THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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Gift from God

Pages 10-11

DAVID MAUNG

JOYOUS: *The community warmly received new Fathers Brian Frulla, Anthony Jimenez and Jesse Lopez after their ordination on June 14 at St. Thérèse of Carmel Church by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano.*

Congratulations!

Nearly 100 students graduate from the only high school in the Imperial Valley. **Page 3**

Moving Experience

Two Eucharistic pilgrimages converged in San Diego to celebrate our faith. **Pages 6-7**

Unity in Diversity

Pentecost Mass celebrates love and unity in the midst of cultural diversity. **Pages 16-17**

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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.

Organization Responds to Crisis

By Aida Bustos

Catholic Charities, in the Diocese of San Diego, continues to work on several fronts to support immigrant families, parishes and schools in the face of unprecedented actions from the federal government.

Fulfilling its Gospel mission, the organization has provided emergency assistance to the most vulnerable in the community for more than a century, working with the public sector and community partners. The organization has offices in San Diego and Imperial counties.

The U.S. government is conducting a massive campaign to detain and deport undocumented immigrants, including at work sites. For example, heavily armed Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raided a popular restaurant in the South Park neighborhood of San Diego on May 30 while diners were eating, handcuffed all employees and detained four of them.

Catholic Charities has launched a Children's Task Force that helps families prepare legal documents at no cost to ensure their children are taken care of in the event the parents are deported. Parishes and Catholic schools in the diocese can request this service for the families they serve.

The organization is providing up-to-date briefings to parishes and schools to prepare them for a potential immigration enforcement action at their premises.

The organization's staff, which includes an attorney, can assist individuals and families through its Refugee and Immigration Services program.

In January, the organization launched a webpage in English and Spanish to inform undocumented immigrants about their rights and prepare them and their families for potential detention by immigration authorities. The page is found at *emergencysafetyplan.org* and *plandeemergencia.org*.

Meanwhile, the new federal administration eliminated a program to enable immigrants from around the world that had reached the border to apply for asylum. In June, it banned travel into the United States from 12 countries and severely restricted entry from seven more.

The administration also has slashed funding to assist immigrants and refugees legally in the country — funding that it had provided for decades.

As a result of these actions, Catholic Charities has been forced to downsize its Migrant Respite Shelters in the San Diego and Imperial Valley region that assisted asylum-seekers to reach their final destination as they awaited their immigration hearing.

Catholic Charities is transitioning its shelters into a smaller-scale operation. This new location will serve as a "Community Hub" — offering legal assistance, supportive services, self-sufficiency programs, and outreach for migrants and refugees. The Community Hub will also welcome collaboration with community partners, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based ones to provide additional support and resources to those in need.

The organization also has had to cut staffing in other programs. By the end of June, it has eliminated around 70 positions across its operations.

Help Available

Catholic Charities is offering to help undocumented immigrants to prepare legal documents for free to arrange care for their children in case they are deported.

The agency continues to offer an up-to-date webpage in English and Spanish with resources and reliable information for undocumented migrants: *plandeemergencia.org* and *emergencysafetyplan.org*.

For immigration-related matters in English or Spanish, Catholic Charities may be contacted by phone at (619) 287-1270 in San Diego or (760) 370-3914 in the Imperial Valley, or by visiting the website *ccdsd.org/immigrant-services*.

JUSTIN MCLELLAN

Pope Sets Sept. 7 Canonizations

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV will canonize Blesseds Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati together Sept. 7, the Vatican announced.

Meeting with cardinals living in and visiting Rome for an ordinary public consistory June 13, the pope approved the new canonization date for the two young blesseds and set Oct. 19 as the date for the canonization of seven others.

The canonization of Blessed Acutis, a teenager known for his devotion to the Eucharist and creating an online exhibition of Eucharistic miracles, had originally been scheduled for April 27 during the Jubilee of Teenagers. It was postponed following the death of Pope Francis April 21.

Born in 1991 and raised in Milan, Blessed Acutis used his tech skills to evangelize and was noted for his joyful faith and compassion for others before dying of leukemia in 2006 at age 15.

Blessed Frassati, born in 1901 into a prominent family in Turin, Italy, was admired for his deep spirituality and love for the poor. A member of the Dominican Third Order, he served the sick. He died at age 24 after contracting polio, possibly from one of the people he assisted.

Catholic News Service

CLASS OF 2025: *Some 90 students graduated from Vincent Memorial Catholic High School, the only Catholic secondary school in the Imperial Valley. Their Baccalaureate Mass and commencement were held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Calexico on May 23.*

Graduates Urged to Stay Friends with Christ

By Roman T. Flores

CALEXICO — Administrators gave the graduates of the Class of 2025 of Vincent Memorial Catholic High School a warm sendoff to all different corners of the nation and world.

Father Mark Edney celebrated a Baccalaureate Mass for the 90 graduates on May 23 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. In his homily, he told the graduates that it was important to continue their friendship with Christ throughout their lives.

And he asked them where they planned to go to college, if that's the route they were taking.

"I'm going to Boston," responded Lucía Uro, the class valedictorian. The graduate, who had a 4.67 GPA, said she planned to study neuroscience at Boston College.

"Guadalajara," responded another graduate, Jorge Fiorentini, a basketball standout at the school.

"I'm going to Spain," said another graduate, adding that he planned to study finance in Salamanca.

PROUD: *Valedictorian Lucía Uro attended the ceremony with her mother, Gabriella Salcedo Uro. She plans to study neuroscience at Boston College.*

"Paris … to study French," still another answered, prompting Father Edney to respond to her in French, which itself prompted laughter among those on hand.

Eight of the graduates received the California Scholarship Federation Lifetime Award for their significant academic achievements. A total of 66 graduates were designated as Fidelity Students, who had received all of their schooling in Catholic schools. A dozen families were named "Fidelity Families" — families that had all of the children in their immediate family attend Catholic schools and to graduate from Vincent Memorial.

"I have been attending a Catholic school my entire life," Uro said in an interview. "I definitely love Vincent Memorial," which is the only Catholic high school in the Imperial Valley.

"It's such a special place, such a special community," she continued, "and I've learned to take advantage of every opportunity here. It really prepared me for the real world.

"I've always wanted to keep going (in Catholic education) because I feel like it really instilled a lot of great values and virtues in my life."

For his part, Fiorentini said, "I will always remember all of my friendships because we are a small school, so everyone knows each other."

And he spoke about the most important lesson he learned.

"I think what helps us is to always put God first. No matter what, our faith is the most important thing, and we cannot be successful in the world if we don't put our faith first," he said.

The graduation also marked the first class at Vincent Memorial under a new principal, Sister Patricia Rodriguez, a native of the Mexicali-Imperial Valley region.

During commencement, the principal encouraged the graduates to "invite God in all that you do. … He will always be waiting for you."

3,000 Joyously Put Their Faith in Action

By Denis Grasska

"A quick and efficient way to help so many."

That's how Anna Leyba, from St. Rose of Lima Parish in Chula Vista, described the Million Meal Event.

"I especially love seeing the young people here," she said, "because it's showing me that their families are teaching them … that we were created to serve, not to be served."

Leyba was among the approximately 3,000 volunteers participating in the event, held June 14 at Cathedral Catholic High School. Now in its fourth year, the Million Meal Event is a charitable project spearheaded by the permanent deacons of the Diocese of San Diego, in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Kids Around the World and Catholic Charities.

The deacons asked parishes and individuals to help to pay for the raw materials for the meals, which cost $300,000. Donations can still be made at *ccdsd.donorsupport.co/page/MillionMealsEvent.*

During two shifts, each lasting two hours, about 150 tables of eight to 10 volunteers each worked in assembly-line fashion to produce meal packets consisting of red lentils, rice, dried vegetables and vitamins. Each packet represents six meals.

Half of the meals will be distributed to impoverished families in Tijuana, while the remainder will be delivered to Zambia.

As in past years, a DJ kept volunteers pumped up with popular music throughout the event.

Elisa Esparza, a member of Our Lady of Grace Parish in El Cajon, who volunteered alongside her grandson, saw her participation as a way of fulfilling the demands of the Christian life.

"We have to take care of each other … 'Feed my lambs,' right?" she said, making a Scriptural allusion.

Erwin and Emily Cena, members of The Immaculata Parish, packed meals with their two daughters, Abby and Camden.

"It's a way for us to put into action what we pray about and what we learn about in school and church," Erwin said.

Emily said, "It's a fun opportunity for our whole family to do something together that's helping folks near and far."

Envisioning what the packaged meals might mean to those who will receive them, Daniel Romero said, "It's nice to make someone else's day."

Romero, a member of St. Rose of Lima Parish and a first-time participant, attended the event with his girlfriend, Miranda Miramontes, and her family.

"It's always nice seeing how many people come out to do this with us. … It's nice knowing that there's a lot of people who want to have a helping hand in this," said Miramontes, for whom this was her third year participating.

Other participants also saw the event as instructive for the next generation.

"We like to volunteer as a family," said Steven Rupiper, of St. Michael Parish in Poway, who attended with his wife and two children. "We want to make sure that our kids understand that it's an important part of being a Christian and giving back to the community."

Bishops Call on Faithful to Fight Racism

The Southern Cross

SACRAMENTO — The Anti-Racism Committee of the California Catholic Conference issued the following statement on June 5.


ADOBESTOCK

Its members are Bishop Michael Pham, of the Diocese of San Diego; and Bishop Matthew Elshoff, OFM, Cap, and Bishop Brian Nunes, both of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

"In keeping with the theme of this Jubilee Year declared by our late Pope Francis, 'Pilgrims of Hope,' we write these words to encourage all of us to continue pressing forward as bearers of hope to eradicate racism in the minds and hearts of the people and cultures today. Since hope is knowing and believing that God is present even in the midst of struggles, trials, and suffering, we are confident that our work will yield fruit as we stay focused on Jesus Christ.

"Racism, according to 'Open Wide Our Hearts' from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 'arises when — either consciously or unconsciously — a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Matt 22:39).'

"With this in mind, we encourage all of us to be in communion with one another as we journey together with Christ, who is our hope and companion, to ensure the work against racism is effective and resourceful. As the Psalmist reminds us, 'How good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together as one' (Ps 133:1). But dwelling together is not enough.

We are also called to live and work together as one, despite our differences.

"Each year at Pentecost, we hear these words from Acts of the Apostles 2:9-10: "We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome.' Despite these differences, many individuals living in Jerusalem in the first century heard the Good News of Jesus proclaimed to them by the Apostles after the Resurrection, thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit creates a unity of love and peace.

"The call to unity is present in our new Pope Leo XIV's episcopal motto, *In Illo Uno Unum* ('In the One, we are one'), and close to his heart. From the Loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, when he greeted the crowds for the first time as Pope Leo XIV, he said, 'United and hand-in-hand with God, let us advance together.'

"We recognize racism is still ingrained in our society today. We need to continue to raise awareness of who we are as God has created us. As human beings, we all share a common origin. We are created in the image and likeness of God. We have dignity and values in the eyes of God. When we ignore this profound truth, we face the consequences of prejudice, fear of others, and hatred. The history and legacy of racism continue to hurt African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and many other cultural communities, compromising and destroying lives.

"The road to transformation is a road of conversion, one of both heart and mind. This conversion will inspire us to change, to reform our lives, to reform our institutions. In this Year of Hope, we need to seriously examine how racism has prevented us from becoming more fully the Body of Christ that we aspire to be. Not every action we take will be perfect, nor should we wait to find the perfect solution. What is important is action — as individuals, as the Church, and as a society.

"We need to begin with listening from the heart and dialogue to guide our actions. As Pope Francis states in 'Dilexit Nos,' the heart is at the center of one's desire and a place for decision-making to take shape (p. 1). Then, transformation of the heart begins to take root in our lives because 'the heart of Christ is alive with the action of the Holy Spirit' (p. 17).

"From his encyclical letter, 'Fratelli Tutti,' Pope Francis states, 'The ability to sit down and listen to others, typical of interpersonal encounters, is paradigmatic of the welcoming attitude shown by those who transcend narcissism and accept others, caring for them and welcoming them into their lives' (p. 39). If we make a genuine commitment to the effort to eliminate racism — in our hearts, in our minds, and in our actions, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then this is a transformative love for conversion which anchors our hope in Jesus Christ.

"As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are committed to His mission of spreading the Gospel and building the Reign of God through daily worship, evangelization, and charitable outreach to those in need. We strive to be transformed in the Spirit of Christ to become a unifying and healing presence in a broken world. We look forward to sharing the Good News of God's love in compassion, humility, and obedience, joyfully anticipating a better world. As Pope Leo XIV says, God 'loves all of us unconditionally.'

"Committing to eliminate racism is to strive for a transformation of heart every day; to strive to see every person as sacred and as a child of God; to find common ground, to learn more about other cultures, especially those represented in the local community and the parish; to participate in groups with diverse people; to participate in anti-bias training at work and apply it to daily life; to reach out and welcome new people and neighborhoods. Let us teach our children that our faith calls everyone to love their neighbor and that everyone has dignity, regardless of skin color or place of origin, and to model those beliefs when interacting with others in our surroundings.

"In the end, 'Conversion is a long road to travel for the individual. Moving our nation to a full realization of the promise of liberty, equality, and justice for all is even more challenging. However, in Christ we can find the strength and the grace necessary to make that journey,' as 'Open Wide Our Hearts' says. As Pope Francis tells us, 'Hope does not disappoint."

Diocese Offers Resources to Tackle Racism

The Southern Cross

The U.S. Catholic Church at all levels is tackling the sin of racism and working toward lasting justice and peace.

In the San Diego Diocese, the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities hosted a series of community forums online to explore racism in various arenas and to identify long-term solutions that can be implemented locally.

Five forums, called "My Church, My Story: Listen, Dialogue and Action," were held from August of 2020 to February of 2021. Each focused on the experiences of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders and immigrants and refugees.

Each forum featured speakers who shared their story and how racism had affected their life, particularly in the Church. Then participants were invited to propose ways their parishes, diocese and the Church itself could root out racism.

Videos of the speakers are presented on a page developed by the diocese, *sdcatholic.org/cultural-diversity/overcoming-racism.*

The participants' comments and recommendations were summarized in a report that was shared with then Bishop Robert W. McElroy, the diocese's leadership and its clergy.

The diocese also presents a webpage on racial justice that invites the faithful to "see," "choose," and "act" against racism. The page is at *sdcatholic.org/life-peace-and-justice/justice/racial-justice*.

The page explores the forms of racism and presents pastoral letters, statements and guidance from the Church; homilies from Bishop McElroy; and ways to combat racism.

Retreat Lifts Grandparents' Role in Faith

By Denis Grasska

Calling all grandparents!

The diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality is hosting its first-ever Grandparents' Day Retreat.

"The reality is (that) so many of our grandparents really power our Catholic community, and yet it's sometimes rare that we really acknowledge them for that," said Janelle Peregoy, one of the office's associate directors.

"These are massive contributions to our Catholic community," she said, reflecting on the impact that older Catholics have on their own families, as well as at their parishes.

The retreat, whose theme is "The Gift of Your Spiritual Wisdom," will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wednesday, July 23, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

That date was selected because of its proximity to the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, which was established by Pope Francis in 2021 and is observed annually on the fourth Sunday in July, near the liturgical feast of Jesus' grandparents, Sts. Joachim and Anne. The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated on Sunday, July 27, this year.

Peregoy said there is no cost to attend the retreat, which is open to "any grandparent that wants to talk about the role that faith plays, not only in their life, but in (the) life of the family, and what that looks like in relationship to adult children."

RETREAT: *The diocese will hold an event for grandparents on July 23 at the Pastoral Center.*

"I think one of the other topics that we really look forward to covering is this idea of redefining purpose and vocation," she said. "What does that look like? How does that look different in retirement? What does that look like in terms of maybe having more free time on your hands than you're used to having?"

The retreat will begin with breakfast. There will be two presentations — one by Sandra Adsit, of St. Michael Parish in Poway, and another by Joe and Janet Bartel, of Mission San Diego de Alcalá Parish — each of which will be followed by small-group discussion.

Peregoy said that the office's "big hope" is that there will be "plenty of time" for participants to make connections with fellow grandparents at the retreat.

It will conclude with a Mass celebrated by Father Charles "Chuck" Fuld, a retired priest and former editor of *The Southern Cross*.

"I agreed to celebrate this Mass for grandparents because I am one. I am what some people call a 'widower-priest,'" said Father Fuld, who entered the seminary after raising his three children and has been a priest for 39 years.

Now, at 91 years old, Father Fuld has five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. His eighth great-grandchild is due in November.

Peregoy said that Father Fuld was "the only priest that came to mind" to celebrate the Mass, because of his unique experience as both a priest and a grandfather.

"We just thought it would be really fun to have Father Chuck come back to his old stomping grounds and share his reflections from that viewpoint," she said.

Various apostolates that are engaged in senior ministry have been invited to attend the retreat and to share their resources with the retreatants.

Peregoy said that the idea of a grandparents' retreat was something that she and her colleagues in the Office for Family Life and Spirituality have been considering for some time.

"Part of the reason that my office hadn't done this before now is that we are somewhat limited, as not-yet-grandparents, in conceptualizing what might need to be discussed," she said. "Then, we realized that certain topics kept repeating themselves in casual conversation."

Such topics, she said, included the challenge of navigating relationships with adult children, of modeling faith and love for the whole family, and of having children and grandchildren who either live far away or who no longer practice their Catholic faith.

"We finally just decided to do it this year," she said of the retreat, "and so we're excited about the possibility."

For more information, contact Janelle Peregoy at (858) 490-8292 or jperegoy@sdcatholic.org.

Eucharist Lights Lives Across Miles

PHOTOS BY ANDY HAYT

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS: *A brief procession June 16 led from Mass in St. Francis Chapel to a Holy Hour in the historic mission church at Mission San Diego de Alcalá.*

By Denis Grasska

Jesus visited San Diego in a special way in June.

Two Eucharistic pilgrimages converged in San Diego on June 16 at Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The pilgrims were from the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, which set out from Indianapolis on May 18, and the Camino de California, which embarked from Mission San Francisco Solano on June 6 on its southward journey along the California Mission Trail.

The pilgrims, joined by local faithful from the San Diego Diocese, walked from the historic Mission San Diego church to St. Francis Chapel, where Mass was celebrated. After Mass, another procession — this time with the Eucharist carried in a monstrance — led to the mission church for a Holy Hour with Eucharistic exposition.

The next morning, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage led a Eucharistic procession along a 1-mile loop in Balboa Park. The pilgrims sang traditional songs in English and Spanish as they walked under the bright sunshine as park visitors watched in curiosity.

Afterward, Camino de California led its own procession from Balboa Park to St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown San Diego and, ultimately, to Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Little Italy.

A "Concert in the Park" was held that afternoon in Bonita Cove Park.

On June 18, pilgrims from both groups attended a morning Mass at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, followed by Eucharistic adoration, before continuing their journey north. They arrived on June 20 at their final destination, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and concluded two days later on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Leslie Reyes-Hernandez, 26, was among eight young adults selected as Perpetual Pilgrims, traveling the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's entire St. Katharine Drexel Route, from Indianapolis to Los Angeles in a special van equipped with its own tabernacle.

She lives in Phoenix, where she teaches algebra at a public high school and ministers at Grand Canyon University's Newman Center.

For her, the monthlong pilgrimage has been filled with "so many" meaningful experiences.

"Something I was particularly looking forward to were all of the conversations that I would have with people," she said, "and our Lord provides."

"I've been meeting so many people from different walks of life … and it's such a blessing to be able to chat with them," she said, "but more than anything, take them to our Lord and just pray with them and pray for them as well."

Reflecting on the impact that the pilgrimage has had on her own life, she said that she has been "astounded by all the ways that the Lord has been working in my heart."

She said that she "came in (to the pilgrimage) one way," but, "thankfully, spending so much time in front of our Blessed Sacrament, one cannot remain the same."

Ace Acuña, 24, concluded two years of working at the Aquinas Institute, the Catholic campus ministry at Princeton University, before joining the pilgrimage, and plans to start graduate school in the fall.

Originally from Las Vegas, Acuña applied to be a Perpetual Pilgrim because he saw it as "a once-in-a-lifetime adventure with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament."

He credits the Eucharist as the catalyst for his reversion to his Catholic faith during his senior year of high school, and he wanted to be part of something that would give others "that same encounter with the Eucharist."

Among the highlights of the pilgrimage, he recalled visiting a state prison in Texas, where a Mass and Holy Hour were held.

"Even though we weren't able to speak with the inmates, we were given front-row seats to our Lord speaking

Pilgrims *Continued on Page 7*

PILGRIMS: *A pilgrim from the Camino de California holds a cross while participating in a Mass June 16 in Mission San Diego de Alcalá's St. Francis Chapel.*

PUBLIC WITNESS: *The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, joined by Camino de California, led a Eucharistic procession June 17 in Balboa Park.*

Pilgrims *Continued from Page 6*

to them in the Blessed Sacrament," he said, "and, just seeing lines of confessions and men kneeling in front of the monstrance and praying, kneeling, bowing, being moved to tears — that was absolutely amazing."

Hunter Lawless, 30, has been a pilgrim with the Camino de California since attending the orientation June 5 and beginning the pilgrimage itself the following day.

Lawless, a civil engineer who has lived in San Luis Obispo for the past decade, experienced a reversion to his Catholic faith last October.

He said that, through the pilgrimage, during which he has been sleeping in his car, he has gained "a deeper appreciation and love for Jesus" in the Eucharist.

"I feel like my heart has been … healed in ways that are hard to explain," he said.

"A lot of people, because of my involvement in this, are asking if I'm discerning for the priesthood or for religious life," said Lawless, sharing that this is "still up in the air."

He said that he hopes to continue the "new traditions" and "small habits," like praying the rosary every day, that he has picked up recently.

Josefina Mancilla walked from Fifth Avenue, in downtown San Diego, to Balboa Park to join the procession there. She's a parishioner from St. Rose of Lima Parish in Chula Vista.

"I wanted to unite with Jesus in a way that called for me to make an extra effort, not just join adoration," she said.

"I prayed for the salvation of souls," she continued. "I have a lot of needs. I also prayed for mercy."

Stephanie Mahoney, senior director of marketing communications for the National Eucharistic Congress, was there for the pilgrimage's kick-off in Indianapolis and then rejoined the pilgrims for the final stretch from San Diego to Los Angeles.

"We recognize the Lord's divine plan to reach souls across the country, and he doesn't start by reaching the multitude," she said. "He starts with an encounter with every single one of us."

"That's how revival begins," she said. "It begins with the spark in each of our hearts that we then go out and share the love of Jesus with everyone across the country."

WALK IN THE PARK: *Pilgrims, joined by local faithful, pray June 17 during a Eucharistic procession in Balboa Park.*

In his homily at the June 16 Mass at Mission San Diego, Capuchin Franciscan Father Christopher Iwancio said, "God is calling us … to get out of our comfort zone."

"We can't sit in our seats and just expect that the Gospel will be spread comfortably from our seats and our recliners," said Father Iwancio, a chaplain with the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. "God is calling us to go out."

Though the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage traveled from Indianapolis, the site of last summer's 10th National Eucharistic Congress, to Los Angeles, Father Iwancio explained how — in a very real sense — the pilgrimage is never-ending.

"Our pilgrimage did not end in Indianapolis, and it doesn't end in Los Angeles," he said, "just as Jesus' pilgrimage did not end in Jerusalem; it went out through Emmaus to Rome and to the many ends of the earth. We're not done yet."

"If we are looking for the conversion of our country and our world, it is not going to be led by signs; it's not going to be led by ballot measures," he said. "It is going to be led by the Eucharist. … We are called to follow God in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us go always forward."

Aida Bustos contributed to this article.

***See a photo gallery of the pilgrimages across diocese at* thesoutherncross.org/pilgrimage2025.**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: *A total of 44 couples at San Rafael Parish participated in Grace Marriage, a program that helps them to strengthen their marriages and build community.*

How Can You Make Your Marriage Thrive?

By Denis Grasska

Grace Marriage has filled a gap in marriage ministry at four local parishes.

The marriage enrichment program, founded in Kentucky in 2012, has been adopted by St. Brigid Parish in Pacific Beach, San Rafael Parish in Rancho Bernardo, St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro and St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch.

"When we consider the amount of time and energy that we invest, without thinking, into continuing education for our careers and even for our hobbies, why wouldn't we devote time, energy and some money to … our vocation of marriage?" asked Kathy Medenwald, a Grace Marriage facilitator at St. Gregory the Great Parish. "And yet, we sail through life, just expecting it to work on autopilot."

Supportive funding was provided to each parish by the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, which was awarded a grant from the Catholic Marriage Initiatives (CMI) Fund to help parishes develop programs to strengthen Catholic marriages.

"There's a growing recognition that family decline is largely driving faith decline," said John Prust, director of the Office for Family Life and Spirituality.

He noted the "massive, lifelong impact" that their parents' marriage has on the faith practice of their grown children.

"Statistics show that millennials from married homes are almost 80% more likely to attend church than peers from unmarried homes," Prust said.

"Grace Marriage provides a framework for couples to develop stronger marriage and communication skills, while also offering a forum for fellowship among couples and families at the parish," he said.

"Frankly, what we have seen so far has far exceeded expectations. All four parishes got off to really great starts and continue to do well," said Prust. "It's clearly meeting a need that was there."

Grace Marriage debuted at St. Brigid Parish in May of 2024. About 35 couples participated in that first series, which ended in January. A second series has been underway since May 17. Meetings are held every month, except July and December, and are preceded by dinner.

San Rafael Parish, which launched the program last September and wrapped up the series on June 18, had 44 couples meeting monthly.

St. Therese Parish held the first of its monthly meetings on Jan. 8 and, after taking a break in July and August, will continue meeting through February of next year. Thirty-three couples are participating, with between 20 and 25 attending any given session.

Marriage *Continued on Page 9*

Marriage *Continued from Page 8*

St. Gregory the Great Parish, which offers Grace Marriage on a quarterly basis, held its first session on May 3. Seventeen couples have signed up for the program, which will be held on four Saturday mornings throughout the year, each session lasting four hours.

At each parish, married couples serve as the facilitators.

Gayle Heyman, director of family formation at St. Brigid's, said that Grace Marriage is about "making intentional time with your spouse and inviting God into all of that." Participants run the gamut from those married for "just a few months" to "close to 50 years."

Kathy and Ron Medenwald, volunteer facilitators at St. Gregory the Great Parish, said that each meeting begins with the screening of a video presentation on a particular topic, after which each individual fills out a worksheet on the same topic, and then couples share their responses one-on-one. Later, there's an opportunity for couples to share their insights with the larger group.

Ron Medenwald said that Grace Marriage is "Scripture-based, and I found that to be very meaningful."

Aida Estrada, who serves as marriage, family life and discipleship coordinator at San Rafael Parish, said that 80 to 90% of a session involves spouses discussing things amongst themselves.

COURTESY ST. BRIGID PARISH

***COMMUNICATION**: A second series of the Grace Marriage program began at St. Brigid Parish on May 17. Meetings are generally held monthly and are preceded by dinner.*

She said that there were times when the discussions "got really deep" and addressed "topics … that they would not have spoken about otherwise."

Estrada recalled a particular session during which the couples were told to list the things about their spouse for which they are most grateful.

"One of the women … shared with me that she's never heard her husband say any of those things to her," she said. "She had no idea that that's the way he felt."

Estrada recalled looking around the room and, many times, seeing the couples laughing, crying, cuddling and even dancing.

"This isn't about marriage counseling; this is about marriage growth," said Goldie Kakacek, who facilitates Grace Marriage at St. Therese Parish with her husband, Steve.

She noted that the curriculum is practical, not based in a "fantasy … world" where "everything was perfect."

"Everybody feels that they walk away with a tool or something that they can work with their spouse on over the next month," she said.

Yvonne Sherman and her husband, Les, are Grace Marriage facilitators at St. Brigid's.

He said that each monthly installment is presented as "a date night," where the couples' childcare needs are met by parish volunteers.

Explaining that Grace Marriage's "core takeaway" is "intentionality," Kathy Medenwald said, "We are encouraged to intentionally date our spouse, and that means setting aside three to five hours a week — no kids, no technology, no distractions, no interruptions."

She added that couples are held accountable with weekly emails and at the next session.

"Ron and I have been married 45 years, and we started dating weekly," Medenwald said.

She said that 10% of each session allows for optional group-sharing that "builds a sense of community."

"I see (that) just extending into the parish," she said. "We're starting to see people now at Mass that we didn't know before Grace Marriage and vice versa. … I could see it really changing the culture, if it becomes a pillar of ministry in our parish."

Kakacek said that Grace Marriage has brought St. Therese Parish and St. Therese Academy closer together by drawing in some school families that weren't as involved at the parish.

Msgr. Steve Callahan, pastor of St. Brigid Parish, also has witnessed the program's impact on the wider community.

"(Grace Marriage) certainly is a benefit to the couples themselves, and I think it leads to greater participation in the parish, too," he said.

"We've seen some really nice friendships grow out of the couples who met in the process," said Heyman. "So, it's been really enriching to us as a parish."

To Shepherd, Teach and Sanctify

FRATERNITY: *Priests of the Diocese of San Diego bestow the fraternal kiss upon Fathers Brian Frulla, Anthony Jimenez and Jesse Lopez, welcoming them as bro*

By Denis Grasska

"Father."

That's how you can address Brian Frulla, Anthony Jimenez and Jesse Lopez from now on.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano ordained the three men to the priesthood during a Mass on June 14 at St. Thérèse of Carmel Church.

On July 1, the newly ordained will begin their first assignments as associate pastors.

Father Frulla, 28, will serve at St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro, while Father Jimenez, 43, has been assigned to St. John of the Cross Parish in Lemon Grove, and Father Lopez, 44, to St. Mark Parish in San Marcos.

Bishop Bejarano began his homily with a lighthearted anecdote.

"Several years ago, while I was greeting the people after Mass, a 2-year-old child ran toward me and hugged my legs," the bishop said. "He looked at me and asked, 'Are you God?'"

The bishop recalled his initial confusion, before the boy's parents explained that they had told him that morning that they were going to church to see God. It was simply a case of mistaken identity.

"I'm not God, but I work for him," Bishop Bejarano had told the child. Laughter rippled across the packed church as he recounted the situation.

To the three transitional deacons about to be ordained to the priesthood, and to their relatives and friends who had gathered to celebrate their big day, he offered a serious lesson drawn from that humorous encounter.

"Of course, priests are not God," Bishop Bejarano acknowledged. "But, for the gift and ministry bestowed on them, they must be an image of our loving God to the world."

Directly addressing the *ordinandi*, as candidates for ordination are called in Latin, he said, "Today, you are receiving and embracing the ministerial priesthood of Christ to shepherd, teach and sanctify the people entrusted to your care. You are ordained not for a few, but for the whole Church. In the words of Pope Francis, for '*todos, todos, todos*.'"

"You are ambassadors for Christ, bringing hope and reconciliation to the world," he told them.

He asked them, "How do we do this?"

"By surrendering to the grace of the Holy Spirit and serving with joy and love. In the Gospel, we hear how the heart of Jesus was moved with pity seeing the crowds. Your heart must be moved in the same way every time you see another human person, no matter his race, his social status, background, personal upbringing, or way of life.

"Jesus always encountered others where they were. He touched the leper; spoke to the Samaritan woman; met with Nicodemus in secret; sat at the dinner table with Matthew, the tax collector; allowed a woman with a bad reputation to anoint his feet; and he did not throw a stone (at) the adulterous woman.

"Be with the sheep and do not be

Priests *Continued on Page 11*

PROSTRATION: *Transitional Deacons Brian Frulla, Anthony Jimenez and Jesse Lopez prostrate themselves as the Litany of the Saints is sung at the ordination Mass.*

ORDINATION: *Through the laying on of hands and the prayer of ordination, Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano confers priestly orders upon Father Jesse Lopez.*

VESTED: *Father Brian Frulla is suble, his priestly vestments, by Fa pastor of Resurrection Parish, whic*

PHOTOS BY DAVID MAUNG

ther priests, at their ordination Mass July 14 at St. Thérèse of Carmel Church.

Priests *Continued from Page 10*

afraid to smell like them," he continued, referencing another quote from the late Pope Francis.

Bishop Bejarano offered insight into what the future might hold for Fathers Frulla, Jimenez and Lopez, and he gave them some advice based on his own experience.

"In your priestly life, there will be disappointing times, experiences of loneliness, or feeling exhausted or troubled," he said. "Always remember to look at Jesus. Sometimes, just calling the name of Jesus can be a powerful prayer."

He shared that he has a crucifix hanging from his car's rear-view mirror and, whenever, it turns away from him, he turns it back and says, "Jesus, don't look that way. I need you to look at me."

The bishop also emphasized the importance of "fraternity," reminding the three men that they share "a common spirit and ministry with your brother priests."

He also encouraged a relationship with the Blessed Mother.

"Be close to Mary, mother of priests," he said. "She is our model of discipleship. By personal experience, I can tell you that she will keep you protected in the heart of her Son, Jesus."

After the Mass, the new priests moved into the parish hall, where relatives and friends lined up to receive one of the very first blessings each of them would give over their years of service.

Father Michael J. Sinor was the spiritual director of the three over the last five years as they prepared for their vocations at the St. Francis Center for Priestly Formation. After the ordination Mass, he reflected on the occasion and his journey with each of the men.

"This was a beautiful, beautiful thing for me on so many levels," he said.

Father Sinor said the men "bring a lot of gifts. These guys have a lot of passion and a lot of goodness in them; they radiate Jesus.

"I was blessed to be able to walk with them as they made a decision to give away their life to God and to the People of God," he continued.

He marveled at the number of people who had squeezed into every seat in the pews for the Mass and had stood shoulder-to-shoulder along the back walls — "this whole mix of people all coming together as one, being in the same heart for this particular service."

Father Sinor is retiring after 37 years as a priest. He was ordained in 1988 and, two years later, was assigned to the diocese's seminary, where he worked as a spiritual director for five years. Then, he worked at several parishes across the diocese before returning to the seminary, where he served the last seven years as spiritual director.

He said simply of his last assignment, "I really enjoyed the work."

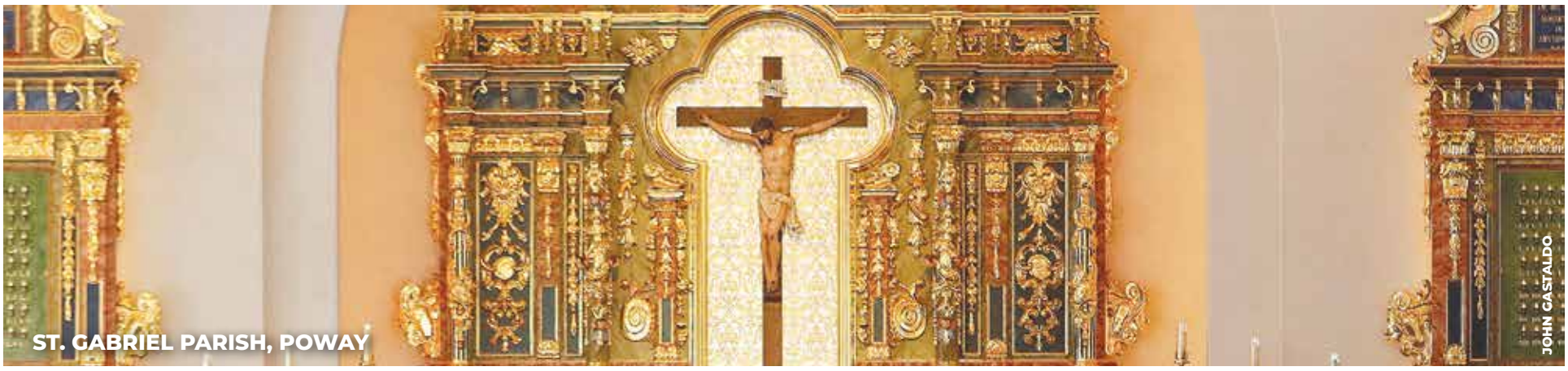
Aida Bustos contributed to this article.

See a photo gallery of the ordination at thesoutherncross.org/ordination2025

dressed with the stole and chather Kenneth Del Priore, former ch Frulla attended in his youth.

BREAD AND WINE: *Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano hands the paten of bread and chalice of wine to Father Anthony Jimenez during the ordination Mass.*

BLESSINGS: *After an ordination Mass, Catholics line up to receive one of the first blessings of newly ordained priests, like Father Brian Frulla.*



Path to Priest: Adviser, Lawyer, Navy Officer

By Denis Grasska

Father Bradley Easterbrooks, 40, is days into his new assignment as the administrator of St. Gabriel Parish in Poway, a position that he has held since June 24.

Exactly three years earlier, at that same parish, he was ordained to the priesthood.

Father Easterbrooks previously served as an associate pastor at Holy Trinity Parish in El Cajon and, most recently, St. Mark Parish in San Marcos.

He also has served as secretary of the diocesan Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs since December of 2023.

Question: What role has the Catholic faith played in your life?

Answer: I was baptized a Catholic and received First Communion, but I was raised in an evangelical Protestant setting after that and identified as an evangelical for most of my adolescence and early adulthood.

I believed in the basic tenets of the Christian faith and tried to model my life after them. So, it was always an important part of my life.

I was intrigued by the intellectual depths of the Catholic faith when I went to Boston College. While in law school at Pepperdine University, I decided to revert to the Catholic faith of my young childhood and become a practicing Catholic.

That decision was something that changed my life forever. I realized that the Eucharist was true and real and, if so, then my whole life was going to be ordered around that reality.

What did you find attractive about Catholicism?

Administrator, St. Gabriel Parish

Father Bradley Easterbrooks

Catholicism speaks to the whole person. It's not merely theological. It has an anthropology, a political philosophy, a response to the world's issues in a way that reflects both reason and faith, nature and the supernatural world, in a way that I had not found anywhere else.

What were you doing professionally before entering the seminary?

After earning a bachelor's in Political Science in 2007, I worked for two years in a business and political consulting firm, including as a traveling aide on a presidential campaign. Then, I worked at a Fortune 10 firm's global headquarters as a consultant, before attending law school from 2009 to 2012.

In 2012, I passed the California Bar Exam and immediately began practicing law with the U.S. Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG). I served on active duty until 2017.

During those years, while stationed first in San Diego and later in Yokosuka, Japan, I became increasingly active in my Catholic parish communities. While I was a successful attorney and enjoyed being an attorney, I discovered that I enjoyed ministry even more. It was through ministry — youth ministry in particular — that I discovered that I had a vocation to priesthood.

What was the discernment process like for you?

Once I began considering the Catholic faith and making it my own, I realized that there was a possibility of priesthood. But, at first, I was closed to the idea. I was convinced that I was going to be married, and I wanted to be married because I wanted to have a family.

Over the course of a few years, I became more and more open to the idea of priesthood and began to pray with an open heart that God would help me discern. Once I opened the window, I felt like God had driven a truck through it, because he placed a very palpable desire on my heart to become a priest, to celebrate the Eucharist every day, and to serve people as someone who would minister the Gospel in their lives.

As a seminarian, you were "co-sponsored" by the Diocese of San Diego and the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. What does that mean?

The Archdiocese for the Military Services sponsored half of my seminary expenses. In exchange, though I'm ordained for the Diocese of San Diego and a priest of San Diego, I have committed to serve for a period of time as an active-duty Navy chaplain. Exactly when that service will take place is still to be determined.

During that time, I will remain a priest of San Diego, but I'll be on loan to the military as a chaplain. I like to view it as a type of missionary work, because I will be sent into a field in which people are in need of the ministry of the Faith, but don't often have easy access to it. So, I'll spend several years serving in the military and then return to my home diocese of San Diego.

What parallels do you see between service as you experienced it in the military and in the Church?

The military culture is a culture of service. It really aligns well with the service of vocation, because a mili-

Vocation *Continued on Page 13*

Vocation *Continued from Page 12*

tary service member is willing to risk life and limb for the security of the community and, in a similar way, a vocation is an offering of one's life to the service of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel.

What have you found most fulfilling about priestly ministry?

I have a front-row seat to the works of God in the lives of others. I just have to show up and be available for what God wants to do through me. I know that it's not me who's doing things, but it's God working through me and through my willingness to simply be there. In those moments, I can see that God is transforming lives, providing healing through the sacraments, through pastoral support, and through my presence. I get to accompany people as they encounter Jesus and are transformed by that encounter.

What has been most rewarding about your work with the Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs?

While we might not share beliefs theologically, these non-Catholic and non-Christian religious leaders share values and principles that enable us to work together and to collaborate for the good of the society around us.

I've found that, whether it's a Shabbat dinner with our Jewish brothers and sisters or meals that I've shared with the Muslim community of San Diego, sharing meals is an opportunity to get to know one another and really experience our common humanity and shared values.

Do you have any recommendations when it comes to discerning God's call?

Be willing to take the first step of opening your heart to the possibility that God could be calling you to priesthood or to religious life, and ask God in prayer if that's his will for you.

Be willing to commit to entering a full-time formation environment. Fill out that application, reach out to the vocations director, make a commitment to finding out if this is the life to which God is calling you. I often see people spending years in discernment, but never taking that next step. If you're far enough along that you're interested in applying for the seminary or formation for religious life, you should do it. One way or the other, God will bring your discernment process to completion once you've entered.

Finally, I'd encourage people to consider a vocation early. So many aspects of our lives are determined by choices we make as adolescents, and college students, and in early adulthood. If someone is considering a vocation, they should feel encouraged to take those steps sooner rather than later. On a related note, if you think that someone you know would be a good fit for the priesthood or religious life, encourage them to pray about it.

Priest Assignments

The Office of the Bishop has announced the following priest assignments:

Bishop Felipe Pulido as canonical pastor of St. Luke Parish, El Cajon.

Father Peter Vu Lam as canonical pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish.

Father Marc Gandolfo as director of priestly vocations, effective Aug. 1

Father Christopher Bongato, in addition to his assignment as parochial vicar of St. Martin of Tours Parish, La Mesa, as secretary for the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities.

And, with the permission of their provincial superiors:

Father Juan Diego Lopez Perez, TOR, as associate pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Vista, effective July 1

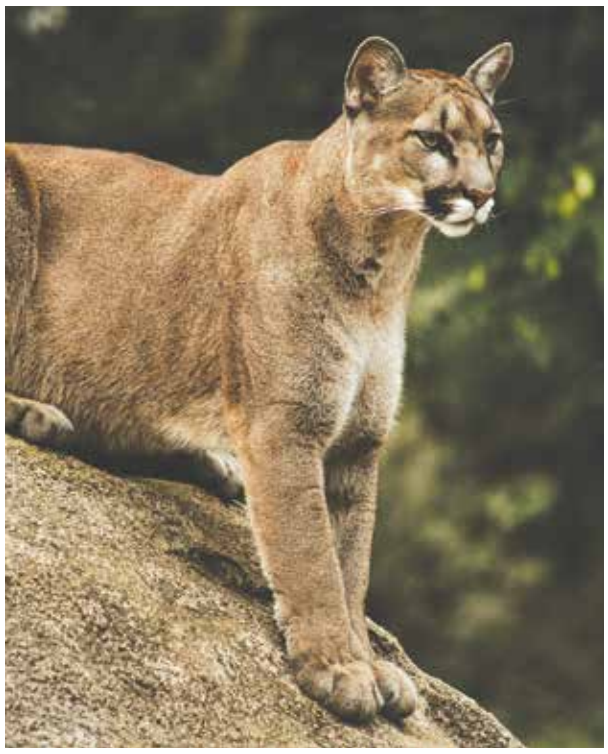
Father Miguel Romero Mozo, MSP, as spiritual director of the formation program at St. Francis Center, effective Aug. 1

Contemplating America, the Beautiful

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Ph.D.

In July, many of us will sing blessings upon the United States of America as we celebrate the country's 249th birthday.

The third-largest country in the world, the U.S. and its territories have a total area of more than 3.8 million square miles and 95,451 miles of coastline. Rivers, lakes, inlets, and coastal territory account for 7% of this total area, or 270,000 square miles. Endowed with one of the most diverse topographies and climates of any region, the nation supports a broader array of ecosystems than any other nation on Earth and is home to more than 200,000 known species of plants, animals, and microbes. To live in the United States is most certainly a great gift and deserving of thanksgiving.



Most Biodiverse Diocese?

The Western United States, in particular, offers spectacular natural features. Mountains, forests, and some of the world's hottest deserts dominate the West, all of which are found right here in the Diocese of San Diego. San Diego's dramatic coastline adds scenic beaches, salt marshes, and tidal flats along with hundreds of marine and coastal bird, fish, and invertebrate species, making San Diego America's most biodiverse county. As the Diocese of San Diego also includes the ecological richness of Imperial County, we can confidently argue we are "America's Most Biodiverse Diocese."

The abundance and beauty of this land undoubtably explain its draw and the devotion of its people. Do you have a favorite place in this great land of ours? A favorite native plant or animal? What is it about this land that you love?

A Source of Wonder and Awe

Pope Francis writes in his encyclical "Laudato Si," "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves."

This month, how might we pause to contemplate the natural wonder of American places, especially those that are dear in our memories? How might we reflect on the history of our friendship with God encountered in the majesty of creation? Step away from the busyness of the world and take time to remember a favorite place — the sights, sounds, and smells there; the feeling of awe; the sense of peace and goodness. Rest in this memory of God's caress!

Reviving Our "True Selves"

Our ancient Catholic teachings call us to care for God's creation as a loving response to this great gift. If we are honest with ourselves, it is easy to take the gift of creation for granted.

Developing a sense of ecological spirituality — seeing the vestiges of God in all things and recognizing our interconnectedness to all of creation — powerfully reopens the door to encounter God and gives us an opportunity to revive something of our true selves. How might you share this awareness in your family? In your parish or school? How might such a revival offer our nation collective healing and recovery?

To get started, consider joining Creation Care activities during this year's Season of Creation, Sept. 1 to Oct. 4, the Feast of Saint Francis. All are welcome to our diocesan Season of Creation Mass at 4:30 p.m., Sept. 20, at The Immaculata Parish.

Register and find more details at *bit.ly/SOC25Mass*. Children and youth are also invited to our annual art contest; register at *bit.ly/SOCArt2025*. To be kept abreast of these upcoming events, sign up at *bit.ly/SOC25Interest*. Questions? Contact Christina Slentz at *cslentz@sdcatholic.org*.

Season of Creation Mass Registration

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

Celebrating 1,700 Years After Nicaea Council

By Cindy Wooden

ROME —The Council of Nicaea 1,700 years ago recognized that Christian unity had to be based on a common faith, said speakers at a Rome conference.

Yet as Christians mark the anniversary of the council, held in 325, they celebrate their common profession of the basics of faith in the Creed adopted at Nicaea while also continuing to experience division, said Paul L. Gavrilyuk, president of the International Orthodox Theological Association.

The association and the Institute for Ecumenical Studies of Rome's Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas organized the conference on June 4 to 7, with the support of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

"Nicaea was a landmark exercise in collective truth-seeking and discernment with an enduring and universally significant dogmatic outcome enshrined in its famous creed," said Gavrilyuk, of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The fact that Christians today continue to use the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, not just liturgically but as a statement of orthodox Christian belief, means it is a continuing source of Christian unity, speakers said.

EAST AND WEST: *Pope Leo XIV greets Orthodox Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, a bishop of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, during a meeting at the Vatican on June 7 with participants attending a conference on the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.*

"The restoration of the unity of the Church requires agreement on the essential content of the Christian faith, not only among the churches and ecclesial communities of today, but also in continuity with the Church of tradition, and above all, with its apostolic origins," said Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Creed is "the strongest ecumenical bond of the Christian faith," the cardinal said. "The Council of Nicaea took place at a time when Christianity had not yet been divided by so many subsequent schisms; its creed is therefore shared by all Christian Churches and ecclesial communities, uniting them in a common confession to this day. Its ecumenical importance cannot be underestimated."

Orthodox Metropolitan Job of Pisidia, a theologian and co-chair of the Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue, said the Council of Nicaea could serve as a model of Christian unity today because it determined the essential points of Christian faith while allowing differences on other matters.

"The Nicene Creed does not represent a confession of faith at a particular moment in the history of the Church but rather manifests the confession of faith that transcends the limits of time and space," he said. It was introduced into the liturgy at the turn of the sixth century, "which shows how much this text became a universal confession of the faith confessed by the one Church, received from Christ through the Apostles and handed down by the Holy Fathers."

Cardinal Koch said the celebration of the Nicaea anniversary also is an occasion to make a renewed commitment to synodality — shared listening, reflection and discernment — and for members of different Churches to learn from the synodal structures of each other's Churches.

Catholic News Service

Celebrating Unity in Diversity

PHOTOS BY DAVID MAUNG

TRADITION: *The Pentecost Mass for All Peoples brought together the cultures in the Diocese of San Diego, uniting them in faith and love. The eighth annual Mass was held on June 7 at Cathedral Catholic High School.*

By Aida Bustos

"Unity in diversity" came to joyful, beautiful life at the diocese's annual Pentecost Mass and Festival.

Faithful from all corners of the diocese packed into the gym at Cathedral Catholic High School, where the multilingual Mass was held on June 7. Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano celebrated the Mass, accompanied by Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido and Bishop Michael Pham and dozens of clergy.

In his introductory remarks, Bishop Bejarano noted that Pope Leo XIV had named Bishop Pham to serve as the seventh bishop of the diocese, prompting applause. Then, he acknowledged that Bishop Pham had started the Pentecost Mass eight years before to bring together the cultures in the diocese. This time, the Mass-goers gave Bishop Pham a standing ovation.

In what has become a tradition, a procession of 19 cultures entered the gym at the beginning of the Mass, from African to Vietnamese. The Mass-goers cheered when Bishop Bejarano recognized that the Peruvian community was participating, noting that newly elected Pope Leo had served in Peru for a long time. The participating communities also included African American, Brazilian, Chaldean, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Irish, Korean, Laotian, Luiseño, Mexican, Panamanian, Samoan and Tongan.

PRESENT: *A total of 19 communities shared their culture, language and traditions at the Mass.*

EUCHARIST: *Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano celebrated the Mass, accompanied by Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido and Bishop Michael Pham.*

After the Mass, the faithful moved to the high school's outdoor grounds, where they enjoyed a cultural festival, complete with traditional food tastings and cultural performances.

In the Local Church, "We must strive to build love and unity in the midst of our diversity," Bishop Bejarano said in his homily.

Unity in diversity "involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church," he said, quoting Pope Francis.

The bishop noted that the Catholic Church was celebrating a Jubilee Year, which called on the faithful to be "Pilgrims of Hope."

During the Pentecost Mass, he continued, the Diocese of San Diego was celebrating its Jubilee of Cultural Diversity.

"This event brings us together to be enriched by our unity in diversity," said Bishop Bejarano, who serves as vicar of Ethnic and Intercultural Communities.

At the Mass, the different cultural communities place on the altar a piece of colorful cloth that represents them. Then, all the cloths are covered with a white one representing "our faith in Christ as we celebrate the Eucharist," the bishop said.

"When I see the fabric that rep-

Unity *Continued on Page 17*

UNITED: *Participants in the Mass shared their traditional attire. They included religious women.*

TASTY: *The cultural communities — including these members of Vietnamese congregations — served traditional fare at the festival after the Mass.*

Unity *Continued from Page 16*

resents my background, I think to myself, 'I'm there! I'm part of that fabric.' Then I feel the joy of being united with everyone else and being enriched by their culture.

"For me, personally, this action is beautiful and invites me to see how beautiful our Church is."

Pope Leo, in his inaugural homily, said that love and unity are the two dimensions of the mission that Jesus entrusted to St. Peter.

"Pentecost speaks to us of that unity-love relationship," the bishop said. "In the Gospel, we hear that all the disciples were together for one reason, fear. Then, by the time Pentecost happened, they were also in one place together. Were they still afraid? Not anymore. They had seen the Risen Christ, who gave them his love and peace. Love takes away fear and brings peace."

He said the Church in the Diocese of San Diego, "must strive to build love and unity in the midst of our diversity."

Then, the bishop shared Pope Francis' words.

The pope said that "unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it signify a loss of identity. Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: It involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church.

"It means knowing how to listen, to accept differences, and having the freedom to think differently and express oneself with complete respect towards the other who is my brother or sister."

The bishop said that unity and love require humility. One of the first disruptions in building unity is believing that "I'm better or superior to others," he added. This is counter to what the Gospel says.

"Jesus taught that the greatest is the one who serves" (Luke 22:27), the bishop continued.

He said that Bishop Pham pledged to continue the work started by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy to build a culture of synodality in the diocese.

In this culture, "we listen to each other with an open heart and respect, we listen to the Holy Spirit, and in communion, we walk together. As a Church, we are called to sow unity and acceptance, not division."

At the conclusion of the Mass, Bishop Bejarano recognized Charlotte Fajardo, who assisted the diocese's Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities for eight years. In that capacity, she worked closely with Bishop Pham to support and strengthen the cultural communities. And she led the coordination of the annual Pentecost Mass for All Peoples.

See a photo gallery of the Pentecost Mass and Festival at thesoutherncross.org/pentecost2025.

HELLO! *The festival presented entertainment from various cultural communities, such as these Laotian dancers from Good Shepherd Parish, who enjoyed meeting Bishop Michael Pham.*

How to Respond to Immigration 'Riptide'


ADOBESTOCK

Like many people who grew up in San Diego, I was taught as a kid what to do if I ever got caught in a riptide.

Don't spend your energy swimming against the strength of the current, but also don't let the current pull you out to deep water — both responses that can lead to drowning. Instead, turn to one side, and start swimming parallel to the shore until you are out of the strong pull of the tide.

Sometimes polarizing, complicated political topics remind me of riptides. It can be so easy to get either swept along with a current, or to become exhausted trying to directly fight strong political rhetoric — from one side of the aisle or the other — in a polarizing issue.

But, as Catholics, we know we are called to be the "light of the world" (Matt 5:14) and, as lay people, we are called to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God" ("Lumen Gentium"). We're called to be more like a solid lighthouse than someone swept up by powerful currents.

So, when we feel these strong tides tugging at us, how do we start "swimming to the side"?

Immigration is one of these "riptide" topics where I see many goodhearted

Columnist
Mary Joy Cunningham

Catholics getting caught up in strong political currents.

From more than eight years of personal experience working with immigrants in the United States, and from conversations with other Catholics in this field, I offer three suggestions — three ways to refocus on the intrinsic dignity of the human person, three ways to start "swimming to the side" and escaping this riptide:

Interact with people as if they have the dignity we say they have.

St. John Paul II said that "the evil of our times consists in the first place in a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person."

In my work, I have been particularly struck by how individual refugees and asylum-seekers I've met have experienced this "pulverization." I've also been struck by how simply recognizing someone's dignity, and interacting with them in a way that demonstrates that recognition, can be a powerful counter to a prior experience of the "pulverization" of their dignity.

Here's an example: Last year, I received a call through work from a man in an immigration detention center. We had a few back-and-forth calls as I helped him to connect to a community resource, and, months later, he contacted me again to say thank you for the calls. He shared about how he had fled his home country after being tortured by government officials, and how lonely and difficult the months in U.S. immigration detention had been for him. He also shared how simply having someone acknowledge him and express respect and care — even in a small way like my few phone calls — was really meaningful.

We have opportunities every day to do small, yet powerful things that acknowledge individuals' personhood and dignity — smiling and making eye contact, genuinely asking how someone is doing, really trying to "listen to understand."

Be open to receiving others' self-gift.

Interestingly, when we encounter people who are in need and/or are different from us, we can easily forget that they have something to offer us.

I have learned that sometimes my clients' examples of faith, conviction and courage can be profoundly impactful in my own life. I think especially of an asylum-seeker client I worked with who had a history of intense suffering and persecution that effectively spanned her life since childhood. In the midst of it all, she had discovered the Christian God and developed a deep faith, even when embracing that faith resulted in more persecution.

When she became pregnant and refused to have a forced abortion, she escaped and, in a very real sense, "went to the ends of the earth" to protect her unborn baby. As a person who tries to live out my own faith and someone who believes in the dignity of the unborn, this client's story continues to inspire me.

Pray and reflect.

Finally, and most importantly, we should stay rooted in Christ through prayer and let our response to others flow from him.

We're each created in the image and likeness of God. And God sees each of us as "worth" his love, so much so that he took on human nature, went through torture, and died because he wanted to be with each of us forever in heaven.

And he gives us the sacraments and the Church to help us through life.

This is the intrinsic dignity of each human person; a dignity based in his unconditional love. Here is a simple prayer that I've found helpful: "Lord, help me to see people and love them with you."

News Briefs

Bishop Pham to Celebrate Young Adult Mass

More than 500 young adults from throughout the diocese are expected to attend the annual Young Adult Adoration and Mass.

The event will be held on Sunday, July 13, at The Immaculata Church, which is located on the campus of the University of San Diego.

Eucharistic adoration will begin at 5 p.m., when there also will be opportunities for confession. Bishop Michael Pham will celebrate Mass at 6 p.m. A social, with live music performed by Seen & Heard, will follow on the East Lawn.

For more information, call (858) 490-8260 or email *yamsd@sdcatholic.org.*

Healing Day Offered for Those Widowed, Divorced

CARLSBAD — "In the Beginning … Coping with Life Alone" will be a day for men and women ready to begin healing from the loss of a spouse through death, separation or divorce.

The event, sponsored by the Beginning Experience ministry, will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, July 26, at St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Carlsbad.

While the program is intended to assist those newly grieving, all are welcome to attend. The cost is $50, which includes meals, snacks and drinks.

For more information or to register, call (858) 748-2273 or email *BeginningExperienceSD@gmail.com.*

'Love Our Priests' to Gather for Mass, Luncheon

The "Love Our Priests" prayer group will welcome Father Edgar Serrano, a retired priest of the Diocese of San Diego, as its special guest for its next gathering.

The event will be held on Saturday, Aug. 2, at Ascension Parish in Tierrasanta. There will be a Mass at 10 a.m., followed by a potluck luncheon.

Father Serrano will share his vocation story.

For more information, email *jeanlaskey@outlook.com.*

Women Invited to Discern Vocation

Women ages 18 to 35 are invited to a discernment session to explore religious life.

The weekly meetings began last October and will continue through Aug. 12. They are held at 6:30 p.m., Mondays, at Mission San Diego.

Women are invited to come and share their experience and walk with other women in discernment.

For more information, contact Sister Katia Chavez, SJS, at (760) 562-2727.

Task Force Releases Homeless Count

The Regional Task Force on Homelessness released the results of the 2025 point-in-time count, also known as the WeAllCount, on May 20.

The count measures the population of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County.

The results show that the number has decreased, overall, by 7%. Unsheltered homelessness dropped significantly among families (by 72%) and veterans (25%), speaking to the continued successes of efforts to provide targeted services for the most vulnerable San Diegans. However, the number of seniors experiencing homelessness for the first time increased by 5%.

"We are encouraged to hear that, for the first time in a long time, unsheltered homelessness in our region has decreased, especially amongst some of our most vulnerable neighbors — veterans and families," said Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO of Father Joe's Villages. "This demonstrates what we've seen firsthand: Targeted investments and partnerships between organizations like ours and our policymakers are making a difference."

Father Joe's Must Raise $250,000 for Program

Father Joe's Villages kicked off a matching campaign on June 12 to raise $250,000 by the end of the year to receive an additional $250,000 from the David C. Copley Foundation.

Funds raised will support the organization's diversion program, which helps people secure alternative housing options before they end up in the shelter system, by assisting clients to meet immediate needs, through rental subsidies and alternative solutions.

"We hear far too many stories of people falling into homelessness simply for missing a single rent payment. And we know it does not need to be this way," said Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO of Father Joe's Villages. "With your support, we can funnel more resources into intervening early to divert thousands of people from entering the shelter system."

The campaign will run until Wednesday, Dec. 31. Donations are accepted at *neighbor.org/donate*.

Retrouvaille Offering Hope for Troubled Marriages

Not willing to let go of your marriage? Many couples continue to

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Jubilee Year Is a Time to Build Bridges

By Justin McLellan

VATICAN CITY — In a world marked by division and ideological conflict, Pope Leo XIV urged Catholics to reject walls of separation and embrace Jesus as "a door that unites," reminding pilgrims that true Christian hope lies in connecting rather than dividing.

HELLO! *Pope Leo XIV greeted people as he rode in St. Peter's Square after celebrating Mass on the Feast of the Holy Trinity and for the conclusion of the Jubilee of Sports at the Vatican on June 15, 2025.*

Addressing thousands of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Basilica June 14 for a special Jubilee audience, the pope said the Holy Year 2025 must be lived as a mission of communion, rooted in the theological virtue of hope.

"To hope is to connect," he said, stating that the Jubilee is an "open door to the mystery of God's connection with humanity which is rooted in Christ's incarnation."

The audience continued a series begun by Pope Francis exploring a dimension of hope through the example of a spiritual figure. This time, Pope Leo focused on St. Irenaeus of Lyon, whom he described as a "master of unity" and a bridge between East and West.

Born in 130 in Asia Minor and later serving as bishop in present-day France, St. Irenaeus "carried with him the witness of those who had directly known the Apostles," the pope said. His life and ministry reflected the way in which cultures, peoples and churches can mutually enrich one another — a dynamic the pope likened to today's migrant communities, which he said often revitalize faith in their host countries.

Amid early Church divisions, St. Irenaeus did not retreat in despair, but instead "learned to think more deeply, always focusing on Jesus," the pope said. In a world fragmented by doctrinal disputes, political pressures and persecution, he found unity not by suppressing difference, but by recognizing how Christ reconciles opposites in his own person.

"Jesus is not a wall that separates, but a door that unites us," the pope said. "He is life itself among us. He gathers the opposites, makes communion possible."

Pope Leo warned against the dangers of ideology and verbal violence, noting that in the modern world "ideas can go mad and words can kill." What grounds society, he said, is the shared human condition: "the flesh," which "binds us to the earth and to other creatures."

Hope, the pope said, is not a distant ideal but a daily commitment. It is a call to "move toward communion," to become builders of bridges, not guards of gates. "Distinguishing is useful," he said, "but never dividing."

Echoing a line from the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is in heaven," Pope Leo said the Jubilee Year must inspire Catholics to act as agents of connection in a fragmented world. "Let us open doors," he said. "Let us connect worlds, and there will be hope."

Catholic News Service

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struggle, but are not willing to give up on each other.

Retrouvaille is a program designed to help struggling marriages regain their health. It helps a husband and a wife re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together.

A Retrouvaille Weekend will be held from Friday evening, Sept. 26, to Sunday afternoon, Sept. 28. The location will be provided upon confirmation.

The cost is $700 per couple.

For information, visit *helpourmarriage-sandiego.org*. Register at (951) 259-9474 or *6016r@helpourmarriage.org*.

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.

For more information, visit *youngcatholicprofessionals.org/chapter/san-diego*.

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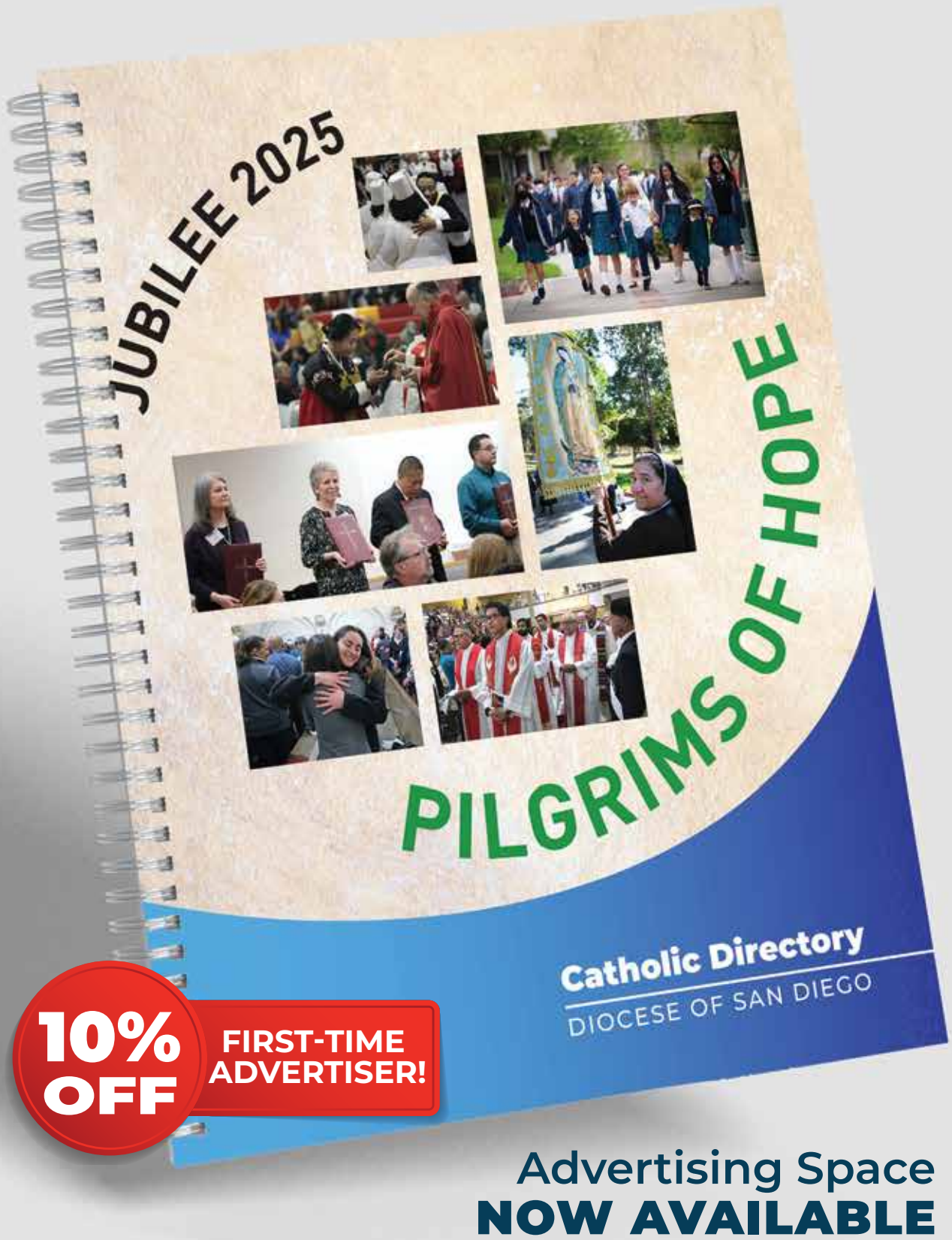

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