children with their moms and dads who are in prison. During the event within the prison walls, families share stories, hug, play games, eat a lunch from outside the prison together, and have family connection time! We offer transportation from all over California, three meals, backpacks, stay connected bags and teddy bears.

- Children who maintain contact with their incarcerated parent are as less likely to drop out of school and experience mental health issues.
- Continued family connection also has a positive impact on the incarcerated parent, preparing them to successfully reunite with their families upon release and reduces recidivism.

Where are we going? Calipatria State prison in the San Diego area, April 12, 2025

How can you help? We are raising support for individuals participating in our Get on the Bus program. These funds allow us to expand our services, serve more families and keep the program 100% free for all families!

Monetary donations are the ***BIGGEST HELP*** for Get on the Bus, but you can help by collecting donation items like: Face painting kits* meal gift cards for Burger King and Taco Bell*neck pillows* gift cards for Amazon, Walmart, Dollar Tree or grocery stores. \$2,000 qualifies as a top tier donation and your logo will be on the GOTB t-shirts provided to all participants and volunteers. Every donation helps so very much!

If you are interested in helping, please contact Mary Thielscher, Regional Coordinator of San Diego, at mthielscher@crjw.org for more information.



“I felt really happy that I got the chance to see my dad this weekend because I haven’t visited him in 7 years and I loved that I got to see my dad this weekend because I get really sad when I know that I can’t see him because he’s so far.”

-16 Year Old GOTB Participant, 2024



Blessing for Sick

MARIA DE LOURDES VALENCIA

The Catholic Church sets aside Feb. 11 to pray for those who are sick, their caregivers, and health-care workers.

Locally, the Order of Malta and the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice invited the community to celebrate the World Day of the Sick Mass on Feb. 8.

Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham celebrated the Mass at Good Shepherd Church. The multilingual liturgy included the anointing of the sick and a blessing of those who take care of them.

In a statement, Pope Francis said that this year's World Day of the Sick would occur in the Jubilee Year 2025, and he invited all faithful to become "pilgrims of hope."

"Dear brothers and sisters who are ill or who care for the suffering, in this Jubilee you play an especially important part. Your journey together is a sign for everyone: 'a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope' ("Spes Non Confundit," 11). The whole Church thanks you for this, as do I!"

The Southern Cross

Pope: Without Human Control, AI Could Show 'Fearsome' Side

By Carol Glatz



VATICAN CITY — Ways must be found to ensure

artificial intelligence benefits everyone and protects the environment, given the high amounts of energy consumed by data centers, Pope Francis told leaders at a global meeting on AI.

There is also a great need to secure and safeguard a place for "proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs," he said in a written message to French President Emmanuel Macron, who was co-hosting with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi the "Artificial Intelligence Action Summit" in Paris Feb. 10-11.

"I am convinced that, lacking such control, artificial intelligence, albeit an 'exciting' new tool, could show its most 'fearsome' side by posing a threat to human dignity," he said in the message, released by the Vatican Feb. 11.

Heads of state, government leaders, experts, entrepreneurs and representatives from nongovernmental organizations from nearly 100 countries were invited to the Grand Palais to seek to make sure the science, solu-

tions and standards of AI truly serve the public interest. Representing the Vatican at the summit were Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, and Bishop Paul Tighe, secretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

According to the French president's website, the summit's aims included: sharing best practices and challenges of AI technologies; reducing the "digital divide" and fostering open access to "independent, safe and reliable artificial intelligence for the many"; developing a more sustainable AI ecosystem given the current "untenable trajectory when it comes to energy use"; and ensuring "global governance of artificial intelligence is effective and inclusive."

In his message to Macron, Pope Francis encouraged "all stakeholders," including the poor, the powerless and others, to participate and be part of the regulation of artificial intelligence.

"I trust that the Paris summit will work for the creation of a platform of public interest on artificial intelligence so that every nation can find in artificial intelligence an instrument for its development and its fight against poverty, but also for the protection of its local cultures and languages," he wrote.

Catholic News Service

LED BY Catholic Priests

Fatima & Lourdes | May 20-29, 2025 | \$3,780

Medugorje | April 29-May 9, 2025 | \$3,750

Civitavecchia (Rome) Cruise | May 11-21, 2025 | \$4,850

Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lourdes | Sept 25-Oct 3, 2025 | \$3,780

Fatima, Santarem, Coimbra, Porto, Nazare
Oct 3-11, 2025 | \$3,780

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Father's Ministries Lifted Distinct Groups

The Southern Cross



Father James A. Boyd, who ministered for almost three decades in the Diocese of San Diego, died Jan. 20 after a prolonged illness. He was 88.

Father Boyd was best known for his work with the Stella Maris Seafarer's Center, where he served as chaplain, beginning in 2003. The center, which closed last year, represented the Diocese of San Diego's participation in the Apostleship of the Sea, an international ministry of pastoral care to those who make their livelihoods on the world's oceans.

"The appeal (of the priestly vocation) is that you're helping people to get to Heaven," Father Boyd told *The Southern Cross* in an interview that appeared in the January 2023 edition. "What could be better than that, helping them to be happy forever?"

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Father Boyd was ordained as a priest for that diocese on June 1, 1963. He ministered as an associate pastor in Brooklyn parishes before joining the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps in 1970.

His naval career spanned more than 25 years and took him around the world: to the Philippines; to Point Mugu in Oxnard, California; to Rota,



Father James A. Boyd

Spain; to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; and finally, to Naval Base Coronado, where he retired from the Navy in 1996.

Officially, Father Boyd would remain a priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn for the entirety of his priesthood. But, with the permission of his bishop, he served in the San Diego Diocese from

early 1997 until suffering a stroke in March of 2024.

Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham, whose diocesan responsibilities include serving as vicar for clergy, acknowledged that the late priest was "very active in our diocese."

"He was from the Diocese of Brook-

lyn, and yet, he is like one of us," he said, expressing the sentiment that he seemed to be just as much a San Diego priest as any who were ordained for this diocese.

In addition to serving as chaplain of the Stella Maris Seafarer's Center, Father Boyd was also actively involved with Engaged Encounter, which prepares couples for married life; Marriage Encounter, an enrichment program for married couples; and Retrouvaille, which is intended to heal deeply troubled marriages.

John Prust, director of the Diocese of San Diego's Office for Family Life and Spirituality, said that the late priest was such a strong supporter of marriages and families that some nicknamed him "The Divorce Buster."

A funeral Mass for Father Boyd was celebrated Jan. 30 at St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish in Carmel Valley. Interment was the following morning at Miramar National Cemetery.

"Being a priest is a very happy life," Father Boyd told *The Southern Cross* two years ago. "Think of all the good things you're doing. You can celebrate Mass; you bring God's forgiveness to people in confession. It's absolutely marvelous to be able to be called by God to do this. What a privilege!"

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Cardinal Robert W. McElroy at St. Joseph Cathedral on Feb. 9, 2025.

Cardinal Urges Speaking Up

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy delivered the following remarks on Feb. 9, 2025, at “Church Stands with Immigrants,” a prayer service at St. Joseph Cathedral.

We come together and pray and proclaim our faith; that the rights of every man, woman and child are inviolate. And that when our society violates those rights, we must speak up with clarity. We understand that God created all of us. We are all children of our God. When misery, fear and terror are unleashed upon the land, we cannot stay silent. When parents don’t know that they will be able to come home to be with their children after work, we cannot stay silent. When Costco becomes a ground to target people without papers, we cannot stay silent. When children become the targets to intentionally inflict pain on their parents with the threat of their separation, we cannot stand silent. When our houses of worship are turned into houses of fear because they are targets for deportation, we cannot stand silent. But we do not stand silent today.

Catholic teaching says that the nation has the right to secure its borders. That is true.

We have a right to secure our border in a way that respects the dignity of all. But what we are witnessing is far different than that. It is not a targeted effort to secure the border. It has become an indiscriminate campaign to bring fear into the hearts of every undocumented person — man, wom-

an, mother and child — in our society; those who are our coworkers, those who are our neighbors, those who worship with us, those who have lived here for so long, helping to build up our society. We cannot stay silent.

We must speak up and proclaim that this unfolding misery and suffering, and yes, war of fear and terror, cannot be tolerated. We must speak up and say, “Go no further,” because our brothers and sisters, who are being targeted, are too precious in our eyes and in God’s eyes. And we should speak up, we must speak up, as Americans, because it is the American belief that we are a nation of immigrants, and that our shores welcome all those who are poor and needy and come here seeking a better way of life. And that is the undocumented population we’re talking about, people who have come here seeking a better life, and who live among us, and work among us, and contribute to building up this country and help us in manifold ways.

So, as we go forth this day, let us remember, not just at this moment, when we pray to our God and ask God’s blessing upon us all, but in every moment in the unfolding weeks. We cannot stay silent but need to speak up for the rights of those who are undocumented, and for the wrong of unleashing a campaign of fear, which is unfolding in our midst.



EMBRACE: Faithful jammed St. Joseph Cathedral for the event, which was titled “Church Stands with Immigrants.”



UNITY: Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano led a vigil in front of the federal building, where an estimated 1,500 people gathered.

By Aida Bustos



“We understand that God created all of us. We are

all children of our God. When misery, fear and terror are unleashed upon the land, we cannot stay silent,” said Cardinal Robert W. McElroy.

He led the local Catholic Church in standing with immigrants and speaking out against Trump Administration orders to massively deport undocu-

mented men and women.

The cardinal joined leaders of other faiths at an afternoon prayer service on Feb. 9 at St. Joseph Cathedral, where the faithful jammed every one of the 900 seats and overflowed onto Third Avenue. The event was titled “The Church Stands with Immigrants,” which was co-sponsored by the San Diego Organizing Project.

Afterward, the faithful, estimated to have swelled to 1,500, walked to the federal building in a procession led

Vigil Continued on Page 11



PRESENCE: Faithful came from across the region, some arriving in 11 buses, and listened to testimonies and prayed.



100 men, women and children came together Feb. 9 to pray for undocumented immigrants. Leaders from other faiths joined their voices in prayer.

Not Alone'

Vigil *Continued from Page 10*

by altar servers, deacons and priests. They carried signs in English and Spanish with references to Scripture, such as “I was a stranger, and you gave me shelter” (Matt 25:35) and “I am my brother’s keeper” (Gen 4:9).

The Church’s teaching calls on the faithful to uphold the sacredness of human life. This means that the care of immigrants and refugees is part of the same teaching that calls on them to protect the most vulnerable, especially unborn children, the elderly and the infirm.

Nationwide, the Catholic Church has called the new executive orders a violation of the rights of undocumented immigrants and “contrary to moral law.” In statements, the U.S. bishops noted that Catholic teaching says that the country has a right to protect its borders and regulate immigration.

“But what we are witnessing is far different than that,” Cardinal McElroy said in his remarks. “It is not a targeted effort to secure the border. It has become an indiscriminate campaign to bring fear into the hearts of every undocumented person — man, woman, mother, and child — in our

society; those who are our coworkers, those who are our neighbors, those who worship with us, those who have lived here for so long, helping to build up our society.”

He urged the faithful to “speak up and proclaim that this unfolding misery and suffering, and yes, war of fear and terror, cannot be tolerated. We must speak up and say, ‘Go no farther.’”

The issue of immigration is deeply personal for the local community.

The Diocese of San Diego runs along the entire length of the border of California with Mexico. Around two-thirds of the nearly 1.4 million Catholics in

the diocese are Hispanic, a significant number of whom are immigrants. The region also is home to migrants from the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries. Clergy and religious women from many nations serve in parishes, schools, hospitals and detention centers.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano noted that he himself was an immigrant from Mexico. He said those being targeted were not anonymous people but rather live in local neighborhoods, work at local businesses, and are “part of our families.”

“Unfortunately, because many of them continue to live in the shadows, all the good that they do is not always visible or recognized,” he said at the cathedral.

The Trump Administration continues to falsely claim that immigrants are responsible for crime going up. In fact, the crime rate is generally down nationwide, with some exceptions. And study after study shows that immigrants, both those legally in the country and those who are undocumented, commit crimes at lower rates than U.S. citizens.

Catholic Charities’ mission is to help the most vulnerable, including immigrants, refugees and those applying for asylum, all legally in the country. Its CEO, Vino Pajanor, spoke at the prayer service about the proactive initiatives the agency is taking to support the migrant community.

The agency launched a comprehensive website in English and Spanish, emergencysafetyplan.org and plandeemergencia.org. The site provides essential information and resources, including a section about the rights immigrants have in the U.S., regardless of their status; and how families can prepare for a potential detention.

The agency’s representatives are distributing business-sized cards with a QR Code at parishes linking to the site. And it also is organizing virtual workshops at parishes and Catholic schools across the diocese to provide vital information to migrants.

“Our efforts are driven by a deep sense of compassion and commitment to social justice,” Pajanor said. “We

Vigil *Continued on Page 12*



SOLACE: Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano assured community members that they are not alone during the immigration crisis.



SIGNS OF THE TIME: Many participants in the procession to the federal building carried signs calling for mercy and love.



UNITED: The faithful prayed to God to bless all governments, especially the federal one, and to help them to treat immigrants with compassion and justice.

Vigil *Continued from Page 11*

believe that every person, regardless of their background or circumstance deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.”

Several individuals, including three young adults, shared their testimonies in Spanish and English at the event, at times struggling to hold back the tears.

One who spoke was identified only as Citlally, from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan.

She began her remarks at the cathedral by referring to a passage from Scripture: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt” (Lev 19:33-34).

Growing up the daughter of immigrant parents, she witnessed the sacrifices they made to build a life in a new country.

“They came here with only their faith in God. They left behind their hopes and dreams so my siblings and I could have a better life.”

She witnessed her parents face difficult situations they did not fully understand.

“I realized their life was a testimony of faith, perseverance and love.”

She said that their prayers formed her and that, now, as the daughter of immigrants, she prays for others.

“I pray for immigrant families, for those separated from their loved ones, for those who feel invisible. I pray that our nation’s leaders see immigrants not as numbers, as intruders, but rather as human beings. Each immigrant is created in the image of God.

“As believers in Christ, we should support one another, reflecting God’s boundless love. Human decency knows no borders.”



Immigrant Resources

emergencysafetyplan.org (English)

plandeemergencia.org (Spanish)



Churches have always opened their doors to migrants, she continued.

“ICE should not enter sacred spaces,” referring to an order from the Trump Administration that lifted a policy prohibiting immigration agents from entering places of worship, schools and hospitals.

She concluded simply: “My story is one of faith.”

Leaders from other Christian faiths also addressed the immigration crisis and walked in the procession to the federal building. They included Bishop Susan Brown Snook, from the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, who spoke at the cathedral, and Revs. Kristen Kuriga and Justine Sullivan, from the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego, who spoke at the vigil. Other faith leaders also joined the procession, walking along-

side Catholic deacons, priests, and religious brothers and sisters.

Along the way, those participating expressed why they had turned out.

“First, I’m here because of my faith. We are not alone,” said Sonia Ocampo, a native of the Mexican state of Nayarit who has lived in the U.S. for 35 years. “There are people who are afraid, but I prefer to have hope over fear.”

Seventeen-year-old Fernando said he was participating because of his mother, who is undocumented.

“I’m afraid for my mother,” said the teen, a U.S. citizen. “Undocumented immigrants are not criminals. I’m here to show that. I only see hate for those without papers. I feel sad.”

Christian Ramírez, a long-time community activist and member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan, said it was imperative to ac-

company immigrants at such a difficult time.

“In our country, it’s very important not to abandon something so basic as respect for our neighbors. I believe this event organized by the Catholic Church in our community is a call to reflection and to not lose our values.”

A 10-year-old boy, who said he belonged to Holy Family Parish in Linda Vista, expressed a simple wish.

“I want to ask (President) Trump to stop bringing agents over here, to cancel everything. They can take my mom and dad.”

At the federal building, Auxiliary Bishop Bejarano addressed the participants as faith leaders stood behind him.

Hoisting an American flag, he thanked the United States for welcoming immigrants, who he said had contributed so much to their adoptive country. He acknowledged that at certain points, however, the nation had rejected migrants.

“You’re better than that,” he said.

At the end of the vigil, the men, women, children, faith leaders and politicians raised their hands, bowed their heads, and prayed together, guided by Bishop Bejarano. First, he sent a blessing to all levels of government. And he asked God “to help them govern with a heart that seeks true justice, the common good, the well-being of families, and to build peace in our midst and in our country ... We ask God to help all those who enforce immigration laws to see the innocent, the suffering, and the dignity of every human person they encounter.”

See photo gallery at
thesoutherncross.org/vigil2025





TEAM SPIRIT: Cardinal Robert W. McElroy meets with the St. Francis of Assisi Creation Care Team at the annual Season of Creation Mass Sept. 24, 2023, at St. James Parish in Solana Beach.

Cardinal McElroy — ‘Laudato Si’ Champion

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Ph.D.



Just one month before the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical “Laudato Si” (On Care for Our Common Home), Cardinal Robert W. McElroy was installed as the sixth bishop of San Diego on April 15, 2015.

Ten years later, he leaves behind an incredible legacy of caring for creation as he departs for his installation as the archbishop of Washington, D.C. There, he will undoubtedly continue to stress that creation is a gift to humanity and that we are responsible for preserving this gift for future generations.

As the Creation Care Ministry formally established under his leadership, we bid him “fair winds and following seas” on his new adventure and offer in gratitude this brief review of the landmark actions taken here during his tenure.

‘Integrated Prism of Analysis’

One of the main things that Cardinal McElroy did throughout his time as bishop was to revive and elevate our ancient Church teachings on creation care through homilies, speeches, interviews and articles. A consistent theme has been his characterization of today’s environmental crisis as a complex, multifaceted challenge, demanding a sophisticated and collaborative response from the whole human family to restore the integrity of creation and ensure human flourishing for all people.

Shortly after his arrival, he launched just such a response, solarizing the Pastoral Center and encouraging parishes to follow suit. Today, with over 55% of parishes having solarized, the diocese as a whole is tracking very close to the Paris Climate Agreement, which calls for a 50% reduction of carbon emissions by 2030 to prevent average global surface temperatures from rising above 2 degrees Celsius. 195 countries, including the Vatican, are signatories to this international treaty.

Another collaborative action was the develop-



ment of a diocesan Creation Care Ministry, which started with a multidisciplinary committee of expert volunteers. This team produced and presented eco-education and spirituality workshops and, at the cardinal’s request, launched a tree-planting program. To date, over 200 trees have been donated for planting at our parishes and schools, and we now own a “crop” of over 500 young oaks.

Drawing inspiration from the Archdiocese of Atlanta, the committee also published one of the first diocesan Creation Care Action Plans in the country, explaining global environmental and energy dynamics and identifying local actions that can be taken. This plan can be found on the Creation Care diocesan webpage and still serves as a valuable menu from which parishes, schools and households can develop their own plans.

In his welcoming remarks to the plan, Cardinal McElroy wrote, “We as the Catholic community of San Diego and Imperial counties must adopt a radical new commitment to such goals if we as a planet are to survive meaningfully and hand on a life-giving existence to the coming generation ... We must work closely with science and recognize the immensely vital role that children and young people will have in transforming our mindsets and our choices that despoil the earth. And we must reject complacency, the greatest foe of all.”



At the behest of this volunteer committee, in the summer of 2022, Cardinal McElroy approved the institution of a formal associate director in the Office for Life, Peace and Justice to lead the ministry. Shortly after, the diocese enrolled in the Vatican’s “Laudato Si” Action Platform, pledging to take action every year for seven years or more. The following year, the Diocese of San Diego was recognized by the Catholic Climate Covenant as the national “Laudato Si Champion.” And in 2024, the diocese became the first in the U.S. to announce successful divestment from fossil fuels.

Dignitatis Humanae

Cardinal McElroy’s coat of arms includes the yellow field representative of the Diocese of San Diego as well as his own personally chosen blue and green fields.

The missions of San Francisco and San Diego are set against the blue while the images of a dove, an oak leaf, and a set of scales inhabit the green, symbolizing peace, life and justice. “DIGNITATIS HUMANAЕ” declares his motto.

Ultimately, it is human dignity at stake as we hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and marginalized. Cardinal McElroy has argued repeatedly that today’s crisis is the result of our estrangement from God, born of selfishness, a thirst for control, and radical individualism. To return to right relationship with our Creator and each other, he contends that “Laudato Si” shows “the pathway forward for us to move from alienation toward healing and the renewal of the earth.”

He has set a profound example for us all. We will miss him.



Send pictures of your family or parish illustrating Care for Creation to cslentz@sdcatholic.org. We will post them on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

[sdcatholic.org/creation](https://www.sdcatholic.org/creation)



These days, we hear about a constitutional crisis as the U.S. system of government unravels.

Crumbling is the desire to do the work needed to nurture a sense of “we” in “the people.” Collapsing is the hope of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one). And erased is the belief that all human beings “are created equal” and “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” Yes, the Constitution is in danger, but something even greater is at risk — our very humanity and, with it, the possibility of God’s loving dream for us in Christ awaiting our response.

To be Christian is to be grafted into an ancient community, while living in a constantly evolving reality. These days, it seems that every hour a decision comes from Washington that moves the United States further from the priorities of a genuine Christian faith. It is a time that, as Pope Francis insists, calls for “charity and clarity.”

Our Sacred Scriptures don’t have much to say about CO2 emissions, artificial intelligence, drones raining bombs, the unchecked power of multinational corporations, xenophobic

Columnist

Cecilia González-Andrieu, Ph.D.



nationalism, racism and disinformation. While our Scriptures do not speak directly to these modern crises, they illuminate deeper questions of kinship, dignity and mutuality that must guide our response.

Are we lost? Christianity has been in danger of losing its way before. On April 16, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., warned of the danger racism and segregation posed to the Christian Gospel and called attention to it with prophetic clarity. Four days after being arrested for leading a peaceful march on Good Friday, King penned his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” It remains one of the greatest examples of Christian theology responding to a political crisis.

Showing up and speaking up. In the letter, King argues for the ancient power of being present where one is needed. Criticized for going to Birmingham by white clergymen, he uses the prophets and the Apostle Paul to exemplify the need to respond and

“carry the gospel of freedom” to all places.

Six decades later, Pope Francis echoes King, responding to the dehumanizing treatment of migrants in the United States in his letter of Feb. 10, 2025. Speaking of “the love that builds a fraternity open to all without exception,” he eloquently argues that the isolationist position espoused by U.S. leaders that limits our care to individual or national identity “introduces an ideological criterion that distorts social life and imposes the will of the strongest as the criterion of truth.”

Feeling our radical interconnectedness. In one of the most quoted passages in the letter, King cries out that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” adding that “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

This awareness of the mysterious unity of all that exists is the direct opposite of current slogans about being “first” and touting our self-proclaimed “greatness.” As Gandhi reminds us, “A nation’s greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.”

If we persist in turning a blind eye to the suffering of the world’s poorest

and giving in to individualism and greed, we are turning away from God and from the good. I believe there will be consequences. Not just in more suffering caused by unrest, war, sickness, environmental degradation and famine, but about that quality within us as human beings that carries the image of God.

The image of God in us cannot withstand this frontal assault on it. Unless we cry out loudly and resolutely with the world’s dispossessed and act to lessen their suffering, we are disfiguring our *Imago Dei* and making ourselves unrecognizable to our Maker.

As Jesus reminded us, “What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me” (Matt 25:45).

Human history is full of once-thriving societies that imploded as a result of their hubris and selfishness. Today, as the pandemic showed us, we are inescapably tied together as a world. Our tradition affirms that God so loved the world that God sent God’s son to be with us (John 3:16). The ultimate sin would be to prove God wrong — to show that in the end, we were not worth loving after all.

Theologian Cecilia González-Andrieu, Ph.D., is a professor at Loyola Marymount University.

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Who Said It Was Going to Be Easy?



If Jesus had not sat at the same table as servile officials of the Roman Empire; if Jesus had not broken the law of the Sabbath when he healed the sick; if Jesus had not publicly defended an adulteress; if Jesus had not invited women to also be his disciples; if Jesus had not denounced the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his time ... surely he would not have created problems, nor be a threat to the theocentric power of his era.

If Jesus had not called “a race of snakes” or “whitewashed tombs” the spiritual guides that recited from memory paragraphs of Moses’ law and gave greater importance to following the rules of purification than to mercy, justice and love, surely he would not have died on the cross.

There’s a dimension that’s difficult to comprehend if we idealize Jesus’

Columnist

Ricardo Márquez



message. Love, fraternity, justice and peace — characteristics of the Kingdom that Jesus invites us to — come with tensions, persecutions, slanders and judgments.

Numerous conflicts have arisen during the story of Jesus’ followers, distinct interpretations of his words, manipulations of his message, and violence between groups that want to appropriate his name. It’s a history of lights and shadows.

We have to discern in each circumstance, as adult believers and followers of Jesus’ message, between what is accidental and what is essential; between what has been the fruit of historic circumstance and what is central in Jesus’ message.

His disciples left us the words that summarize the root of his message: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the sec-

ond is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:37-40). “All” that came beforehand and “all” of what is to come depends on this.

It’s so simple and clear a message that it’s hard for us to grasp it; that is why Jesus thanks God, because simple individuals have a better disposition to understand it than those who entangle us with academic pronouncements.

Today, we also live in a complicated reality full of tensions. Presidential statements about immigration policies have stoked fear, anxiety, suffering and uncertainty in our Hispanic community and in other immigrant communities. We can’t see with indifference the closing of borders, massive deportations, the shutdown of the process to apply for asylum and the proposal to eliminate U.S. citizenship to the children of immigrants.

We are all affected, though we don’t believe that, though we think that we don’t belong to “that” group. Some of our brothers and sisters, whom we share faith with on this American soil, play along with the narratives emanating from presidential spheres, that for-

eigners are invading the country, that we are corrupting it, putting them at risk. It’s a perverse generalization that generates a blindness to recognize and value what our Hispanic communities contribute to the economy and life of the United States.

The process of integration between distinct cultures creates tensions and conflicts, but managed adequately and with respect, can enrich human coexistence. We see each other when we’re equals, but when we’re different we have the opportunity to elevate our sense of belonging, to recognize each other as brothers and sisters.

To express our disagreement with the new measures and to promote actions to reconsider them and revoke them could bring us problems. But who said following and practicing Jesus’ message would be easy?

In the end, and this is the radical experience of Jesus’ core message: “Do not be afraid,” because death does not have the final word, nor suffering, nor jail, nor persecution. Every day, the Spirit gives us the gift of the resurrection, the gift of hope.

Ricardo Márquez can be reached at marquez_muskus@yahoo.com.



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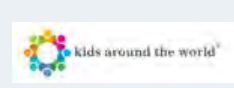
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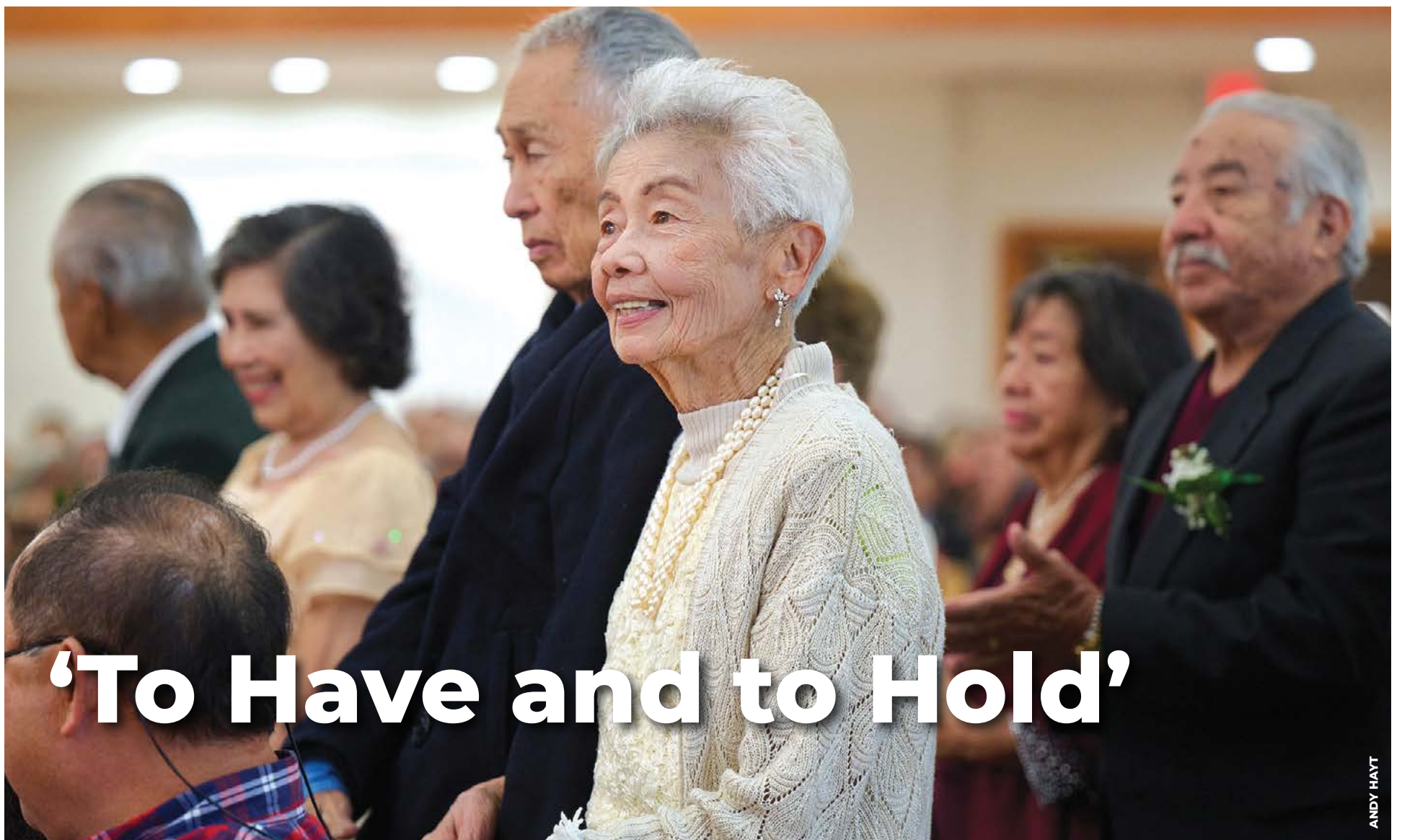


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ANDY HAYT

BLESSING: Couples from across the diocese celebrated their love and lives together at the diocese's annual Marriage Anniversary Mass on Feb. 15 at Good Shepherd Church.

The Southern Cross



Some couples had been married for more

than 65 years. Some for less than one year. They all crowded into the pews to acknowledge their marriage before God, to renew their wedding vows and to celebrate their union.

The diocese's fifth annual Marriage Anniversary Mass on Feb. 15 returned to its roots at Good Shepherd Church, where the Office for Family Life and Spirituality had held the inaugural celebration outdoors in 2021 during the pandemic. It's one of the events the office organizes year-round to strengthen marriage.

"Today, our diocese celebrates love, celebrates hope, celebrates the vocation of marriage," said Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido, near the start of the Mass. "What a powerful way to say that 'our marriage is good' and 'our marriage is beautiful.'"

The Mass featured readings, prayers and songs in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Tagalog, reflecting the rich diversity in the diocese.

Many couples brought family members. One of them was the family of Teresa and Carlos Javier Chávez, who were celebrating their 50th anniversary, said their granddaughter, Camila Chávez.

The couple was accompanied by Teresa Chávez's brother and his wife, Salvador and Rosalía González, also

celebrating their 50th anniversary. The children of the González family, in turn, brought their spouses, Omar and Andrea González, who have been married five years, and Adriana González Mota and Arturo Mota, married for 10.

The families are members of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Charles parishes in South Bay.

"We came today to celebrate four distinct marriages," said Camila Chávez smiling, as she organized the couples, their children and grandchildren for photos of the memorable day.

Afterward, the couples and their families jammed into the parish hall for a reception, complete with tamales, egg rolls, chicken wings and wedding cake.

And they could stop by ministry resource tables promoting marriage-enrichment opportunities available through parishes and the diocese year-round. In particular, couples who were civilly married were invited to explore whether God might be calling them to receive the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Don and Mary Wagner, of Good Shepherd Parish, were celebrating 55 years of being married.

Why has their marriage lasted?

"The Lord," she quickly answered.

Then he said, "Patience and love."

See photo gallery at
[thesoutherncross.org/
anniv2025](https://thesoutherncross.org/anniv2025)



ANDY HAYT

PARTNERS: Carlos Javier and Teresa Chávez celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, along with many family members.



ANDY HAYT

RENEWAL: Couples renewed their vows as part of the Mass, celebrated in four languages.

'I Felt a Weight Lifted Off My Shoulder'

By Denis Grasska



Janelle Peregoy can't speak highly enough of Life-

Giving Wounds, a nationally known ministry that offers peer-led retreats and support groups for adult children of divorced parents.

"Honestly, it is the program I wish existed when I was in my 20s," said Peregoy, who suffered for years after the dissolution of her own parents' marriage.

Peregoy serves as an associate director of the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, where her focus is on divorced and separated ministry.

A two-year effort to bring Life-Giving Wounds to San Diego paid off last spring, when the ministry held a retreat at the Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center in Oceanside. The dioceses of San Diego and Orange and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles joined forces to organize the event, which was the ministry's first-ever retreat in Southern California.

This year, the dioceses of San Diego and Orange are re-teaming to welcome Life-Giving Wounds back to the region. The upcoming retreat will be held from Friday, March 28, to Sunday, March 30, at Lestonnac Retreat Center in Tustin.



HEALING: Life-Giving Wounds brought its retreat for adult children of divorce to Southern California last year. The San Diego Diocese is co-sponsoring another retreat this March in Tustin, California.

"We hear the phrase 'Children are resilient' all the time," said Peregoy, "and that may be true, but a lot of those children end up addressing those wounds in therapy later on in their 20s and 30s."

Researchers have identified divorce as an "adverse childhood experience" linked to an increased risk of substance abuse and other challenges in life.

Such childhood trauma can cause difficulties for grown children of divorce when it comes to relationships, since they "haven't seen a thriving example" of marriage, said Peregoy. It can even warp one's perception of God.

"The phrase 'God the Father' ... cuts differently if you've had abandonment in the family," she said.

More than 30 people attended last year's retreat.

Among them was Veronica Gil-Garcia, 48, of St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish in Oceanside.

Born in Mexico City, her parents separated when she was 6 — something that she likened to the dropping of an atomic bomb.

"For me, it was devastating," said Gil-Garcia, who was "left with a hole in my heart" and "felt abandoned, alone, misunderstood, rejected, ignored."

Fast-forward many years, she had divorced after a civil marriage and, with an annulment, remarried in the Church 18 years ago. She thought that last year's retreat sounded perfect ... for her daughter.

"I thought it would be an excellent

opportunity for God to heal her from the divorce between her father and me," she said. "But, to my surprise, she wasn't interested in going."

"Since I had already reserved a spot, I ended up going," she said, describing the retreat as "immensely healing and restorative in my life."

Janine Solano, a 32-year-old Long Beach resident, also attended.

Her parents divorced when she was 4 years old. The couple reconciled three years later, but separated again after two years.

Solano, who works for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, was thinking more of her boyfriend, a fellow adult child of divorce, than of herself when she reserved two spots at the retreat.

"I wasn't going to go if he didn't go, because I felt like I didn't need it," said Solano, who became engaged after the retreat and is preparing to be married this December. "But, luckily, Jacob wanted to attend, and we went, and it changed our lives."

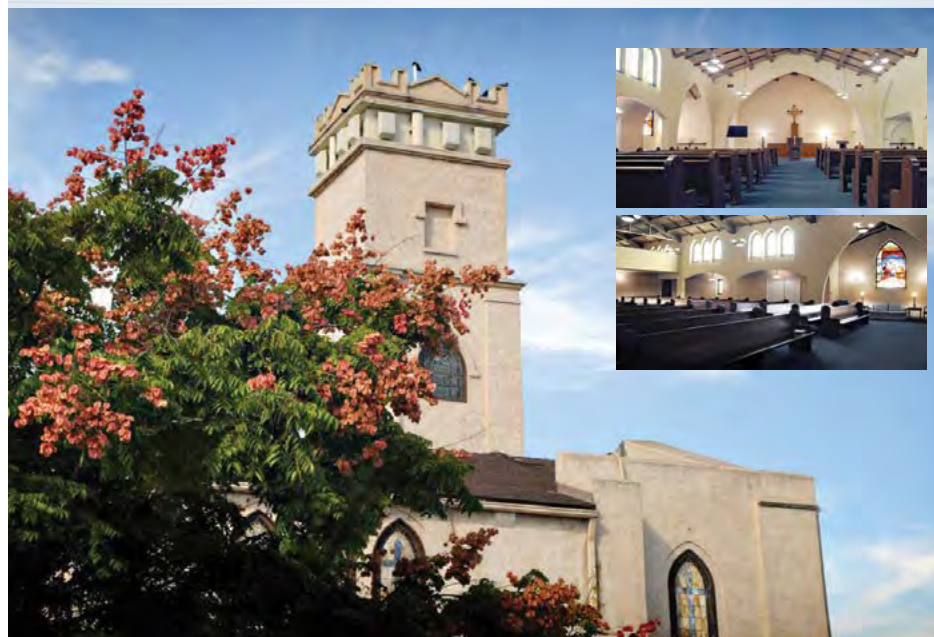
How to Attend

The cost to attend is \$425 for single occupancy, \$375 for double occupancy, and \$125 for commuters. Registration is open at rcbo.org/acod.

For more information, email jperegoy@sdcatholic.org.

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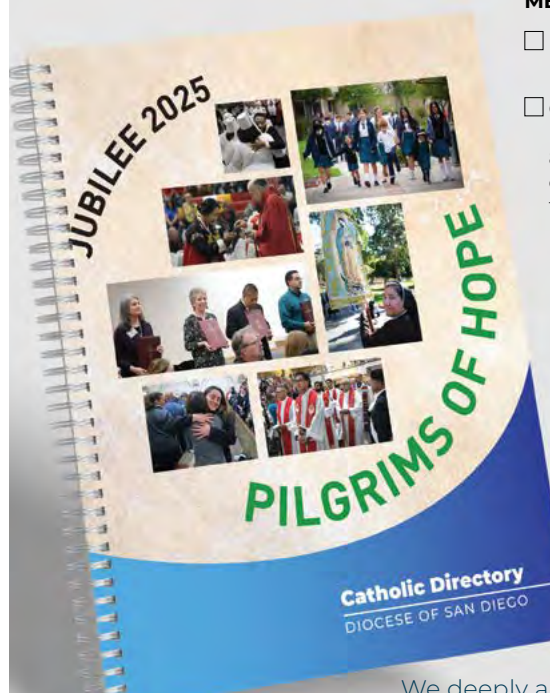
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News Briefs

Gala Supports Trafficking Survivors

Children of the Immaculate Heart, a nonprofit that has served survivors of sex trafficking and their children since 2013, will hold its 12th annual gala on Saturday, March 1.

It will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. at St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish in Carmel Valley. The evening will include a three-course dinner, drinks, a jazz band, auctions, and door prizes.

The keynote speaker, Jamie Gates, Ph.D., is a sociology professor at Point Loma Nazarene University and an expert on human trafficking.

The gala supports services for the clients in the organization's program, including housing assistance, individual counseling, equine therapy, financial tutoring, career planning, education, monthly groceries, and transportation.

Tickets are \$85 per person. RSVP is required at childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/events or (619) 431-5537.

'40 Days for Life' to Begin March 5

The spring campaign of 40 Days for Life will run from Ash Wednesday, March 5, to Palm Sunday, April 13.

Held on the same dates in communities around the world, the 40 Days for Life campaign is an effort to protect the unborn through fasting and prayer, community outreach, and peaceful all-day vigils in front of abortion clinics.

The centerpiece of the campaign is

a 40-day, round-the-clock prayer vigil on the public sidewalk outside of an abortion clinic. Locally, such vigils will be taking place at nine locations in San Diego and Imperial counties, including downtown San Diego, Clairemont, College Area, Mira Mesa, Escondido, Vista, El Cajon, Chula Vista and El Centro.

Two 40 Days for Life Commissioning Masses, celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano, were to precede the spring campaign. The first was held Feb. 23 at Our Mother of Confidence Parish in University City. The upcoming one will be at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, March 2, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (1770 Kearney Ave., San Diego 92113).

For more information, including the nearest location, and to sign up for vigil hours, visit sdcatholic.org/40-days-for-life-campaign.

Workshop to Focus on 'Dealing with Emotions'

EL CAJON — St. Luke Parish's Mental Health Ministry is sponsoring a presentation on "Dealing with Emotions in Positive Ways."

It will be held at 10:15 a.m., following the 9 a.m. Mass, on Sunday, March 9, at St. Luke Parish, located at 1980 Hillsdale Road, El Cajon 92019.

Presenter Marissa Cenicerros, from St. Paul's PACE, will give tips on how we can control our emotions so they don't control us, and how this can help with anxiety and depression.

All are welcome, but an RSVP to hello@thechurchofstluke.org is

requested. St. Luke Parish offers resources for those dealing with mental health challenges, as well as for their caretakers, at thechurchofstluke.org/mental.

5K Walk Keeps Oaxacan Kids in School

The Oaxaca Education Fund will hold its annual 5K Walk on Saturday, March 22.

The fundraiser event will begin in Canyonside Park, located at 12350 Black Mountain Road, and continue into Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Registration will start at 8:30 a.m. There is a suggested donation of \$20. Children younger than 14 walk for free.

The Oaxaca Education Fund grew out of a migrant ministry that served field workers who worked between Rancho Peñasquitos and Del Mar. It distributes school supplies to about 1,500 children in the towns from which these workers come.

The fund has helped 22 young people finish college so far and is providing tuition help and enthusiastic moral support to 17 students following in their footsteps. It also provides a monthly food stipend for 50 orphans and disabled children.

For more information or to support the fund, visit oaxacaeducationfund.org or text or call (858) 437-4001.

Opportunity for Men to 'Explore' Vocation

The Diocese of San Diego will host an Explorer Day with Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano on Saturday, March 22.

The event, which is intended for men interested in exploring the possibility of a priestly vocation, will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at St. Francis Center, which is located on the campus of the University of San Diego.

To register, contact your parish priest and pick up an application in the parish office.

For more information, contact Carmel Maglalang at (858) 490-8389 or cmaglalang@sdcatholic.org.

Rachel's Vineyard Offering Post-Abortion Healing

The Rachel's Vineyard ministry is presenting "A Time for Mercy," a Catholic post-abortion retreat, from Friday, March 28, to Sunday, March 30.

Organizers promise a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion. Rachel's Vineyard retreats are open to women and men seeking healing from an abortion. The retreats are confidential and non-judgmental, offered in the Catholic tradition.

Early registration is recommended, as space is limited.

For more information, visit

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atimeformercy.org, call (951) 325-7702 or email RVTemecula@verizon.net.

Divorced, Separated Invited to Healing Mass

The Diocese of San Diego wants divorced and separated Catholics to know: “You are not alone. Divorce and separation are never part of the plan. The Church is here to help.”

The diocese will deliver that message at 7 p.m., Wednesday, April 9, at the diocesan Pastoral Center in the form of a bilingual Healing Mass celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano.

After Mass, there will be a dessert reception where divorce support ministries from across the diocese will be available to answer questions.

For more information, email jperegoy@sdatholic.org.

‘Beginning Experience’ Offers Healing for Widowed, Divorced

OCEANSIDE — Divorced, widowed and separated men and women are invited to register for a healing Beginning Experience Weekend.

The next weekend will be held from Friday, May 2, to Sunday, May 4, at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside.

The weekend focuses on healing and moving beyond grief in a supportive and caring environment with others who are going through and have gone through the same experiences.

For more information, email beginningexperiencesd@gmail.com or call (858) 748-2273.

Young Adults Can Network at YCP Events

The San Diego chapter of Young Catholic Professionals (YCP) hosts regular events for young Catholics in their 20s and 30s.

Among the organization’s recurring events is its Executive Speaker Series, where a Catholic speaker is invited to reflect on his or her faith and career. There is no cost for admission, and attendees can enjoy free beer, wine and appetizers, as well as time for networking.

YCP San Diego also holds networking happy hours, half-day retreats and other events.



COURTESY MSGR. DONAL SHEAHAN

Renewal for Reverends

Sixteen priests from the Diocese of San Diego took part in a retreat Feb. 3 to 7 at the Cardinal Timothy Manning House of Prayer for Priests in Los Angeles.

Sponsored by the diocesan Office of the Vicar for Clergy, this retreat opportunity is offered to all priests twice a year.

Priests participating in the recent retreat included Fathers Jun Cinco; Minh Do; Silverio Espenilla; Rolando Gabutera; Andrew Kunambi; Peter Vu Lam; Rey Manahan; Elmer Mandac; Victor Maristela; Lauro Minimo; Miguel Romero Mozo, MSP; Donal Sheahan; Paul Dass Selvaraj, OMI; Anthony Stanonik; and Ernesto Torres. They were joined by Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham, who currently serves as vicar for clergy and is pictured center-right in the front row.

For more information on upcoming events, visit youngcatholicprofessionals.org/chapter/san-diego.

Men Invited to Join ‘Rosary Crusade’

The Men’s Rosary Crusade gathers at 9 a.m., every first Saturday of the month, at the corner of 6th and Laurel in Balboa Park. All men are welcome.

The rosary intentions are for reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of America, for families and for the unborn.

For more information, email draguez@sbcglobal.net or call (619) 920-8363.

Catholics Can ‘Encounter’ Jesus in Rancho Peñasquitos

Encounter, a Spirit-filled evening

of inspiring music, prayer and Eucharistic adoration, is held on the second Friday of each month at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

Sponsored by the parish’s Hearts of

Fire Ministry, the event runs from 7 to 8 p.m. Confession will be available, beginning at 6:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish at (858) 324-0490.

Obituary

Jesuit Father Kevin Casey



DUBLIN, Ireland — Jesuit Father Kevin Casey, who served in the Diocese of San Diego before returning home to his native Ireland, died Jan. 30 at the Cherryfield Lodge Nursing Home in Dublin. He was 83.

Born in Dublin, Father Casey was ordained as a priest in the Society of Jesus on June 23, 1972.

Father Casey ministered for many years in the Diocese of San

Diego, from 1999 until his return to Ireland in 2022.

Locally, he served at Guardian Angels Parish in Santee as a priest in residence, then parish administrator and, from 2013 to 2017, as pastor.

He was administrator of St. John the Evangelist Parish in San Diego, from 2017 to 2021, and senior associate pastor of St. Mark Parish in San Marcos, from July 1, 2021, until Aug. 1, 2022.

Father Casey’s funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 5 at Clongowes Wood College in Ireland.

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