THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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Making History

Pages 10-12

TAKE A LOOK: *Bishop Michael Pham presents the apostolic mandate appointing him as San Diego's seventh bishop, during his installation Mass July 17 at St. Thérèse of Carmel Church.*

Flying High

Synod pilot program expands with 14 more parishes. **Page 2**

Young Church

More than 500 people gather for annual Young Adult Mass. **Page 3**

Wounded Healer

Franciscan priest leads retreats to help fellow military veterans find healing. **Page 13**

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THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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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.

AIDA BUSTOS

COLLABORATION: *Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido addressed the gathering on May 7 at the Pastoral Center of the second cohort of pilot parishes participating in the diocese's initiative on Reimagining Parish Life and Leadership in a Synodal Church.*

Synod Pilot Grows to 34 Parishes

The Southern Cross

More than a third of the parishes in the Diocese of San Diego are now actively participating in a process of "Re-Imagining Parish Life and Leadership in a Synodal Church."

This effort is helping pastors and parishioners engage in meaningful dialogue, building stronger relationships and sharing perspectives that lead to better decision-making at the parish level.

Currently, 34 "re-imagining" parishes are part of this initiative, a key step in creating a culture of synodality as each develops goals for parish life and leadership.

Convocation on Aug. 23

Members of each parish's Re-Imagining Team or Re-Imagining Pastoral Council will gather on Saturday, Aug. 23, for the second annual Convocation of Re-Imagining Parishes at St. Thomas More Catholic Church.

The event, themed "Pilgrims of Hope, Guided by the Holy Spirit," will bring together about 375 participants for a day of prayer, dialogue and inspiration. Speakers include Bishop Michael Pham and Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano and Felipe Pulido.

"Expanding this initiative is essential," said Bishop Pulido. It allows parishes to learn from one another, create a culture of collaboration, and involve more voices in decision-making. Above all, the effort seeks to "enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission," according to the final report on the Synod on Synodality.

First Pilot Parishes

Corpus Christi, Our Lady of Guadalupe (Chula Vista), Our Lady of Guadalupe (San Diego), Sacred Heart (Brawley), Sacred Heart (Coronado), Our Lady of Grace, St.Therese, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Brigid, St. Didacus, St. Gregory the Great, St. Jude Shrine of the West, St. Luke, St. Mary, Star of the Sea (Oceanside), St. Mary (Escondido), St. Thomas More, The Immaculata,

Second Group

Ascension, Good Shepherd, Holy Trinity, Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe(Calexico), Our Lady of Mount Carmel (San Ysidro), Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sacred Heart (Ocean Beach), St. Catherine Laboure, St. Mark, St. Martin of Tours, Our Lady of Sacred Heart, Most Precious Blood, Our Lady of Refuge, St. John of the Cross, San Rafael, St. Thérèse of Carmel

What Is Synodality?

In October 2021, Pope Francis launched the global Synod on Synodality, a three-year process inviting every diocese to consult its members, beginning at the parish level.

"Synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ," according to the final report of the Synod on Synodality.

The aim was to revitalize the Church for the 21st century. Local consultations led to reports at diocesan, national and continental levels, culminating in two gatherings of delegates in Rome in 2023 and 2024. Proposals from those sessions were submitted to Pope Francis. The Vatican released an implementation plan in July. (See Page 14).

In San Diego, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy moved quickly to foster a synodal culture, launching several initiatives, including pilot parishes. The diocese's new bishop, Bishop Pham, has affirmed that continuing this work remains a priority.

A New Way of Being Church

Last summer, the first cohort of 17 pilot parishes identified two key goals — one focused on community life, the other on leadership — and began implementing them using synodal practices.

This spring, those parishes welcomed a second cohort of 17 Re-Imagining Teams or Re-Imagining Pastoral Councils, sharing best practices in their mutual gatherings. Today, 34 parishes are actively engaged, some completing their initial goals, others developing new ones.

Father John Hurley, CSP, is a member of the Diocese's Re-Imagining Leadership Team and the initiative's coordinator. Bishop Pulido and Chancellor "Marioly" Galván are the other leadership team members.

Father Hurley noted "the hope and excitement" in all of the gatherings.

"It's an ongoing journey — transforming culture," he said. "There is no end point."

‘It’s Inspiring to Be Around People My Age’

By Denis Grasska

The Immaculata Church was packed with more than 500 young adults.

YOUNG ENERGY: *Young adults joyfully worship the Lord during the annual diocesan Young Adult Mass, where they packed The Immaculata Church July 13.*

CAPTURING MEMORIES: *A young adult poses for a photo with Bishop Michael Pham after the annual Young Adult Mass.*

And Bishop Michael Pham, who celebrated the annual Young Adult Mass for the first time this year, didn’t fail to notice.

“It’s a wonderful view to see many of you gathering here on this day,” he said in his homily. “It gives us, as Church, great hope.”

“You are the Church today,” he said.

The Young Adult Mass, organized annually by the diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, attracts Catholics aged 18 to 39 from throughout the diocese.

This year’s Mass was held July 13. As in past years, it was celebrated in The Immaculata Church, located on the University of San Diego campus.

The 6 p.m. Mass was preceded by a Holy Hour, with Eucharistic adoration and Benediction. Young adults knelt in prayer, as the band Seen & Heard led praise-and-worship music. Several priests were available to hear confessions.

After Mass, young adults gathered outside for a social hour with tacos and live music.

Bishop Pham devoted much of his homily to a reflection on the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which was the Sunday Gospel reading.

In the Gospel, to illustrate the concept of loving one’s neighbor, Jesus tells the story of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, who is waylaid by robbers and left to die on the roadside. A Jewish priest and a Levite pass by without helping the man, but a Samaritan stops, cleans the man’s wounds, brings him to an inn and sees that he is looked after.

“One of the striking features about the Samaritan in the Gospel is the amount of time he spends in caring for the injured man,” said Bishop Pham. “His compassion extended far beyond the expectation.”

The bishop reflected on why the Samaritan responded differently than the other two men. Perhaps, he suggested, the priest and Levite had approached the situation by asking what might happen to them if they stopped — whether being robbed themselves or becoming ritually unclean — while the Samaritan asked what might happen to the wounded man if he chose not to stop.

“Many of us today are very cautious about getting involved,” he said. “Getting involved is messy business. It disrupts our lives. … It is much safer and far easier to close our hearts and go quietly beyond the other side of the road.”

Bishop Pham said that, in our contemporary world, there are many people lying wounded on “the roadside of life,” though not all of their wounds are visible.

“Today’s parable does not invite us to go out, risk our lives, and become heroes,” he said. “It invites us to reach out, risk our pride, and become human. It invites us to ask a question: ‘Can I help?’”

Twenty-six-year-old Valeria Cardona, of St. Didacus Parish, was moved by Bishop Pham’s words.

“I loved the homily, the message that Bishop Michael gave today about risking our pride to become human … and just help our neighbor as Jesus would help our neighbor,” she said. “I loved that.”

Cardona, like many young adults who spoke to *The Southern Cross*, was attending the Young Adult Mass for the first time. She described the atmosphere at the Mass as having “a lot of young energy.”

“It’s so great to come to church with your friends and getting the chance of meeting new friends, too,” said Cardona, who recently started attending young adult events at St. Brigid Parish in Pacific Beach. “I love the families, of course. I love babies, and older people, and everything, but it’s so great to have similar people to relate with.”

Leah Greenbergs, 25, seemed to feel the same.

“I am usually around older people,” she said, contrasting the Young Adult Mass with the Masses that she typically attends. “It’s humbling, and it is rejuvenating and inspiring, to be around people my age and on fire for the Lord.”

Greenbergs, a member of St. Martin of Tours Parish in La Mesa, said that that she is “absolutely” interested in attending the Young Adult Mass again.

Michelle Acherman, a 28-year-old member of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Little Italy, attended the Mass this year at the invitation of a friend.

“I think what makes it special is that there’s a lot more youth,” Acherman said of the Mass. “I feel like, especially during the college years, students might kind of fall off the radar, and I think this is a great way to get them to reconnect through their faith.”

Her 25-year-old sister, Raquel, also had a positive experience at the Mass.

“It’s a nice event,” she said, “because it brings community. … So, this is a great way to connect with other people who also share the same beliefs.”

Another first-time attendee, Elena Mariscal, a 30-year-old parishioner of Resurrection Parish in Escondido, appreciated that the Mass was bilingual, “which was a nice surprise” for her, and she enjoyed the praise-and-worship music that included familiar songs that she listens to in her car.

Jake Lyons, 19, from Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado, attended the Young Adult Mass for the first time this year.

“It was great,” he said. “It was just cool to see all the young adults come together in one place … Lots of people on fire for Jesus.”

Information about events for young adults is on Instagram @sdcatholic

Schools Poised for 'New Possibilities'

DAVID MAUNG

FRESH START: *Students at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School in San Ysidro assembled for the first day of school last year. Students there and at 38 other Catholic elementary schools and six high schools will soon have the opportunity to make new friends and connect with old ones. Local schools will hold their first day of classes between Aug. 13 and Aug. 26.*

By Denis Grasska

The first day of school is just around the corner.

About 15,600 students are enrolled at local Catholic schools for the 2025-2026 academic year. This includes about 1,300 students at 31 preschools; 9,500 at 39 elementary schools; and 4,800 at six high schools.

Most of the diocese's elementary schools will hold their first day of class between Aug. 13 and Aug. 26, with Aug. 20 being the most common start date.

Mater Dei Catholic High School students will return on Aug. 11. Three high schools — the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, Cathedral Catholic and Vincent Memorial Catholic — welcome back students on Aug. 13. St. Augustine and Cristo Rey San Diego high schools will follow on Aug. 14 and 18, respectively.

Diocesan Superintendent Leticia Oseguera said that this is a time of year "filled with new possibilities."

"The children are always excited to start a new school year, be with their friends again, see their teachers, be back on campus," she said. "It's just a happy, exciting time."

Oseguera shared that most students who attended St. Katharine Drexel Academy last year will be continuing in Catholic education. The school closed over the summer after a long battle with low enrollment and growing budget deficits, and the diocesan Office for Schools offered a $1,000 tuition discount for the 2025-2026 school year to every student who finished last year at the school and opted to attend another local Catholic elementary school this year.

Many families took the diocese up on that offer. When the bell rings on the first day of class, former St. Katharine Drexel Academy students will be found at St. Didacus School, St. John of the Cross School in Lemon Grove, St. Kieran School in El Cajon, St. Martin of Tours Academy in La Mesa, St. Patrick School (North Park) and St. Therese Academy, among other schools.

DAVID MAUNG

ALL SMILES: *It was all smiles at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School last year when students returned to campus for the first day of school.*

Nine schools have new principals this year: Dominican Father Allan White at St. Mary's School, El Centro; María Guadalupe Hernández at St. John of the Cross School; Jamie Brandt at St. Martin of Tours Academy, La Mesa; Annalisa Burgos at Nazareth School; Dawn Wright at St. Michael's School, Poway; Francie Moss and Katie Zack as co-principals at Stella Maris Academy, La Jolla; David Blair at St. Charles School, Imperial Beach; Lorena Hernández at St. Pius X School, Chula Vista; and Jeff McMurtry at Cathedral Catholic High School.

As in past years, the Office for Schools is offering a slew of orientations and professional learning opportunities in late summer for Catholic educators.

"(Catholic educators) do this because it's a calling and because they want to make a difference in the lives of our students," said Oseguera. "And so, I hope that through the support that we provide, they know how much we appreciate them and how we want to make sure that we're making their jobs a little easier."

On Aug. 7, pastors and principals will gather for a synodal dialogue.

Oseguera said that the event, which was called for by Bishop Michael Pham, builds upon a listening session held last May. It will focus on the importance of the partnership between pastors and principals, she said, and promote the idea that parishes and their schools should be "working together as one."

The annual Religion Convocation, typically held in August, has been rescheduled for October to better accommodate the schedules of local teachers and principals. The event, which draws more than 1,000 Catholic educators and catechists, includes a keynote speaker and Mass. Removing the event from amidst the hustle and bustle of late summer preparations for a new school year, the convocation will be expanded into a full-day event.

For Oseguera, the excitement of a new bishop adds to the excitement of a new school year.

"The fact that we have a new bishop is going to be new and exciting for our schools," she said two days before the July 17 installation of Bishop Pham as the seventh bishop of San Diego.

She noted that, while still an auxiliary bishop, Bishop Pham was "my partner in a lot of school issues" last year.

"He's very involved with schools; he cares deeply about schools," she said. "And so, I'm excited for him to officially step into the role and see his vision for our Catholic schools."

San Bernardino Bishop Issues Dispensation

The Southern Cross

SAN BERNARDINO — Immigration enforcement actions have increased significantly across the San Bernardino region, including on parish property.

As a result, Bishop Alberto Rojas has lifted the obligation in his diocese for Catholics who are immigrants to attend Mass, becoming the first in the nation to do so.

The bishop announced the dispensation in a letter in English and Spanish issued on July 8, acknowledging the fear that has gripped his community of an estimated 1 million Catholics.

"All members of the faithful in the Diocese of San Bernardino who, due to genuine fear of immigration enforcement actions, are unable to attend Sunday Mass or Masses on holy days of obligation are dispensed from this obligation," he said in the letter.

The bishop encouraged alternative spiritual practices, such as participating in televised or online Masses, personal prayer, reading of Sacred Scripture, or participating in devotions such as the rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Earlier, in a letter dated June 23, Bishop Rojas described what was unfolding in his diocese.

"We have seen a change and an increase in immigration enforcement in our region and specifically in our diocese. Authorities are now seizing brothers and sisters indiscriminately, without respect for their right to due process and their dignity as children of God.


COURTESY DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

DISPENSED: *Bishop Alberto Rojas has granted a dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation to undocumented immigrants in the San Bernardino Diocese with fear of immigration enforcement.*

"I say once again to our immigrant communities who are bearing the trauma and injustice of these tactics that your Church walks with you and supports you. We join you in carrying this very difficult cross.

"While we surely respect and appreciate the right of law enforcement to keep our communities safe from violent criminals, we are now seeing agents detain people as they leave their homes, in their places of work and other randomly chosen public settings. We have experienced at least one case of ICE agents entering a parish property and seizing several people. It should be no surprise that this is creating a tremendous amount of fear, confusion and anxiety for many. It is not of the Gospel of Jesus Christ — which guides us in all that we do.

"I ask all political leaders and decision-makers to please reconsider and cease these tactics immediately, in favor of an approach that respects human rights and human dignity and builds toward a more lasting, comprehensive reform of our immigration system.

"Many are taking to the streets to voice their opposition to the current immigration enforcement tactics. It is their constitutional right to do this, and I call on all protestors to act without vulgarity, violence toward others, or destruction of property. The tension around this issue has been further heightened by the decision to deploy federal National Guard troops and military personnel to the sites of these protests. At this point, this seems only to increase the level of anger and fear of violence in the streets.

"Our late Holy Father, Pope Francis, once told me that his greatest fear was division. Indeed, it is painful to see such division amongst God's people at this moment. This is not what he wants for us. Let us instead remember what we all share — our creation in his image and likeness. Let us look for God in one another.

"We continue as Catholics in this Jubilee Year, called to carry the hope of Christ in our hearts and to share it with the world. We know this hope is an antidote to the strife and suffering in our communities. May it prevail over this division and may God's Kingdom come."

***STORYTELLER**: Volunteer Lupita Moreno-Perez, right, reads a Bible story to participants July 6 at Our Lady of the Valley Parish's Vacation Bible School in El Centro.*

VBS Offers 'Wild World' Adventure in Faith

By Roman Flores

EL CENTRO — Dozens of children lined up with their parents, waiting to enter.

The colorfully decorated parish center was lined with picturesque scenes of bears beside a river, seaside boats with campfires, fish and eagles soaring over mountain tops. A row of chibi-esque saints adorned the upper walls as if looking down on the little ones about to embark on their week-long journey.

"Your group is the otters," Deacon Sergio Hernández told young Axel Serano. "Yayyy!" the 6-year-old exclaimed, jumping up and down in front of the adults.

This was the scene in the Imperial Valley as Our Lady of the Valley Parish held its first day of Vacation Bible School, which ran from July 6 to July 10 in the St. Mary Church Parish Center.

VBS *Continued on Page 7*

VBS *Continued from Page 6*

Vacation Bible School (VBS) is held by churches throughout the Imperial Valley to bring the faith to children while they are on summer vacation from secular school.

Though VBS is held widely throughout the Protestant churches in the Imperial Valley in the summer, it is still relatively new for Catholics in the area. 2025 marks the second year that Our Lady of the Valley Parish will utilize a "Totally Catholic" version of the VBS program, said Faith Formation Co-Directors Eddie and Margie Madueño.

"The packet that we bought has Jesus in it," said Margie Madueño. "Other things we are introducing are (topics like the) saints, like our Mother Mary, John the Baptist; scapulars; and (Eucharistic) adoration."

"Unlike our Protestant brothers and sisters, who don't believe in the real presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, for us it's the maximum — the main reason why parents should consider a (Catholic) VBS at Our Lady of the Valley," she said.

The theme for the parish's 2025 VBS is "True North: Trusting Jesus in the Wild World," which is a wildlife and outdoors-themed adventure in Alaska, the Madueños said.

"For them to see that Jesus is in everything and Jesus is with them — it's trust," she said. "It's like Alaska, cold, and creatures of every kind … we're introducing them to God's creation."

The children were divided up into cohort groups of similar ages, in wildlife-themed collectives such as the "otters," "chipmunks" and "butterflies."

GATHER AT THE RIVER: *Vacation Bible School participants play in a makeshift river as part of an activity July 6, while costumed volunteers look on.*

The co-directors said about 100 volunteers helped administer the Totally Catholic VBS program to almost 150 children from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.

The groups journeyed to different stations around the parish center to learn different aspects of the faith, while having fun with a variety of games, arts & crafts, "Sticky Scripture" or a children's version with excerpts from the Gospel of Matthew, Bible stories, dance, and snack stations.

The parish community really seemed to come together to support the children, as groups of high school-aged confirmation students, young adults, and other adults came together to volunteer, Eddie Madueño said.

"It's a lot of work, and we're grateful for all the volunteers," he said. "It goes pretty smooth because we've been having meetings for the last few weeks and, you know, the kids really seem to enjoy it. It's a lot of blessings."

Even on the first day, parents were pleased by the results and the smiles on their children's faces.

"I saw it as a good opportunity for (my son) to learn more about the Catholic Church, and I know that they make it fun for his age, so I really wanted him to be in it," Victoria Fernandez said about the enthusiastic Axel.

"I would say, even though I try to explain to him the sacrifice that Jesus did for us on the cross, and he knows, I think it's different when he interacts with kids his age," she said.

For other parents, the parish's Totally Catholic VBS serves as the all-important first introduction to the faith.

"I figured that VBS can expose my son to the faith, so I enrolled him," Sharon Burns said of her 3-year-old son, Jared Vincent. "I knew he was ready."

"I want him to get more interested in the faith, ask more question about it and just develop a curiosity about it," she said. "VBS, back in my day, was only Protestant … and now, it seems like there are more fun Catholic things — and he thrives on fun.

"Their mind is like a sponge at this age, so I feel it's a great time to have him at these kinds of things," she continued. "This is going to help him have fun and thrive at the same time."

Burns said that, while there is a small cost associated with Our Lady of the Valley's VBS, "it feels like you're giving money to a worthy cause." She encourages parents to "just do it" when it comes to enrolling their children.

"I hope it sticks with him," she said. "I just hope he gets closer to Jesus."

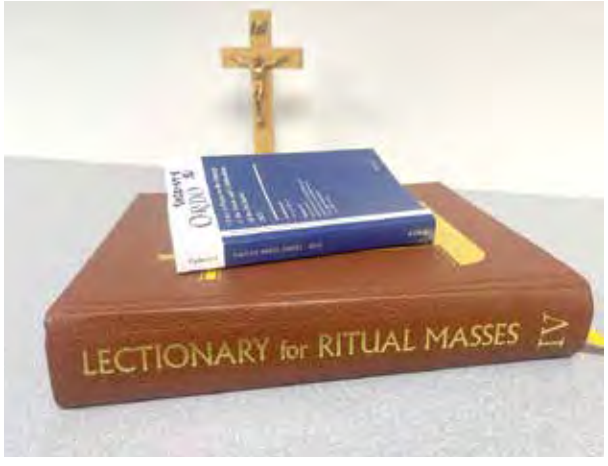
‘Care of Creation’ Mass Added to Roman Missal

Pope Leo XIV celebrates the first Mass for the Care of Creation at the Borgo “Laudato Si” Village in Castel Gandolfo, urging Christians to embrace our mission to bring peace and reconciliation to our world and all of creation.

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Ph.D.

The Vatican announced in July the addition of a new formulary for a “Mass for the Care of Creation” to the Roman Missal — *Missa pro Custodia Creationis*.

What does this addition entail? Don’t we already celebrate a Mass during the Season of Creation? Why was a “formulary” for the Care of Creation needed? (Understandably, you might be wondering, what is a formulary?) And how might you expect to participate in such a Mass?



Various Needs and Occasions

This new Mass for the Care of Creation is classified within a group of about 50 Masses known as “Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions.” The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* explains that, because “almost every event in life is sanctified by the divine grace that flows from the Paschal Mystery, and because the Eucharist is the Sacrament of Sacraments,” it is fitting to allow for Mass formularies particular to “various occasions of Christian life for the needs of the whole world or for the needs of the Church.”

These special formularies are developed using select Scripture passages and theological language relating to the specified need or occasion. They include key parts of the Mass, such as the Entrance Antiphon, the Collect, and the Prayer After Communion. Examples of these Masses include “For Vocations to Holy Orders or Religious Life,” “For Reconciliation,” “For the Blessing of Human Labor,” and “For Refugees and Exiles.”

The proposed Biblical readings include Wisdom 13:1-9, Colossians 1:15-20, and selections from the Gospel of Matthew that recount Jesus calming the storm and calling people to trust in divine providence like the lilies of the field and the birds of the air.

But how does this differ from our annual Season of Creation Mass? Up until now, all language used during those Masses has been the language that would have been used for any Mass on that day. Our hymns, decorations, and the blessing for those participating in Creation Care ministry provided context for our celebration, but the formulary did not distinguish the Mass in any particular way.

Archbishop Vittorio Francesco Viloa, OFM, Secretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, offered an explanation. The new formulary for the Mass for the Care of Creation “receives some of the principal themes contained in ‘Laudato Si’ and expresses them in the form of prayer,” which is found throughout the liturgy. For instance, the entrance antiphon draws from Psalm 19: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims works of his hands.” The prayer after communion asks that, “We may learn to live in harmony with all creatures.”

Another distinction is when this Mass may be celebrated. Masses for Various Needs and Occasions are generally to be used on weekdays; however, in cases of “grave need” or “pastoral advantage,” the diocesan bishop may permit celebration on any day with the exception of solemnities, Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, and a few other special occasions.

Bringing Peace and Reconciliation

On July 9, Pope Leo IV celebrated the first Mass for the Care of Creation outside at the Borgo “Laudato Si” Centre, recognizing the surrounding beauty as “a kind of ‘natural cathedral.’” His homily, which you can find if you scan the green QR code, underscores the great need for prayer and the ecological conversion of those “both inside and outside the Church, who still do not recognize the urgency of caring for our common home.” Leo points to Jesus’ calming the storm as a sign of hope and argues our mission to care for creation ultimately aims to bring peace and reconciliation to the world.

Pope Leo XIV’s homily for first Mass for the Care of Creation

The upcoming Season of Creation, Sept. 1 through Oct. 4, will offer ample opportunity to join in this mission. Go to *bit.ly/SDCCPage* to see upcoming events. We especially welcome all to our Season of Creation Mass, 4:30 p.m. at The Immaculata on Sept. 20. For information and registration, go to *bit.ly/SOC25Mass*.

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

Mass Offers Warm Embrace, Open Heart

By Norma de la Vega

"If I say I'm a Christian, I must live like Christ taught us to do, loving and respecting my neighbor, without judgment or prejudice."

That was the central message from the annual All Are Welcome Mass celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano for LGBT+ community members.

Faithful from across the region, from many cultures, jammed the pews for the Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church in San Diego on July 13.

"Christ's love is perfect and unconditional," Bishop Bejarano said in his homily. "We should experience that perfect and unconditional love through our Mother Church."

"It is for this reason that, today, we offer this Mass for those who feel unwelcomed and rejected by the Church, their mother," the bishop said. "They are the victims of the harsh judgment and closed hearts and minds of some of its members."

Other marginalized populations include those suffering from mental illness, the homeless, the addicted, the incarcerated and immigrants, he said.

How do we believe in those who call themselves Christians, when they are not truly living the unconditional love of Christ?

"Can I defend the unborn, and at the same time be in favor of the ICE raids targeting innocent working immigrants?"


CHARLIE NEUMAN

PEACE BE WITH YOU: *Mass-goers greet each other during the annual All Are Welcome Mass celebrated at St. John the Evangelist Church in San Diego on July 13.*

He said that the Gospel says "no" (Matt 25).

"How can we close our hearts to LGBTQ individuals when we have not made a minimum effort to spend time with them, to listen to their struggles and pains, and to journey with them, discovering the beauty of their souls, which are in the image and likeness of God?

"A good Samaritan should always see these and other peoples with the eyes of the Gospel," he added, referring to that day's reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25).

The bishop said that many people have suffered rejection and stigmatization at some point in their lives.

"The heart of Jesus is open to all, and it will never reject anyone."

The Mass-goers applauded the bishop, giving him a standing ovation. After the Mass, some shared their thoughts.

"This is very encouraging because you can feel that the message from the Bible is as real as real life," said San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria. "It was an empowering message."

"We're super glad, and super thankful to be included here, as part of the faith," said Ramón Sandoval, of the organization *Colectivo Viva Vivo*, which offers sex education on both sides of the border.

Nicole Murray-Ramirez, a long-time activist, said the LGBT community, like immigrants and refugees, is under attack.

"It's a blessing to have a bishop who supports us," Murray-Ramirez said.

Support Available

Parishes that have a ministry outreach to the LGBT community include:

St. John the Evangelist, SD
Our Lady of Guadalupe, SD
St. Catherine Labouré, SD
St. Brigid, SD
St. Thomas More, Oceanside
St. Francis of Assisi, Vista

Bishop Takes Over ‘Wonderful Flock’

By Denis Grasska

The Force may not have been with Bishop Michael Pham on July 17.

But the Holy Spirit certainly was.

“You may be used to seeing a tall bishop and cardinal … but now, you can envision before you a shorter bishop, like Yoda in ‘Star Wars,’ getting ready to lead,” he said in the homily for his installation Mass, humorously referencing his own short stature.

“Whether we are tall or short … we are all called to be bearers of hope and beacons of Good News to peace, justice and love for all,” he said.

St. Thérèse of Carmel Church was filled to capacity as Bishop Pham was solemnly installed as the seventh bishop of San Diego by Archbishop José H. Gomez, of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He became the first Vietnamese-American to lead a diocese in the United States.

Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, was on hand, as was Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, archbishop of Washington, D.C.; and Cardinal Roger Mahony, archbishop emeritus of Los Angeles.

Twenty-five bishops and archbishops participated in the liturgy, including San Diego’s auxiliary bishops, Ramón Bejarano and Felipe Pulido, and Bishop John Dolan, a former auxiliary bishop of San Diego who now heads the Diocese of Phoenix. There were more than 200 concelebrating priests and 10 deacons vested for Mass.

Cardinal McElroy, who served as bishop of San Diego for 10 years until this past March, offered a salutation near the beginning of the Mass.

Addressing his successor, he said, “I am so proud of the leadership you have shown in proclaiming the Gospel in its entirety, in reaching out to the poor and the marginalized, in pointing to the limitless reservoir of grace that lies within the sacramental life of the Church, and of teaching that, for the disciple and for the pastor, love and truth can truly meet.”

“I now welcome you to your new role, with great happiness and joy, to the diocese that I have loved and led and to the diocese which you have loved and now lead,” he said. “May you always, in Christ’s grace, lead this wonderful flock to the glory that lies ahead of them.”

Subsequently, Cardinal Pierre publicly read the apostolic mandate in which Pope Leo XIV appointed Bishop Pham as bishop of San Diego. Upon accepting the mandate, Bishop Pham ceremonially presented it to the College of Consultors, Chancellor Marioly Galván, and to the entire assembly, which responded with extended applause.

After this, again to the applause of the assembly, Bishop Pham was seated by Cardinal Pierre and Archbishop Gomez and presented with his crozier, symbolizing that he had assumed pastoral leadership of the diocese.

Pham *Continued on Page 11*

A NEW BEGINNING: *Bishop Michael Pham waves as he exits St. Thérèse of Carmel Church, following his installation Mass July 17. With his installation as the*

CHARLIE NEUMAN

KNOCK, KNOCK: *Bishop Michael Pham knocks on the door of St. Joseph Cathedral with a mallet, seeking entrance July 16, symbolizing his taking possession of the diocese.*

DAVID MAUNG

WELCOME: *Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States, congratulated Bishop Pham during the installation.*

diocese's seventh bishop, he embarks on a new stage in his ministry.

Pham *Continued from Page 10*

The new bishop was then welcomed by representatives of the clergy, religious and multicultural laity of the diocese, and by religious leaders of other faith traditions, after which the liturgy then proceeded like the traditional Catholic Mass.

In his homily, with humility and humor, Bishop Pham accepted his new position.

He began by acknowledging the "tremendous honor and privilege" of being appointed bishop, and he expressed his "deepest gratitude" to God, his parents and siblings, those who oversaw his priestly formation, and those with whom he has collaborated over his quarter-century in ministry.

"Even though having lived here in San Diego for over 40 years in which I call home, I still have much to learn about life and service to God's people," said Bishop Pham. "As I begin this new responsibility as the shepherd of the Diocese of San Diego, the chosen Gospel of John today becomes the guiding principle for my ministry: Jesus says, 'My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life.'"

In English, Vietnamese and Spanish, he asked the faithful to pray for him that, as bishop, he might "stay centered on Christ, the Good Shepherd, the source of eternal life."

Bishop Pham emphasized justice and peace throughout his homily message.

"Jesus was sent to us by the Father to give us his Spirit of love," the bishop said. "We, too, are sent by Jesus to bring the same Spirit of Love to the world filled with division and hatred, through our active participation in justice and peace, in forgiveness and reconciliation actualized now in the Eucharist."

He said that listening to God and to one another is essential if, guided by the Holy Spirit, we are to right the injustices prevalent in the world and to bring peace.

"Peace is possible only when there is justice," he said. "Justice also requires love and compassion. We are challenged to live justly and bring justice to our society as we are mindful of our sisters and brothers who are being neglected, who are being thrown away on the side of the road, and who are incapable of defending themselves."

Two of Bishop Pham's siblings spoke to *The Southern Cross* before the Mass, sharing their insights into their brother's personality and reflecting on what his installation means to their family.

Pham *Continued on Page 12*

Online Resources

Bishop Michael Pham's homily from his installation Mass and a photo gallery are available at *sdcatholic.org/installation2025.*

PHAM-ILY & FRIENDS: *Relatives and friends of Bishop Michael Pham, along with Vietnamese community members, filled a section of St. Thérèse of Carmel Church for the installation Mass.*

SNAPSHOT: *Well-wishers take a selfie with Bishop Pham inside St. Thérèse of Carmel Church, site of his installation Mass.*

Minnesota Neighbor Remembers Phams

By Denis Grasska

Linda Willette still remembers Bishop Michael Pham as the boy next door.

COURTESY BISHOP MICHAEL PHAM

NEW ARRIVALS: *Family members of Bishop Michael Pham arrived as refugees in Minnesota in 1983, settling in the city of Blue Earth. They moved in next-door to Linda Willette and her husband, Jan. Linda recently shared her memories of the Phams and of her community's refugee outreach.*

Willette, 82, and her husband, Jan, lived in Blue Earth, Minnesota, from 1974 until 2005, when they moved to Minneapolis.

A Catholic, she was an active participant in an ecumenical effort to sponsor Vietnamese refugee families in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and to help them settle in Blue Earth.

One of those families, the Phams, moved in next door. The Willette and Pham children often played together in the open lot between their properties.

"Our youngest son and the youngest of the Pham family were always out playing football," Willette said.

She recalled how she had felt when she learned that Pope Leo XIV had appointed her one-time neighbor as the seventh bishop of San Diego.

"It was wonderful, exciting news," she told *The Southern Cross*.

Willette said that the Phams were "regular church-attenders" and fellow parishioners at Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, located about two blocks from their home, and that the pastor there gave Bishop Pham's father a job doing custodial work at the parish.

She posits that the future Bishop Pham, who arrived in Blue Earth in 1981 with two siblings and was joined by his parents and four remaining siblings two years later, received "a good foundation in the Catholic Church" while living there.

A small agricultural community in south-central Minnesota, Blue Earth has a population of about 3,160. It's home to a 55-foot statue of the Jolly Green Giant, mascot of the Green Giant company, which operated a vegetable-canning plant in Le Suer, Minnesota, for over 90 years.

Reflecting on the town's embrace of Vietnamese refugee families, Willette said, "It was wonderful for a small community to take these people in, even if it was January and 20-below, when the first families arrived."

Generally, Catholic volunteers assisted newly arrived Catholic refugees, while their Protestant neighbors met the needs of families who belonged to their own denomination.

"But we all worked together as an ecumenical group to make things better for the Vietnamese refugees," said Willette, who was among those who taught English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for refugees at the local public school.

"We saw to it that they got a good public school education and also went on to vocational school," she said.

In addition to Linda and Jan, the Willette household also included their daughter and two sons. Between 1976 and 1988, four nephews also lived there.

In 1981, the Willettes sponsored two teenaged Vietnamese refugees, who lived with them for much of that decade. Willette said that, when one of them got married later, it was her husband who "gave away the bride" at the wedding.

Willette said that it was "an honor" for her and her husband to be godparents to another refugee couple's child.

Eventually, many of the Vietnamese families relocated to warmer climes, finding new homes in California and Texas. (The Phams moved to San Diego in 1985.)

"But I always felt like we gave them a good start," she said, "and life was good for them in Blue Earth when they needed it the most."

As for her former neighbor, who was installed July 17 as bishop of San Diego …

"We wish him well, and I just think it's a great thing," she said. "He's a wonderful person, (from) a good family, a wonderful background, and he should be able to succeed greatly as a bishop."

Pham *Continued from Page 11*

"We're so happy for him. It's just a momentous occasion, and we're just so thrilled," said Ann Pham, 43, the youngest of the nine siblings and a member of Good Shepherd Parish.

"We can't even say enough about how we feel or how the family feels because we are truly, truly blessed and honored," added Valerie Pham, 51, a member of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish.

The Pham sisters said that their brother, whose episcopal motto is "United in Christ," has long demonstrated a commitment to bringing people together.

"He has had such a wonderful journey throughout his entire life to try and gather everyone together," said Valerie Pham. "His mission is unity."

Bishop Pham has even been a source of unity within his own family, his sisters shared.

CHARLIE NEUMAN

EVENING PRAYER: *Bishop Michael Pham leads Vespers July 16 at St. Joseph Cathedral.*

Valerie noted that he has dinner with the family every Saturday evening.

"He makes the time and commitment to come and be with the family," she said. "Regardless of how busy he is, that is his priority."

Ann said that, by seeing how their brother makes time for family dinner despite his demanding schedule, his siblings are inspired to be there, too.

"So, we feel really united when he's home," she said.

Prior to the installation Mass, Cardinal McElroy shared his thoughts about Bishop Pham's appointment, describing his successor as "the ideal selection to be the bishop of San Diego" at a time when "synodality is emerging in the life of the Church."

"Bishop Pham, in a unique way, in his life, embraces so many of the elements of synodality," he said. "Synodality emphasizes that our life is a journey here on this earth together, walking in faith with God leading us and understanding that we walk not as individuals, but as a community of faith."

He pointed to the Vietnam-born bishop's refugee experience after the Vietnam War.

"This idea of journey," he said, "that we're heading, not exactly where we know where we are going, but knowing that God is with us, has been so much part of his life."

Additionally, he said, "Bishop Pham is a man of deep collaboration and consultation and, then, of action, and that's very much in the spirit of synodality. He's brought great unity in our cultural communities and made a great contribution there and, as a pastor, he really acted on the principle that every Catholic is called to participate deeply in the life of the Church. … He'll continue to do that as a bishop and work well with our priests here in San Diego."


MISSION SAN LUIS REY, OCEANSIDE

JOHN GASTALDO

‘A Broken Soldier Can Become a Saint’

By Denis Grasska

Father Ed McKenzie, OFM, leads retreats for military veterans and their families at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside.

The next Coming Home Veteran’s Retreat will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., on Saturday, Aug. 9. An optional closing Mass will follow the retreat.

Born and raised in Jackson, Michigan, 76-year-old “Father Ed” is a U.S. Air Force veteran who served during the Vietnam War. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as the effects of exposure to the defoliant known as Agent Orange.

A late vocation, Father Ed was a husband and father before entering the Franciscan Order in 2003 and being ordained to the priesthood on May 5, 2011. He came to San Diego about a year ago, after about 12 years of ministry in Chicago.

Question: What role did the Catholic faith play in your formative years?

Answer: My whole family was baptized into the Catholic Church when I was about 9. My dad and mom brought us up in the faith, and it stayed with me.

When did you feel the first stirrings of a priestly vocation?

Around the time our family converted, I started thinking about what I wanted to do for a living, and the world of the Catholic Church opened up to me. I saw what was going on at the altar, that priest up there with the fancy clothes, and I thought that might be a nice job.

I explored the idea of being a priest and was intrigued by St. Francis of Assisi, after learning about him from a Secular Franciscan in our neighborhood.

In 1963, I entered St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary, which was run by the Franciscans, in Oak Brook, Illinois. It went well for four years, before I decided that priesthood wasn’t for me; I liked girls too much. I left and got drafted promptly.

Did anything else influence your decision to leave the seminary?

The world was a mess, and I was confused.

Vietnam was happening. All the

Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside

Father Ed McKenzie, OFM

Kennedys were getting killed. I had entered the seminary before Vatican II and, in the middle of my studies, the council happened. Because of all the changes, I felt at that time that the priest I had wanted to be when I entered the seminary was no longer the priest I could be after Vatican II. Although in hindsight, it was the best thing that could have happened to our Church, it was a confusing time for a young mind.

How did your military service begin?

I was drafted in 1968, but I decided I didn’t want to sleep in foxholes, so I went down to the Air Force recruiter with my draft notice and said, “Can you get me in?” The next thing you know, I’m in the Air Force, where I worked on helicopters.

My first military assignment was with NASA. I was assigned to Apollo 11. We flew cover for the astronauts at Johnson Space Center in Houston. When Neil Armstrong crashed the lunar landing training module, we rescued him, put out the fire and took him to the hospital.

Once Apollo 11 made it to the moon, they sent me to Vietnam, and it went downhill after that.

What was it like in Vietnam?

It was a hellish place. I’m still struggling with PTSD and taking medicine for the bad dreams.

In Vietnam, I was in air rescue. We deployed special forces in the jungle, and then we would extract them after the battle in our helicopters. I didn't have to shoot anybody, which I’m grateful for, but a lot of my buddies did.

Did you pursue a religious vocation immediately after the war?

No, I got married in 1972, after getting out of the service. It wasn’t a marriage made in heaven. We got married for the wrong reasons, and we were like oil and water, but we ended up with two wonderful boys. My wife and I divorced in 1989, and our marriage was annulled. Today, we are not “friends,” particularly, but can be “friendly” to each other.

Combat veterans can be difficult to live with, and the baggage that I brought back from the war played a big role in the failure of my marriage. I decided that I was no good at marriage, so I stayed single.

Feeling that I needed meaning in my life, I got involved at my parish. I served as a lector and an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. One thing led to another, and I started taking theology courses and even thought about the permanent diaconate. Then, a Franciscan high school classmate of mine suggested that I come back to the Franciscans; at age 55, I did.

How did you get involved with veterans ministry?

While ministering in Chicago, I saw that the Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House had a “Coming Home Retreat” for veterans. I attended it myself, and it was the best thing I ever did. It was an opportunity for me to talk to other veterans, who understood where I was coming from.

I ended up joining the retreat team, helping Jesuit Father Michael Sparough, who had developed the retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. I was on the team for 10 years, and we gave three retreats a year. A year ago, I felt that I should take this retreat somewhere else in the country. After researching possible locations, Mission San Luis Rey, with Camp Pendleton so close by, grabbed my attention.

What impact did your war experience have on your retreat ministry?

Vietnam changed my perception of St. Francis of Assisi. Previously, I thought of him as that smiling garden statue with a bird on his shoulder. I came back from Vietnam with a much different vision: a man who was broken and hurt by PTSD, just like me.

Francis was a knight. He experienced combat and was shattered by it. I saw him as proof that a broken soldier can become a saint. That’s my message in my talks to veterans: You can become a saint; you don't have to wallow in your misery; you can rise above that, just like Francis did.

Why is ministry to veterans so important?

The suicide rate for veterans is terrible. It’s an epidemic. I’m doing my small bit to try to address that, paying it forward for the healing that I’ve received. I feel most like a priest when trying to help veterans.

The Coming Home Veteran’s Retreat will be held on Saturday, Aug. 9, at Mission San Luis Rey. Learn more at sanluisrey.org/retreats.

What advice would you give to those who are seeking to discern God’s call?

First, get a good spiritual director. You need good advice. You’ve got to listen to the urgings of the Spirit, and the Spirit usually works through other people.

It’s important to understand that we have free will. I could have been anything I wanted to be in life, and God wouldn’t have interfered. But when God created me, he knew what would be best for me, and it was my job to discover that, to seek it out and live it. It took me a while.

When you finally say yes to his will for you, he gives you graces that you can’t imagine ever being possible. When you finally align your will to his will, it’s a much smoother road.

Are there any devotions that you would recommend for those who want to grow closer to God?

Personally, I love the rosary and the Liturgy of the Hours. Everybody has a way that’s going to fit their personality; whatever that is, do it.

But find a spirituality that will take you out of yourself, a spirituality that will flow into other people in some way. We’re in this life together, and we have got to help each other out.

For example, for me, the rosary is not a personal devotion; it’s a connection to other people. On each bead, I think of an individual. Whoever comes into my mind, that’s who I pray for. When I'm done saying my daily rosary, I’ve spent time with a lot of people in my mind.

Vatican Offers Plan to Implement Synodality

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY — Local Churches and bishops worldwide will be instrumental in helping implement the proposals and foster the spirit of the 2024 final document of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, the Vatican synod office said.

(The Diocese of San Diego began implementing the recommendations of the final document in early 2024, under the leadership of Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, the then local bishop. Bishop Michael Pham, the cardinal's successor, has said that continuing the synod's implementation will remain a priority at the diocese.)

To more effectively carry out the mission of evangelization, the implementation phase of the synod "aims to examine new practices and structures that will make the life of the Church more synodal," the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops said in a new set of guidelines released July 7.

"Concretely, the priority is to offer the people of God new opportunities to walk together and reflect on these experiences in order to reap their fruits for the mission and share them," the text said.

The 24-page text, titled "Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod," is a guide for bishops and synodal teams, and an invitation to them to share their initiatives as they apply the synod on synodality's final proposals locally. It also seeks to answer some key questions the office received recently. The text was released in multiple languages at *synod.va*.

Divided into four chapters, the document offers responses to: What is the implementation phase and what are its objectives?; Who will participate in the implementation phase and what are their tasks and responsibilities?; How to engage with the 2024 synod assembly's final document during the implementation phase?; And what method and tools can help shape the implementation phase?

The guidelines underline how the local Churches must play an active role in this phase, including by reaching out to diverse communities such as the marginalized, young people and those resistant to the synodal process, because, "in order to truly walk together, we cannot lose the contribution of their point of view."

Engagement should extend beyond the parish to include schools, hospitals, prisons and digital platforms, it said, and relations with religious communities, movements and associations should be strengthened to further exchange the variety of gifts toward mission.

Sister Nathalie Becquart

Synodality "cannot be a path limited to a core group of 'supporters,'" it said.

"On the contrary, it is important that this new process contribute concretely 'to expand possibilities for participation and for the exercise of differentiated co-responsibility by all the baptized, men and women,' in a spirit of reciprocity," it said. "Moreover, it is crucial that it aims to involve those who have so far remained on the margins of the ecclesial renewal process established by the synod."

The diocesan or eparchial bishop is the first person responsible for the implementation phase, the guidelines said. "It is his responsibility to initiate it, officially indicate its duration, methods and objectives, accompany its progress and conclude it, validating its results."

This phase "will be an appropriate opportunity to exercise authority in a synodal way," it said, reminding bishops they are not alone and should encourage all members of the Church to share the journey together.

Synodal teams and participatory bodies "will be essential in the implementation phase as well," the guidelines said, so "existing teams should be valued and, where necessary, renewed; those that have been suspended should be reactivated and appropriately integrated; and new teams should be formed where they have not been established previously."

The three-year period of implementation and evaluation on the local, national, regional and international levels will culminate in a "celebration of the ecclesial assembly" in October 2028 at the Vatican "to share the fruits of the implementation phase and to have a kind of evaluation," Xavière Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, said.

— Catholic News Service

Four Teens Heading for Mission in Ghana

The Southern Cross

WASHINGTON — Catholic teens from the San Diego Diocese will head to Africa this month.

DELEGATES: *From left, Tim Rivette, Hector Saldaña, Natalie Myers and Valeria Torres pose for a group photo at their home parish, St. Patrick Church in Carlsbad. The four teens will be part of a synodal delegation to Ghana in August and share their experiences in the months to come.*

Hector Saldaña, Natalie Myers, Tim Rivette and Valeria Torres — all parishioners of St. Patrick Parish in Carlsbad — will join Catholic Relief Services on a synodal delegation to Ghana.

On Aug. 15, they will travel to Baltimore to join the other delegates. The following day, they will depart for Ghana, where they will learn about the health services that CRS provides to various communities, meet with a local diocesan school to learn about emergency response efforts, visit a local clinic and water sanitation facility, and more. They will come home Aug. 23.

The four teens are members of the National Youth Advisory Council, a diverse group of young people who speak on behalf of the youth of the United States to ensure that the voices of young people are integrated into the mission and work of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). The members represent various parts of the country and cultures.

The federation is a broad, nationally recognized leadership alliance for Catholic youth ministry. Its mission is to "support and strengthen those who accompany young people as they encounter and follow Jesus Christ."

"The opportunity to participate in this synodal delegation is absolutely exciting for these young people. This experience allows them to see the Universal Church and the Gospel in action firsthand at such a young age," said Natalie Ibarra, who joined the federation staff as communications manager in 2022 and will be part of the delegation.

Ibarra, a member of the same parish as the four youth, previously served for eight years as youth and young adult ministry coordinator at Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside.

"My hope is that each young person will grow in faith, leadership and solidarity through this experience," she said. "I hope they return inspired and equipped to share their experience with their local peers. I also hope they gain confidence as advocates for justice and as witnesses to how the Gospel transforms lives, wherever they live."

National Youth Advisory Council members participating in the delegation will formally share their experience in their parish communities and at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in November in Indianapolis.

Archbishop Nelson Perez, chair of Catholic Relief Services and the federation's episcopal advisor, invited the National Youth Advisory Council participants to join the delegation.

"I can't think of a more powerful opportunity for our young Church to witness firsthand the transformative work of the Gospel in action," said Archbishop Perez, who also leads the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. "This synodal delegation will not only deepen their understanding of global solidarity and human dignity, but also empower them to become bold witnesses of faith and justice in their own communities."

For more information, visit **nfcym.org.**

Resisting Cruelty, Restoring Kinship


ADOBESTOCK

"Unprecedented" may be the most overused word in English today — yet it rarely helps us understand what's truly happening.

Columnist
Cecilia González-Andrieu, Ph.D.

Something could be unprecedented because it is wonderful, like an unusually large harvest, or discovery, or cure. That's not what we mean today.

So, what makes this moment so unprecedented? One answer is that our country has never been in such a purposefully cruel and damaging state of chaos in the memory of most of us alive today. What's unprecedented is that we, the people of the United States, are facing situations of lawless disregard for life and dignity at the hands of our government that defy our ability to call upon experience to confront them. This lack of experience paralyzes us.

I grew up appreciating my classes in civics and history. As I got older, I enjoyed learning about ethics and drawing from the deep well of Christianity's wisdom expressed in Catholic Social Teaching. For me, a large part of the bewildering quality of the present moment is that an unusually high number of people seem to have absolutely no memory of civics, history, ethics or religious wisdom. This lack makes them apparently incapable of discerning right from wrong, truth from lie.

In a finding that should distress all of us who call ourselves Christians, a new poll from the respected Public Religion Research Institute reveals that 54% of white Catholics support deportations without due process. This astoundingly high amount is second only to white evangelicals who are 65% in favor of deporting undocumented persons — without due process, legal recourse, or access to constitutional protections guaranteed to all people under U.S. law.

The disconnect of biblical faith from ethics is also heartbreakingly clear in Hispanic Protestants who express support for deportation without due process at 30%. Tellingly, the largest opposition to mass deportations comes from non-Christians, Hispanic Catholics and Black Protestants. Our communal well is empty.

Experts in water use tell us that sometimes a well goes dry because silt and other obstructions are blocking the water flow. In these situations, the solution is to inject water at high pressure, to overcome the blockage and allow the water to flow again. How do we do this? I think we have begun.

In the face of the mass firings at the National Park Service, the Alt National Park Service was set up to continue caring for the lands we hold in common. It is their careful analysis that testifies to the gushing water of peaceful protests held on June 14, a day when war-making and authoritarian fealty were on full display in Washington. In opposition to the glorification of violence and despotism, over 13 million people turned out in communities big and small, in states blue, red and purple, in cities and in rural towns, to irrigate our community well with the water of good will, kinship and responsibility.

Two days later, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement of support stating that "no one can turn a deaf ear to the palpable cries of anxiety and fear heard in communities throughout the country in the wake of a surge in immigration enforcement actions."

We can all contribute to the flowing water, which as the evidence of peaceful demonstrations shows, has so energized the imagination of young people. Communities are organizing to raise funds for immigrant families left without parents, and the elderly left without their young caretakers. Communities of faith are organizing rapid-response teams to rush to the aid of the detained, incarcerated or left behind. Fear recedes as empathy surges — and together, we walk as pilgrims of hope, drawing living water from a well renewed.

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

Small, Everyday Acts Sustain Us

The number of news stories related to tragedies, crime and natural disasters is disproportionate to those related to solidarity, support, generosity and love that occur every day.

Columnist
Ricardo Márquez

What benefit can the agencies and groups that control the media derive by promoting bleak news? What effect does the constant bombardment of "apocalyptic" or end-of-the-world stories have on the population?

The most notable fruit of this disparity is fear, and fear silences consciences and paralyzes wills.

We have all experienced fear in our lives, have felt paralyzed, impotent. The more widespread fear is, the greater power and control those who cultivate fear gain.

It's not about hiding from the critical reality that we have utilized, without conscience, the earth's resources, contaminating it, destroying it. It's not about ignoring the difficulty we have living together and respecting our beliefs and cultures, or ignoring the wars raging around the world, claiming innocent lives. In Gaza alone, nearly 17,000 children have perished since the war began in 2023.

While these realities exist, innumerable acts of solidarity also exist: the mobilization of doctors who provide emergency healthcare; the arrival of volunteers who provide food and medicine; and the churches that open their doors to those without shelter. There are countless human gestures of generosity and love: a child that accompanies his grandfather among the ruins; a mother who does not eat so her child can; a person who shares his ration of water with a stranger; a rescue worker who risks his life to try to save someone else's; communities that pray and send resources to areas devastated by flooding. As the proverb tells us, "Evil makes a lot of noise, but goodness is silent."

I don't want to deny the overwhelming reality of evil and its tragic, deadly consequences, but I will not allow it to blind me from seeing the power, the beauty and the hope that come from countless acts of generosity and solidarity, that spring from a consciousness that we are all part of one family, interconnected, brothers and sisters.

I am saddened by the recent news of the floods in Texas; I'm moved by the tragedies unfolding in Gaza, Sudan, Venezuela, Ukraine and elsewhere. At the same time, my hope is sustained by the response by so many people who are anonymously working to help, heal and save lives.

Evil does not have the final word because these people exist, and I am profoundly grateful to them. Their simple, daily actions sustain us from what could be a global collapse.

In a world that rewards the spectacular, the Gospel of Jesus reminds us that the simplest and most humble actions are those that truly sustain brotherhood and build community: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I needed clothes and you clothed me; I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matt 25:35-36).

And now I ask you: What small gesture can you do today to be part of that silent web that sustains our life and our hope? Who can you thank today for sustaining us with their everyday kindness? What do you choose to do — even the simplest act — so that evil does not have the final word?

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

News Briefs

'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 Religious Vocation

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

The weekly meetings are held at 6:30 p.m., Mondays, at Mission San Diego de Alcalá.

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.

Young Catholic Professionals to Host 'Virtue Panel'

The San Diego chapter of Young Catholic Professionals (YCP), which hosts regular events for young Catholics in their 20s and 30s, will present "Fortitude in Action: A Virtue Panel Discussion."

The free event will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 14, at St. Michael Parish in Poway.

The discussion will focus on the virtue of fortitude — how it empowers us to face challenges with courage, perseverance and faith -— and what it means to live boldly in a world that often tests our values.

There will be a Mass from 6 to 6:30 p.m., followed by networking from 6:30 to 7 p.m. There will be complimentary beer, wine and appetizers. The dress code is business casual.The panel discussion will run from 7:10 to 8:30 p.m., with a 15-minute Q&A session to follow.

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

Catholic Singles Invited to National Conference

DENVER — More than 400 people from across the United States and beyond are expected to attend the National Conference for Single Catholics.

The event, which offers the chance to connect with like-minded singles of all ages, will be held from Aug. 22 to 24 at the Omni Interlocken Hotel in Denver. (There will also be a virtual option with online socials and small-group discussions.)

The weekend will include talks by dynamic speakers, music, social events, Mass with Archbishop Samuel Aquila, Eucharistic adoration, fellowship and more.

For more information or to register, visit *NationalCatholicSingles.com*. If attending in-person, use the promo code PARISH25 for a discount.

'Adventures' Recommended for Married Couples

Adventures in Marriage is a highly interactive program that teaches couples the practical, "hands-on" skills essential to build a healthy, thriving marriage that can go the distance.

Sponsored by the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, it will be offered from 6:30 to 9 p.m., Tuesdays, Sept. 9 to 30, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

Fun, practical and easy to learn, Adventures in Marriage is appropriate for couples at any age or stage. It is designed to reach couples across the spectrum; it helps couples with good marriages discover how to have a great marriage and helps distressed marriages reboot and learn a much better way.

For more information, call (858) 490-8256 or email *jprust@sdcatholic.org*. Register at *tinyurl.com/adventuresinmarriage*.

Annual Young Adult Retreat Returning in September

JULIAN — The diocese's annual Young Adult Retreat will be held from Sept. 12 to 14 at Whispering Winds Catholic Camp & Conference Center in Julian.

Young adults, ages 18 to 39, are invited to step away from the busyness of everyday life and enter a weekend of rest, reflection and renewal.

The weekend includes shared lodging, engaging talks, small group discussions, and powerful opportunities for prayer through Mass, Eucharistic adoration and confession.

The cost is $200 per person. For more information, call (858) 490-8260 or email *yamsd@sdcatholic.org*.

'Peace with Creation' to Be Theme of Youth Art Contest

"Peace with Creation" is the theme of the fourth annual Season of Creation Art Contest.

Sponsored by the diocesan Creation Care Ministry, the contest is open to fourth- through 12th-graders in local Catholic schools and faith-formation programs.

Entries of drawings, colorings and/or paintings will be evaluated based on both the quality of the artwork, as well as the described creation care-themed inspiration attributed to the piece. Recognition and cash prizes for the top two places in each age category will be awarded. The entry deadline is 11:59 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 21.

Winners will be announced on Sept. 28, and they will be invited to receive their awards at the Feast of St. Francis Festival, which will be held on Saturday, Oct. 4.

For submission details and registration, visit *bit.ly/SOCArt2025*.

'Southern Cross' Wins Journalism Awards

The Southern Cross recently received recognition in two journalism competitions.

The publication took home six awards at the Catholic Media Awards and one in the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) San Diego Pro Chapter's San Diego Area Journalism Contest.

The Catholic Media Awards were presented June 27 at the conclusion of the three-day, annual Catholic Media Conference, which was held in Phoenix this year.

The competition received 3,125 submissions.

The awards won by *The Southern Cross* included:

- Second Place, Best Feature Writing — Non-Weekly, for "Parishioners Dancing to Better Health," written by Aida Bustos
- Third Place, Best Photo Story — News, for "So Powerful, So Moving," taken by Leonardo Enrique Fonseca
- Honorable Mention, Best Photograph — Hot Topic (Eucharistic Revival), for "Eucharistic Congress," taken by Leonardo Enrique Fonseca
- Honorable Mention, Best Photograph — Portrait, for "Bishop Pulido Selfie" (seen above), taken by Andy Hayt
- Honorable Mention, Best Story and Photo Package — By Two Individuals or More, for "Catholic Students' Joy of Learning Takes Center Stage," by Assistant Editor Denis Grasska and Photographer David Maung
- Honorable Mention, Best Photograph — Spot News, for "I Do!" taken by John Gastaldo

The SPJ's journalism awards, which recognized the work of journalists in San Diego and Tijuana during the 2024 calendar year, were presented June 26 during an awards banquet in Mission Valley.

Competing in the non-daily newspaper division, Assistant Editor Denis Grasska received second place in the Education category for "We're grateful to have a place to call home," an article that appeared in the March 2024 print edition.

The winning article reported on how St. John of the Cross School in Lemon Grove, which had to evacuate after its campus flooded on a day of record rainfall in the county, found a temporary home on the campus of St. Michael Academy, a school that had closed three years earlier.

Retrouvaille Offers Hope for Troubled Marriages

Not willing to let go of your marriage? Many couples continue to struggle, but are not willing to give up on each other.

There is hope.

Retrouvaille is a program designed to help struggling marriages regain their health. It assists a husband and a wife to 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 more information, visit *helpourmarriage-sandiego.org*. Register at (951) 259-9474 or *6016r@helpourmarriage.org*.

ISP Retreats Help Recovery from Homelessness, Addiction

The Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP) invites those recovering from homelessness and addiction to experience God's unconditional love.

The organization's programs are designed for men and women in substance use recovery who desire to deepen their spirituality and are open to sharing their story.

ISP does not proselytize, and people of all (or no) faith traditions are welcome.

Guided by the wisdom of Ignatian spirituality and interwoven with traditional 12-Step approaches, ISP retreat programs offer individuals recovering from homelessness and addiction a chance to take time away to reflect on and deepen their relationship with God, to identify the places inside that need healing, and to bond with others.

For information, visit *ispretreats.org*.


ADOBESTOCK

Biến Đổi Tâm Hồn Trong Năm Thánh “Những Người Lữ Hành Của Hy Vọng”

The Southern Cross

We published the statement in English and Spanish from the bishops in California against racism in the July issue. It's published here in Vietnamese.

Phù hợp với chủ đề của Năm Thánh được tuyên bố bởi Đức cố Giáo Hoàng Phanxicô của chúng ta, “Những Người Lữ Hành Của Hy Vọng”, chúng tôi viết những lời này để khích lệ tất cả chúng ta tiếp tục tiến bước như những người mang hy vọng nhằm xóa bỏ sự kỳ thị chủng tộc trong trí óc và trái tim của con người và các nền văn hóa ngày nay.

Vì hy vọng là biết và tin rằng Thiên Chúa hiện diện ngay cả giữa những cuộc đấu tranh, thử thách và đau khổ, chúng tôi tin tưởng rằng công việc của chúng ta sẽ sinh hoa kết quả khi chúng ta tập trung tư tưởng vào Chúa Giêsu Kitô.

Sự kỳ thị chủng tộc, theo văn bản “Mở Rộng Tâm Hồn Chúng Ta” từ Hội Đồng Giám Mục Công Giáo Hoa Kỳ, “phát sinh khi – dù có ý thức hay vô thức – một người cho rằng chủng tộc hoặc sắc tộc của mình là vượt trội, và do đó đánh giá những người thuộc chủng tộc hoặc sắc tộc khác là kém hơn và không xứng đáng được tôn trọng trong sự bình đẳng. Khi niềm tin hoặc thái độ này dẫn đến việc những cá nhân hoặc các nhóm loại trừ, chế nhạo, ngược đãi hoặc phân biệt đối xử một cách bất công với những người khác dựa trên chủng tộc hoặc sắc tộc của họ, thì đó là tội lỗi. Những hành động kỳ thị chủng tộc là tội lỗi vì chúng vi phạm công lý. Chúng biểu lộ sự thất bại trong việc thừa nhận nhân phẩm của những người bị xúc phạm, để nhận ra họ như những tha nhân mà Chúa Kitô kêu gọi chúng ta yêu thương (Mt 22:39).”

Với điều này trong tâm trí, chúng tôi khích lệ tất cả chúng ta hãy hiệp thông với nhau khi chúng ta đồng hành cùng Chúa Kitô, Ngài là hy vọng và người bạn đồng hành của chúng ta, để đảm bảo công việc chống lại sự kỳ thị chủng tộc sẽ hiệu quả và đầy đủ nguồn lực. Như Thánh Vịnh nhắc nhở chúng ta, “Thật tốt đẹp và vui vẻ biết bao khi anh em sống chung với nhau như một” (Tv 133:1). Nhưng sống chung thôi chưa đủ. Chúng ta còn được kêu gọi sống và làm việc cùng nhau như một, dù có những khác biệt. Mỗi năm vào Lễ Chúa Thánh Thần Hiện Xuống, chúng ta nghe những lời này từ Công Vụ Tông Đồ 2:9-10: “chúng tôi là người Parthia, Mêđia và Êlam, dân cư Mesopotamia, Giuđê và Cappadocia, Pontus và Asia, Phrygia và Pamphylia. Ai Cập và các vùng Libya gần Cyrene, cũng như du khách từ Rôma.” Dù có những khác biệt này, nhiều cá nhân sống ở Giêrusalem vào thế kỷ thứ nhất đã nghe Tin Mừng về Chúa Giêsu được các tông đồ công bố sau khi Ngài sống lại, nhờ công việc của Chúa Thánh Thần. Thánh Thần tạo nên sự hiệp nhất trong tình yêu và hòa bình.

Lời kêu gọi hiệp nhất hiện diện trong khẩu hiệu giám mục của Đức tân Giáo Hoàng Leo XIV, In Illo Uno Unum (“Trong Đấng duy nhất, chúng ta là một”), và gần gũi với trái tim của ngài. Từ Ban Công của Vương Cung Thánh Đường Thánh Phêrô, khi ngài chào đám đông lần đầu tiên với tư cách là Đức Giáo Hoàng Leo XIV, ngài nói: “Hiệp nhất và tay trong tay với Thiên Chúa, chúng ta hãy cùng nhau tiến bước.” Chúng tôi nhận ra sự kỳ thị chủng tộc vẫn còn ăn sâu trong xã hội của chúng ta ngày nay. Chúng ta cần tiếp tục nêu lên nhận thức về chúng ta là ai như Thiên Chúa đã tạo dựng chúng ta. Là con người, tất cả chúng ta đều có chung một nguồn gốc. Chúng ta được tạo dựng theo hình ảnh giống Thiên Chúa. Chúng ta có nhân phẩm và giá trị trong mắt Thiên Chúa. Khi chúng ta bỏ qua sự thật sâu sắc này, chúng ta phải đối diện với hậu quả của sự thành kiến, sợ hãi lẫn nhau, và thù ghét. Lịch sử và hậu quả để lại của sự kỳ thị chủng tộc tiếp tục làm tổn thương người Mỹ gốc Phi châu, người Mỹ Bản Địa, người gốc Tây Ban Nha/Châu Mỹ Latinh và nhiều cộng đồng văn hóa khác, làm suy yếu và phá hủy đời sống con người.

Con đường biến đổi là con đường hoán cải, cả tâm hồn và trí óc. Sự hoán cải này sẽ thúc đẩy chúng ta thay đổi, cải cách cuộc sống của chúng ta, cải cách các thể chế của chúng ta. Trong Năm Hy Vọng này, chúng ta cần nghiêm túc xem xét thế nào mà sự kỳ thị chủng tộc đã ngăn cản chúng ta trở nên Thân Thể Chúa Kitô cách trọn vẹn hơn mà chúng ta khao khát muốn trở thành. Không phải mỗi hành động chúng ta thực hiện đều hoàn hảo, cũng không nên chờ đợi để tìm giải pháp hoàn hảo. Điều quan trọng là hành động – với tư cách cá nhân, với tư cách Giáo Hội và với tư cách xã hội.

Chúng ta cần bắt đầu bằng việc lắng nghe từ trái tim và đối thoại để hướng dẫn hành động của chúng ta. Như Đức Giáo Hoàng Phanxicô nêu trong thông điệp ‘Người Đã Yêu Thương Chúng Ta (Dilexit Nos), trái tim là trung tâm của mong muốn và là nơi để quyết định được hình thành (tr. 1). Sau đó, sự biến đổi trái tim bắt đầu bén rễ trong cuộc sống của chúng ta vì “Thánh tâm Chúa Kitô đang sống với hành động của Chúa Thánh Thần” (tr. 17). Từ Thông Điệp ‘Hỡi Tất Cả Anh Em’ (Fratelli Tutti) của Ngài, Đức Giáo Hoàng Phanxicô nói: “Khả năng ngồi xuống và nghe người khác, trong các cuộc gặp gỡ giữa người với người, là điển hình của thái độ đón nhận thể hiện bởi những người vượt qua lòng tự ái và chấp nhận những người khác, chăm sóc họ và đón nhận họ vào cuộc sống của mình” (tr. 39). Nếu chúng ta thực hiện một cam kết chân thành để loại bỏ sự kỳ thị chủng tộc – trong tim, trong trí óc và trong hành động của chúng ta, nhờ vào sự hướng dẫn của Chúa Thánh Thần, thì đây là một tình yêu được biến đổi trong sự hoán cải, neo chặt hy vọng của chúng ta vào Chúa Giêsu Kitô.

Là môn đệ của Chúa Giêsu Kitô, chúng ta cam kết với sứ mệnh của Chúa trong việc truyền bá Tin Mừng và xây dựng Triều Đại Thiên Chúa qua việc thờ phượng hàng ngày, rao giảng Tin Mừng và các hoạt động từ thiện dành cho những người cần giúp đỡ. Chúng ta phấn đấu để được biến đổi trong Thánh Thần của Chúa Kitô để trở thành sự hiện diện hiệp nhất và chữa lành trong một thế giới bị đổ vỡ. Chúng ta mong chờ chia sẻ Tin Mừng về tình yêu của Thiên Chúa trong lòng thương xót, khiêm nhường và vâng phục, mong đợi trong vui mừng một thế giới tốt đẹp hơn. Như Đức Giáo Hoàng Leo XIV nói, Thiên Chúa “yêu thương tất cả chúng ta vô điều kiện.”

Cam kết loại bỏ sự kỳ thị chủng tộc là phấn đấu cho sự biến đổi trái tim mỗi ngày; phấn đấu để thấy mọi người là thánh thiêng và là con cái Thiên Chúa; để tìm điểm chung, học hỏi thêm về các nền văn hóa khác, đặc biệt là những văn hóa hiện diện trong cộng đoàn địa phương và giáo xứ; để tham gia vào các nhóm đa văn hóa; để tham gia đào tạo chống thành kiến nơi sở làm và áp dụng nó vào cuộc sống hàng ngày, để tiếp cận và chào đón những người mới và những khu xóm mới. Hãy dạy con cái chúng ta rằng đức tin của chúng ta kêu gọi mọi người yêu thương tha nhân và rằng mọi người đều có phẩm giá, bất kể màu da hoặc nơi xuất xứ, và để những niềm tin đó là khuôn mẫu khi tương tác với những người khác trong môi trường xung quanh.

Cuối cùng, “Hoán cải là một con đường dài cho mỗi cá nhân. Đưa quốc gia chúng ta đến việc thực hiện đầy đủ giao ước về tự do, bình đẳng và công lý cho tất cả là một thử thách khó khăn hơn. Tuy nhiên, trong Chúa Kitô, chúng ta có thể tìm thấy sức mạnh và ân sủng cần thiết để thực hiện cuộc hành trình đó” (trích trong Mở Rộng Tâm Hồn Chúng Ta, Hội Đồng Giám Mục Công Giáo Hoa Kỳ, 2018). Như Đức Giáo Hoàng Phanxicô nói với chúng ta, “Hy vọng không làm thất vọng.”

Angelica's Story: Starting Over

For women who are unhoused across San Diego and Imperial County, Catholic Charities' Rachel's Program is a beacon of light and a promise of rebirth.

For over 40 years, the program has served women with in-depth case management, housing assistance, recovery programming, and warm compassion. For women like Angelica, Rachel's Program's care was the difference between life and death:
The apartment, with its dried flowers and bible verses, was a stark contrast to the words the woman spoke. "If I hadn't come to Rachel's Promise, I would be dead."

Angelica began her life in Northern California, born into the care of an abusive father who exposed her to alcohol and drugs throughout her childhood. By the time she turned eighteen, she had fallen into circles of dangerous gangs, dealers, and criminals. She was addicted to hard drugs and alcohol, mindlessly surviving each day. Looking back, she says there was no thought behind each action she made. "When you are on drugs," Angelica said, "You don't really think...you don't know what is going to happen to you, so you have to have thick skin."

She did not dream of her future, too trapped in an endless cycle. Motivation to quit and become clean was constantly undermined by another reason to keep using. Desperation brought on by addiction and financial strain from being robbed sent Angelica into a mindset of revenge and anger. There wouldn't be another chance if she did not get out now.

A one-way ticket to San Diego inspired a move that would change her trajectory. There was no looking back; she spent the journey praying that she would find the support she needed and could build her life anew.

With no friends or family, her first few nights in San Diego were spent in an abandoned RV. Blessed timing, a bed opened up at Catholic Charities' Rachel's Promise: one of three interconnected services helping women who are unhoused under Rachel's Program.

A shower, new clothes, and a bed of her own, Angelica hoped this would be the fresh start she had always worked so hard to find.

Rachel's Program offered a supportive community; with the services she needed to rebuild her life. Accountability helped her, and the other women she lived with to continue to stay sober. For Angelica, promises for her future were far better than memories of her past. "I don't look back," she spoke candidly, "... my family don't ever want me to go back...they come out here to visit me."

Recovery was never going to be simple. But the team at Rachel's Program gave Angelica her confidence back and reminded her just how much she could still give to the world.

Overcoming all she had been through, Angelica graduated from the McAllister Institute and, with the help of Catholic Charities, has moved into her own housing. She shares her story unapologetically with groups across San Diego, proud of herself and her journey, endlessly grateful to the team that helped her along the way.

Catholic Charities did not just save her life; it offered her a future.

According to the 2023 SAMHSA report on Substance Use, with treatment and support, 73% of those suffering from substance dependencies can recover; however, communities who are unhoused lack access to these services, which enables addiction and feeds into chronic homelessness. Catholic Charities' services for those who are unhoused provide support, community, compassion, and high-level medical care to individuals wherever they may be in their journey.

Angelica regularly returns to Rachel's Promise to connect with and support other women who are navigating similar challenges.

The hardest step of recovery for a person battling addiction is knowing that it is time to find help. Wherever an individual who is unhoused may be in their recovery journey, Catholic Charities is there to meet them where they are.

To people wanting to support Catholic Charities, Angelica says, "...they are donating to a good cause. We need shelters, especially in San Diego. For people who are homeless, or in domestic abuse, or from another country, we need it...A safe place."

Turn dreams into reality; Every donation to Catholic Charities helps someone take their first step toward a life of new beginnings. Donate today using the envelope included or by visiting ccdsd.org.