

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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Pages 3-4

CHARLIE NEUMAN

**JOURNEY OF FAITH:** Significantly more people are preparing to enter the Catholic Church across the San Diego Diocese compared to last year. At Mission San Luis Rey Parish, candidates and catechumens attended a Sunday Mass on Feb. 8 as part of their preparation. The diocese will welcome more than 1,800 of their counterparts from parishes across the region at the Rite of Election on March 1.



## Classical Concert

Parish choir to perform Mozart's "Requiem" on Palm Sunday. **Page 6**



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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.



**JOYOUS:** Bishop Ramón Bejarano displays the apostolic mandate from Pope Leo XIV that names him bishop of Monterey during his installation Mass on Feb. 19. A group of cardinals and bishops, including Bishop Michael Pham and Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido, attended the liturgy.

# Bishop Installed in Monterey

By Aida Bustos



**SEASIDE —**  
“I come to you as I am, a brother and a servant, with gifts and many imperfections.”

That is how Bishop Ramón Bejarano introduced himself during the joyous Mass where he was installed as the sixth bishop of Monterey on Feb. 19.

Bishops, clergy, religious and faithful packed into a ballroom at the Embassy Suites hotel where the Mass was celebrated. The bishop's mother, María Elena Silva Bejarano, had traveled from Odessa, Texas, along with family members.

Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the pope's representative in the United States, presented Bishop Bejarano with the apostolic mandate naming him bishop.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, of the Archdiocese of Washington, attended the Mass, as did Bishop Michael Pham and Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido, of the Diocese of San Diego.

“I thank Pope Leo for entrusting me to this Local Church,” Bishop Bejarano said during his homily, then outlined his priorities for the diocese that he will lead.

“My deepest desire is that every person in this diocese may encounter the Risen Christ,” he said.

Bishop Bejarano, 56, served as auxiliary bishop in San Diego for five and a half years before Pope Leo named him to lead the Diocese of Monterey last December.

The diocese serves approximately 200,000 Catholics through 46 parishes and 18 schools and includes seven of California's 21 historic Franciscan missions.



**EUCHARIST:** Bishop Bejarano distributes Communion to his mother, Maria Elena Silva Bejarano, during his installation Mass.



**REUNITED:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy attended the installation Mass for Bishop Bejarano.



## ‘Something True, Rooted and Consistent’

**REFLECTION:** Lissa Hutcheson leads an OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) class after Mass on Feb. 8 at Mission San Diego de Alcalá. Below, a participant in the OCIA process, Aiden Morgan Paterson, participated in the Mass; he is one of 600 catechumens across the diocese who will receive their First Holy Communion and be confirmed at their parishes during the upcoming Easter Vigil.

By Denis Grasska



Aiden Morgan Paterson feels as if he is “approaching the end of one journey and the beginning of a new and more fruitful one.”

Paterson, 24, is currently enrolled in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) process at Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá Parish.

He is one of 600 catechumens across the diocese, who will be baptized, receive their First Holy Communion and be confirmed at their parishes during the upcoming Easter Vigil.

Meanwhile, some 1,246 candidates, who are already baptized Christians, will be fully initiated into the Catholic Church, receiving the sacrament of confirmation and, if they haven’t already done so, their First Holy Communion this Easter.

“This year, I have seen a significant increase in the number of people entering the faith,” said Leticia Trent, director of the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry. “I have seen parishes double the number of catechumens from last year.”

Last year, there were 433 catechumens and 1,020 candidates across San Diego and Imperial counties.

“It is very inspiring to see that our diocese is blessed to welcome a growing number of people seeking Christ,” Trent said.

At the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, all of the diocese’s catechumens and candidates



will be presented to the bishop and be declared ready for the sacraments of initiation.

This year, that liturgy will be held March 1 in the Jenny Craig Pavilion at the University of San Diego. A total of 75 parishes will be represented, with attendance expected to be around 4,900 — a number that includes the catechumens and their godparents, candidates and their sponsors, parish OCIA team members, and a limited number of ticketed guests.

“The Rite of Election serves as a beautiful reminder of our unity,” said Trent. “To see 5,000 individuals come together in one Spirit is a testament to the enduring strength of our mission. This gathering is a visible sign of a Church that is both growing and intensely alive.”

As in past years, that growth has come from catechumens who have walked diverse paths to find a spiritual home in the Catholic Church.

Larry Jimenez Montellano is one of the catechists for the English-language OCIA class at Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside.

“For whatever reason,” he said, “these catechumens did not have the traditional Catholic initiation at a young age. ... But now, as adults, they feel something is missing.”

“Each year, we are inspired by their stories of what led them here to Mission San Luis Rey Parish,” he said. “The payoff for us catechists is walking with them through this journey. What a blessing and privilege to see them grow in their faith.”

The parish currently has 13 cat-

echumens and 21 candidates in its English-language OCIA program and another three catechumens and seven candidates in the Spanish-language classes.

Jimenez said that this year’s catechumens and candidates are a “diverse group of individuals” that includes both military and civilian, men and women in about equal numbers, and various ethnicities and marital statuses. They range in age from 18 to 60.

“We have some that have never opened/touched a Bible, yet own one,” he said, “some that attend Mass regularly and some (that) never have.”

“The real reason why they are here is out of love,” said Jimenez. “God is love, and his love is a strong force that draws all to him.”

Paterson, who is a catechumen at Mission San Diego, wasn’t “exposed to religious thought, practice or instruction of any kind” during his formative years. As a result, he was left “to construct my understanding of the world solely through my own reasoning.”

“Having been raised in a secular environment,” he said, “my exposure to Christianity was limited largely to its most simplified and stereotypical representations, which were often treated casually or dismissed altogether by those around me.”

A close friend during his college years introduced him to “a small but meaningful idea of faith.” He credits that initial introduction with prompting him “to begin studying and reflecting more deeply on matters of faith and truth” after graduating and

**Growth** *Continued on Page 4*



**JOURNEY:** Adult participants in the OCIA process head to a session after a Sunday Mass on Feb. 8 at the Parish Church at Mission San Luis Rey, where they reflect on the day's readings. The parish nearly doubled the number of catechumens it's preparing to enter the Catholic Church this year.

## Growth *Continued from Page 3*

moving out on his own.

From among the various Christian traditions, Paterson said he was drawn to Catholicism “by its historical foundation, theological credibility, and the living authority of Christ passed down through the Apostles and continued today through the Catholic priesthood.”

Paterson said the OCIA experience has been “profoundly enriching, providing not only a sense of new community and family, but also new ideas and practical ways to live out the faith.”

“I am now prepared to enter this next stage of life, carrying with me newly acquired tools, deeper understanding and, most importantly, a growing relationship with Christ,” he said. “I look forward with great anticipation to receiving the Eucharist, a sacrament that I find myself reflecting on daily.”

Lee Sherwood, 72, a catechumen from The Immaculata Parish, located on the USD campus, was raised in the Presbyterian Church, but he married a Catholic. The couple raised their children in the faith and sent them to Catholic schools.

“I finally decided it was my turn and took the step to truly become Catholic,” said Sherwood, who said it was a step that he had wanted to take for “so many years.”

He credits his OCIA classes with providing him with “a better understanding” of Catholicism, its teachings and traditions.

What does it mean to him to be on the cusp of becoming Catholic?

“It makes me smile and, of course, wonder why I waited so long,” said Sherwood, who looks forward to “receiving the sacraments in front of my family,” especially his two grandchildren who have preceded him in being



baptized.

Larissa Castro, also a catechumen from The Immaculata Parish, grew up as an atheist. As an adult, she converted to Mormonism but began to feel “alienated and disappointed” there and ultimately stopped attending religious services.

The 32-year-old said that her interest in Catholicism came after meeting her husband.

“He never pressured me to convert or otherwise delve deeper into the faith; that was a choice I made by myself,” she said. “It’s taken me two and a half years to get to the point of baptism and confirmation, but it’s been a beautiful journey of self-discovery and growing deeper in faith. I would not change it for anything.”

She expressed anticipation for being cleansed from Original Sin through baptism and for receiving Communion for the first time.

She added, “I look forward to being a part of the community that constantly looks for a way to heal the world and make it a little less broken through the light of Jesus.”

Quinn Fogel, 34, is a catechumen at Mission San Diego.

His father was Catholic and his mother was Protestant, he said, but the family didn’t attend either Mass or worship services during his youth. His “main exposure to Christianity” came from his grandparents, who sent him to Vacation Bible School during his summer visits.

In his early 30s, Fogel started “thinking more seriously about God ... and what I believed.”

“That gradual search eventually led me to learn more about Christianity in a more intentional way, ask harder questions, and look for a faith that was both historically grounded and lived out in a real community,” he said. “Over time, that journey brought me to OCIA and to preparing to enter the Catholic Church.”

He said that he was attracted to Catholicism because of “how complete it felt — spiritually, intellectually and historically.”

“I wasn’t looking for something that was simply inspiring; I wanted something true, rooted and consistent,” he

said. “The more I learned about the early Church and the continuity of Catholic teaching through history, the more it made sense that the Catholic Church wasn’t just one option among many, but a living connection to the faith handed on from the beginning.”

Fogel said that he’s experiencing “a sense of peace” in the knowledge that he is “anchored in something bigger than myself.”

John Ledesma, a 29-year-old catechumen at Mission San Diego, was raised Lutheran but never baptized. His parents were both fallen-away Catholics.

“Religion was something that we practiced for an hour on Sunday and then wasn’t discussed for the next six days,” he said. “This led to me falling away from attending church, praying, or putting my trust into the hands of the Lord.”

In his mid-20s, a spiritual search led to his reading “a myriad of religious texts, trying to find something that would rekindle the faith candle that once burned within me.” He started listening to daily Bible readings and then “supplementing” that by attending Mass.

At first, it was geographical proximity that led him to the Catholic Church. Immaculate Conception Parish in Old Town was simply the Christian church nearest to his home. But he found the Mass to be “a one-hour communication with God, a one-hour session of presence with the Holy Trinity.”

“Finding my true spiritual home means everything to me,” said Ledesma. “Once I took the mud from my eyes and responded to the calling of God, life has such clarity to it.”

“The sacraments of initiation are not the end goal,” he said. “They are the beginning of the next stage in my journey.”

# Day of Fun Puts Student Brains to the Test

By Denis Grasska



Who's it going to be?

Thirty-six teams from local Catholic schools will compete in the 2026 Catholic Academic Junior High Decathlon on Saturday, March 7. The event will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. Augustine High School.

The first-place team will represent the diocese at the national level of the competition, which will be held virtually on Friday, March 20.

Last year, St. Michael's School in Poway won at the diocesan level and went on to rank fourth-place overall nationally.

Elizabeth Kramer, associate superintendent of the Diocese of San Diego's Catholic schools and a decathlon regional coordinator, said that 21 regional decathlon events will be held throughout the country on March 7. Since these events typically attract between 12 and 15 teams, she said, San Diego's will be the largest.

She said that the decathlon is an event for students to showcase their intelligence in an academic competition with 10 subjects. They train virtually the entire school year for this day, meeting after school.

"It's just a fun and exciting day



**EXCITING:** Students prepare for months for the Catholic Academic Junior High Decathlon, a fast-paced competition that tests their knowledge in 10 subjects.

for students to collaborate as a team, using their God-given gifts and abilities to showcase their intelligence," she added.

There's the Logic Quiz, where the 10 students on each team have one hour to collaborate in solving 20 challenging logic puzzles.

There are also eight individual subject tests — Current Events, English, Fine Arts, Literature, Math, Religion, Science and Social Studies — for which one member of each

participating team takes a 50-minute multiple-choice test.

First-place winners in the individual subject tests also go on to compete at the national level.

The Super Quiz, another team event, consists of 50 multiple-choice questions about Fine Arts, Literature, Religion, Science and Social Studies. Other than the opening prayer, this is the only part of the event that is open for the public to view.

The event has the joy of a sports

competition, with many families turning out to support their students with banners and noisemakers.

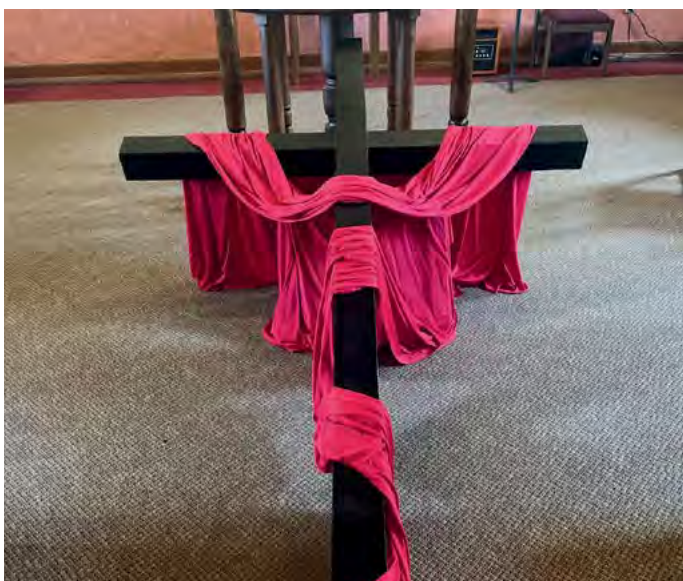
At the conclusion of the decathlon, the scores are tabulated and the winners are announced.

Kramer said the diocesan-level competition introduced an optional service component last year. Two teams opted to organize a service project last year, she said, and she hopes to see even more do so this time.

Coaches will submit a written explanation — and photos — of their team's service project prior to the March 7 event. Teams will be recognized for their service during the awards ceremony that concludes the event, as well as in a newsletter that will be sent out the following week by the diocesan Office for Schools.

"Engaging in a service project as an Academic Decathlon team fosters meaningful connection among team members while putting faith into action," said Kramer. "Students have the opportunity to learn and engage with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to serve the broader community."

Learn more at [catholicajhd.org](http://catholicajhd.org).  
For questions, email [ekramer@sdccatholic.org](mailto:ekramer@sdccatholic.org).

## THE SACRED THREE DAYS TRIDUUM RETREAT

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# Parish to Perform Mozart's Grand 'Requiem'

## The Southern Cross



With its upcoming performance of Mozart's

"Requiem," the St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish Choir is undertaking its biggest concert of the decade.

The free, one-hour event will be held at 3 p.m. on Palm Sunday, March 29, inside the church and will be followed by a reception.

The parish choir has offered annual Palm Sunday concerts since 2008, except for a three-year hiatus that began with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Catherine Marshall, the parish's director of music and the concert's conductor, reflected on the "Requiem" and how it can help concert-goers to enter into the spirit of Holy Week.

**The Southern Cross: What should readers know about this work?**

**Catherine Marshall:** Mozart's "Requiem" is famous for both its story and its intimate, deep and sublime spirit. Mozart was commissioned to write the Requiem Mass in the summer of 1791, but, by that November, the composer was bedridden with a serious illness. By the time of his death the following month, Mozart had finished the Introit, vocal parts and continuo for the Kyrie, Sequence, and Offertory, only completing eight measures of his famous "Lacrimosa." Mozart's wife, Constanze, had one of his students, Franz Xaver Süssmayr



**BIGGER THAN EVER:** Catherine Marshall, seen conducting last year's Palm Sunday concert, will lead an ensemble of about 70 musicians — one of the largest orchestral forces that her parish has ever assembled — for a performance of Mozart's "Requiem" on March 29.

(1766-1803), complete the work after his death.

**How is this a spiritual and explicitly Catholic work?**

The Requiem Mass is seen as one of the most "beautiful and expressive in the Roman Missal." This Catholic Mass for the souls of the faithful departed has attracted composers for centuries, inspiring some of the greatest choral music ever written.

The Requiem, meaning "rest" in Latin, is a Mass made up of an Introit, Kyrie, Gradual, Tract, Sequence, Offertory, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, Communion, Responsory and Antiphon. The texts of the Requiem meditate on the Final Judgment and our hope for salvation, depicting the day of wrath, trembling at the Final Judgment, and pleading for the mercy of Jesus. The texts take us through the prayers of liberation for the depart-

ed, asking for deliverance from the lion's mouth, and offering sacrifices of prayers and praise on behalf of the souls we commemorate.

**How challenging is it to perform this work?**

This work presents several challenges to a church choir. First, there are a lot of notes. Mozart writes "melismas" for the singers, where one syllable of a word is elongated over several changing pitches. For example, when the altos sing the syllable "le" of "Eleison" at the beginning of the Kyrie, they sing 27 notes on just one syllable. These melismatic passages are challenging technically, especially at the fast tempo required. They span the full range of each voice type, requiring each singer to be in their best "vocal shape" and well warmed-up.

Second, Mozart writes complex and masterful fugues. A fugue is where

one or two musical themes are sung by multiple sections of the choir, each with independent, imitative entrances, rather than all at the same time. Each voice is singing something important, different from all the other sections.

By the end of our rehearsals, our singers are physically and mentally maxed out, but very gratified.

**How can this concert help concert-goers to prepare spiritually for the Paschal Triduum?**

This work gives us a chance to appreciate what has become a celebrated piece of art and history. Music, which can serve as a vestment to the Church's texts, gives us a way to experience, through our senses, the dignity and power of our Universal Church and Christ's redeeming suffering that we contemplate during Holy Week. There is a serious, dignified and mysterious quality to Mozart's "Requiem." When we allow our senses to take in this powerful "vestment" of our Church's ancient texts, we can come to find deeper connection to our own humanity, and our need for Jesus' passion, death and resurrection.

**What do you hope the faithful will take away from this performance?**

Our Church's history of sacred music can often be seen as something of the past rather than something that can continue to impact our faith today. Sacred music sanctifies us and points us to the glory of God. I hope that each person in attendance is able to have a deeper encounter with God through sacred music.



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**HOLDING PATTERN:** Couples from across the region celebrated their marriage and renewed their vows at the Diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass on Feb. 14 at the Church of the Resurrection in Escondido.



**BLESSING:** Couples waited in a long line to be blessed by Bishop Michael Pham after Mass.



**PHOTO OP:** Couples joyfully took photos noting the number of years they had been married, before and after the Mass.

## Celebration of Marriage and Lasting Love

The Southern Cross



ESCONDIDO — Long before the Diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass was to begin, couples of all ages and cultures began arriving at the Church of the Resurrection.

At a photo station decorated with red hearts, they lined up to take a photo they could customize with the number of years they had been married.

More than 1,000 people attended the sixth annual Mass, held on Valentine’s Day, celebrated by Bishop Michael Pham. In his homily, he shared “the three Cs” needed to nurture a lasting marriage: communication, commitment and community.

At one point, the couples stood as the corresponding number of years they had been married was announced: newlyweds to 10 years, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and beyond.

At another moment, the couples looked into each other’s eyes and renewed their wedding vows, their words of love in English, Spanish and Vietnamese echoing across the packed rows.

See photo gallery at [southerncross.org/2026marriage](https://southerncross.org/2026marriage).





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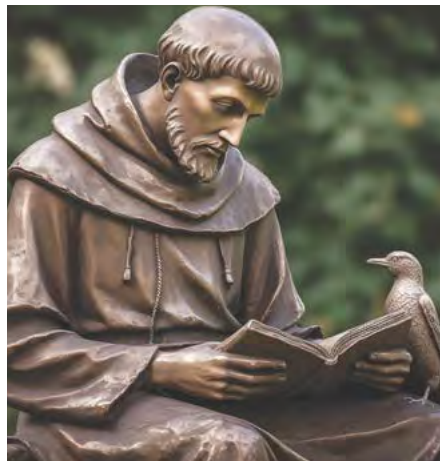
## Pilgrim Churches Named for 'Year of St. Francis'

The Southern Cross



Eight churches in the Diocese of San Diego

have been named by Bishop Michael Pham as pilgrimage sites for the "Year of St. Francis."



Pope Leo XIV has declared a "Year of St. Francis" from Jan. 10, 2026, to Jan. 10, 2027, to celebrate the eighth centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi.

A special plenary indulgence "under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father)" is available to those who make a pilgrimage during the Year of St. Francis to any Franciscan conventual church or place of worship associated with him and follow the Jubilee rites or spend suitable time in prayer to God for an increase of Christian charity and peace, concluding with the Our Father, the Creed and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare and all the saints of the Franciscan Family.

Bishop Pham has designated the following churches as the pilgrimage sites in the San Diego Diocese: Immaculate Conception Parish, Old Town; Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá; St. Francis Chapel at Mission San Diego de Alcalá; Old Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside; San Luis Rey Parish, Oceanside; St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Imperial; St. Didacus Parish, San Diego; and St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Vista.

The elderly, sick and homebound also will be able to obtain the plenary indulgence by spiritually joining the Jubilee celebrations and offering their prayers, pains or sufferings to God.

## Trinitarians of Mary No Longer Religious Order

As previously announced by the Diocese in 2022, at the conclusion of a three-year visitation, the Apostolic See (specifically the then-Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) by means of a Decree dated 13 May 2022 and approved *in forma specifica* by Pope Francis, suppressed the religious institute formerly known as the Trinitarians of Mary. With this suppression, the former members of the Trinitarians were automatically dispensed from their vows and are no longer permitted to present themselves as religious. There is no right of appeal, and the Trinitarians have ceased to exist as a religious institute recognized by the Catholic Church.

### 21st Annual Good Friday

## Pro-Life Stations of the Cross

### April 3, 2025

**12:00-1:15 p.m.**

**Sidewalk of St. Joseph Cathedral**  
4th St. & Beech, Downtown S.D.



Most Rev. Felipe Pulido  
Aux. Bishop



- Accompany Jesus to Calvary
- Reflect on the Sanctity of Life
- English & Spanish
- Arrive by 11:45 a.m.
- Wear comfortable shoes
- Bring your own signs
- Park at St. Joseph Cathedral
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By Denis Grasska



Bishop Michael Pham rallied the crowd with what he called “a simple and powerful truth.”

“Life, from the womb to the tomb, is a precious gift,” he said, passionately defending the sanctity of human life as one of the speakers at the 14th annual San Diego Walk for Life.

The largest pro-life gathering in San Diego County, it was held Jan. 24 at Waterfront Park in downtown San Diego. For Bishop Pham, who has led the Diocese of San Diego since last summer, this was his first time speaking at the event.

The theme, taken from Jeremiah 1:5, was “Known, Created, and Loved in the Womb.”

An estimated 2,100 people, both Catholic and Protestant, attended the walk. They listened to a line-up of speakers, including a keynote presentation from Catholic singer-songwriter Kairy Marquez; visited exhibitor booths; and, with many of them carrying pro-life signs and banners, gave public witness as they walked a half-mile loop around Waterfront Park.

Among those participants were Avery Kessler, of Queen of Angels Parish in Alpine, and Rebecca Cummings, of Santa Sophia Parish in Spring Valley, each of whom spoke to *The Southern Cross* with children in tow, and Riley Wallevand, a freshman at John Paul the Great Catholic University in Escondido, who was among a group of students from the school.

### ‘Proclaiming a Truth’

“When we speak of respect for life, we are not talking about a slogan or a political position,” Bishop Pham said in his remarks. “We are proclaiming a truth at the very heart of our faith.”

Human life is sacred because “each person is created in the image and likeness of God,” he continued. “Birth and death are the two great markers of every human life; between them



**PRAYERFUL PRESENCE:** Participants in the 14th annual San Diego Walk for Life prayed for an end to abortion and for respect for the sanctity of human life.

lies a sacred journey, one that no one else has the right to erase, discard or diminish.”

The bishop said that human life is “so valuable that God’s only Son became one of us” and, through his life, death and resurrection, we are all “invited into God’s kingdom.”

“Each life has been given the highest

dignity and called to the highest destiny: everlasting life with God,” he said. “Our lives come from God, and our lives are destined for God.”

Bishop Pham said that respecting life “means more than opposing abortion or euthanasia,” although he acknowledged that those two issues are “central moral concerns.” He said that

it also means “recognizing and confronting (everything) that threatens human dignity,” such as war, homelessness, discrimination and addiction.

“When life is treated as disposable at any stage,” he said, “it becomes easier to treat all life as expendable.”

**Life** Continued on Page 11



**ON THE MOVE:** From left, Bishop Michael Pham and auxiliary bishops Ramón Bejarano and Felipe Pulido led the prayerful walk in a loop around Waterfront Park.



**SAY CHEESE!:** Young participants in the Walk for Life capture the moment with a selfie.



Walk for life on Jan. 24 at Waterfront Park in downtown San Diego.

### Life *Continued from Page 10*

Offering words of motivation for the crowd, Bishop Pham said, “Because of Christ, we are never a people without hope. We walk today, not in anger, but in hope. We trust, not in ourselves, but in God who makes all things new.”

### ‘A Passion for This Topic’

As the event got underway, and with her 4- and 5-year-olds in a stroller beside her, Avery Kessler explained what brought her out to the Walk for Life.

“I just have a passion for this topic,” said Kessler, 28, “and I truly believe life begins in the womb and that it’s

just a tragedy that a lot of people don’t really see that.”

She said that she was there “to add numbers to the walk” and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be around like-minded people.

Kessler, who aspires to be a social worker, feels that her pro-life views are “sort of an unpopular opinion” in her chosen field.

She shared that, during the week before the walk, she had an “in-depth conversation” about abortion with one of her fellow interns. Her views were met with “resistance,” she said, and the conversation was “kind of uncomfortable.”

“But it’s cool ... to start having those conversations and building my voice,” she said.

Kessler said that one of her hopes for the pro-life movement is simply that it will be able to reach more people.

“I love Jesus so much, and I think that he’s the best thing ever,” she said, “but I think some people look at the pro-life cause and only see Catholicism or Christianity and might feel turned off.”

She hopes that these people might come to know that “there’s a place for them here, too.”



**BABIES WELCOME:** The youngest participants in the Walk for Life aren’t even able to walk yet.

### ‘Follow God’s Plan’

Riley Wallevand, an 18-year-old freshman from John Paul the Great Catholic University, attended the walk with his girlfriend, Audrey Juhasz, as well as fellow students.

“For me, (the pro-life cause is) an important issue,” said Wallevand, a member of his university’s pro-life club. “I think life should be protected. I think that the more people that exist, the more possible saints we have in Heaven. I want those souls to be with God, and I’m here to protect that life and give them the best opportunity to follow God’s plan.”

He said that he would like to see more abortion restrictions this year, especially with regard to the abortion pill, and greater support for all facets of life, including children in the foster care system and the elderly.

Juhasz said, “It’s absolutely insane how one-third of my generation isn’t alive (because of abortion), and I feel like that’s not something to just take lightly.”

She said that she hopes that more people will become aware that “there’s so many options” and “support systems” available for mothers in crisis pregnancies.

“You can give your baby up for adoption, if you can’t take care of it in the way you’d like to,” she said, giving an example of one of those options.

### ‘Huge Change of Heart’

Rebecca Cummings, a 39-year-old member of Santa Sophia Parish, grew up in a pro-choice family. Her mother had worked in abortion clinics, and she herself had once identified as pro-choice.

But today, she and her husband are solidly pro-life. They participated in this year’s walk with their 4-year-old son.

“We had a huge change of heart, especially as we decided to have a child ourselves,” she said, reflecting on their conversion. “Through that whole process, it became really clear (that) this is actually a human life.”

Cummings began “questioning the abortion rhetoric” about seven years ago and has considered herself pro-life for about five years now. She said that the Catholic Church’s strong pro-life stance played a “huge” part in the couple’s spiritual journey toward becoming Catholic.

As she pushed her stroller amidst a crowd of pro-life advocates holding signs, she said that the walk made her feel that she was “not alone.”

“Being able to realize there’s other people who are equally as passionate about this,” she said, “it gives me more courage and confidence to stand in the truth about life.”

For information, visit [sandiegowalkforlife.org](http://sandiegowalkforlife.org) or contact Maria Valencia at (858) 490-8323 or [mvalencia@sdcatholic.org](mailto:mvalencia@sdcatholic.org).

# Unpacking Faith: The Father We All Need

By Denis Grasska



The Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is celebrated on March 19.

## Who is St. Joseph?

St. Joseph was the “righteous man” chosen by God to be the spouse of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. He was a descendent of King David, and he made his livelihood as a carpenter.

## Where do we find him in the Bible?

We encounter St. Joseph in the first two chapters of Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels.

We know that he was still alive when Jesus was 12, because he is present in the account of the Finding in the Temple. But he never reappears in Scripture, leading many to speculate that he died before Jesus began his public ministry at age 30.

## How many words are attributed to him in Scripture?

St. Joseph certainly isn’t one of the Bible’s big talkers. In fact, the Gospels contain no recorded words of Jesus’ foster father.

## Where does he rank among the saints in Heaven?

Many believe that, with the exception of the Blessed Mother, who was uniquely conceived without Original Sin and never sinned during her lifetime, St. Joseph ranks highest in the Communion of Saints.

St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) said, “It is true that the other saints enjoy great power in Heaven, but they ask as servants, and do not command as masters. St. Joseph, to whose authority Jesus was subject on earth, obtains what he desires from his kingly foster Son in Heaven.”

He also said, “Some saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage with particular efficacy in cer-



tain needs, but not in others; but our holy patron St. Joseph has the power to assist us in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking.”

That sentiment was shared, among others, by St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), who put it this way: “To other saints, Our Lord seems to have given power to succor us in some special necessity — but to this glorious saint (Joseph), I know by experience, he has given the power to help us in all.”

## How long has St. Joseph’s name been among the saints referred to in the Eucharistic Prayers?

Pope St. John XXIII added him to Eucharistic Prayer I in 1962: “In communion with those whose memory we venerate, especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ, and blessed Joseph, her spouse ...”

In 2013, Pope Francis approved his addition to Eucharistic Prayers II, III and IV: “... with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her spouse ...”

## What groups and causes claim St. Joseph as a patron saint?

In addition to such obvious groups as fathers, families and workers, St. Joseph is also the patron of the Universal Church and the patron of a “happy death” — the former, because he once protected Jesus as his foster father and now intercedes for the Church; the latter because he is believed to have died with Jesus and Mary beside him, as we also should hope to do.


## How significant is the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Solemnities are the highest-ranking classification of feasts on the liturgical calendar.

When St. Joseph’s feast day fell on a Lenten Fri-

**Father** *Continued on Page 13*

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**Father** *Continued from Page 12*

day in 2021 (and as it will in 2027), the obligation to abstain from meat was dispensed. The celebratory nature of solemnities trumps the penitential nature of Fridays.

In Italian culture, St. Joseph's Day is an important cultural tradition. Families create a "St. Joseph's Table," with a panoply of food items surrounding a statue of the beloved saint. The tradition originated as an expression of gratitude to St. Joseph, whose intercession was credited with ending a drought in Sicily during the Middle Ages.

**Are there other feast days celebrated in St. Joseph's honor?**

Yes, since 1955, May 1 has been observed as the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, which highlights the dignity and sanctity of work, in contrast to the materialistic "May Day" celebrations held on that same day by Communists.

It's also worth mentioning the Feast of the Holy Family, which is celebrated on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Enough about "days" in honor of St. Joseph! How about "years"?**

Pope Francis proclaimed a special Year of St. Joseph that ran from Dec. 8, 2020, to Dec. 8, 2021.

**What churches and schools in San Diego are named after him?**

Local churches and schools named after St. Joseph include St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown San Diego, St. Joseph Parish in Holtville, St. Joseph Parish in Westmorland, and St. Joseph Academy, a K-12 school in San Marcos.

**Where can you read more about St. Joseph?**

Pope Francis penned an apostolic letter about him in 2020. It was titled "Patris Corde" ("With a Father's Heart") and, in it, the late pontiff formally proclaimed the Year of St. Joseph.



"Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father," written by Father Donald Calloway, MIC, and published that same year, also has many fans.

During an interview published in the January 2022 edition of *The Southern Cross*, Father Calloway said that, even after the Year of St. Joseph had ended, people should still turn to St. Joseph for assistance.

"In light of a lot of the anxieties in the world, the stress, and everything that's going on," he said, "we really need a loving father to comfort us, to give us hope, to give us peace."

**Young Adult Pilgrim Walk on March 28**

**The Southern Cross**

Catholics ages 18 to 39 are invited to participate in the annual Young Adult Lenten Pilgrim Walk.

The event, which in past years has attracted about 30 young adults, will be held on Saturday, March 28.

Participants will meet at noon at All Hallows Church in La Jolla, where they will park their cars, and then be taken by bus to Sacred Heart Parish in Ocean Beach. They will walk an approximately 8-mile route that will take them to St. Brigid Parish in Pacific Beach and then to All Hallows Parish.

The plan is to arrive All Hallows in time for confession at 4:30 and Mass at 5:30 p.m.

There will be the option to join up with the pilgrimage at St. Brigid's or, for families with small children, at a location about 1.5 miles from All Hallows Church.

The pilgrim walk is sponsored by the diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Maricruz Flores Strauss, the office's director, said that the Lenten Pilgrim Walk makes things easy by presenting the opportunity to go on pilgrimage "in your (own) backyard."

Evelyn Knuff, an office associate director, reflected on the spiritual benefits of participating in the walk.

"You get to shut off a lot of the distractions in life and enter into prayer and into meaningful conversation or just (allow) silence in, which we don't get many opportunities for," she said.

"Anyone can go on a walk by yourself and find that refreshing," she said, "but the sense of community that comes with walking together ... is really valuable."

**Information: Visit [sdcatholic.org/youngadult](http://sdcatholic.org/youngadult) or call (858) 490-8260.**

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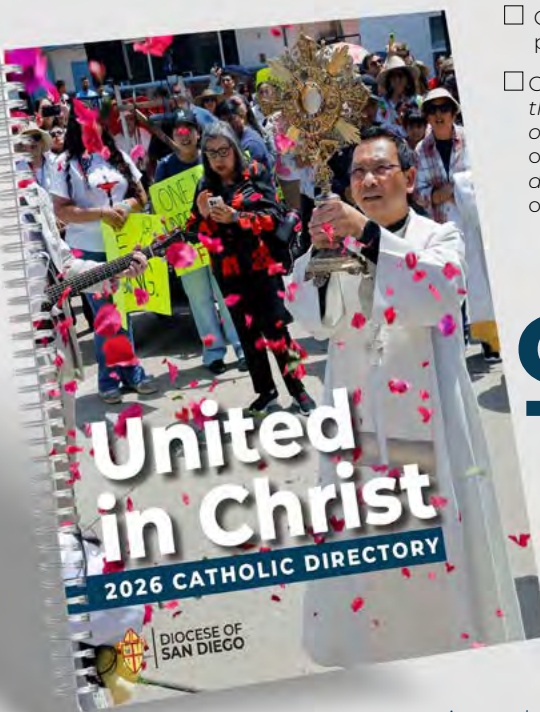
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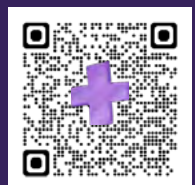
- Reflections on social justice issues
- Procession around Downtown San Diego
- Passion re-enactment by Cristo Rey High School students
- Free parking available at S.D. Rescue Mission



Most Rev. Felipe Pulido  
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# Humble Servant Had Far-Reaching Impact

**Note:** The following are excerpts from the eulogy delivered by Noreen Madden McInnes, director of the diocesan Office for Liturgy and Spirituality, for Brian Avey, at his funeral Mass at Mission San Diego de Alcalá on Jan. 28. He died on Dec. 31.

 I was blessed with the privilege and honor to be a colleague and a friend of Brian Avey for 11 years in the Office for Liturgy and Spirituality.

Over the years, Brian worked humbly and diligently to serve our Lord and the people of God. He never complained. No job was too small or too big.

It was his vocation. In fact, he had a favorite brown sweater with a hood that he liked to wear. Many people assumed he was “Brother Brian.” Even people that had only spoken to him on the phone, never met him in person, would call and ask for “Brother Brian.” He just had a gentle, respectful way of speaking with people and doing everything he could to assist them with their liturgical needs.

In addition to his deep spirituality, Brian was a very talented and intelligent man. Before he worked for the Church he was an IT manager who supervised a large organization.

Brian was a fine musician and composer. Everyone knows of his amazing gifts as cantor, pianist and organist, but his favorite instrument was the violin. He considered joining a symphony orchestra at one point.

But instead of staying in the secular world and pursuing a large financial reward, he became a parish choir director and an administrative assistant in the Office for Liturgy in the diocese to humbly serve our Lord. He served in various local parishes as a music minister: Holy Family, St. Patrick’s (Carlsbad), St. Brigid’s.

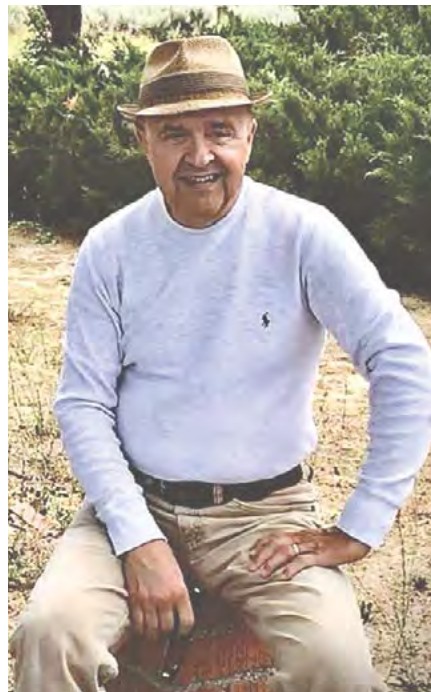
The work that Brian did at the diocese was far-reaching, and a tremendous blessing to many. The Chrism Mass was one of his favorite projects of the year. With Brian’s support and organization, over 7,000 bottles of holy oils were distributed throughout the diocese for baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, anointing of the sick and catechumens, and dedications of churches.

During Brian’s tenure, he was instrumental in the planning and preparation for significant diocesan liturgies:

- 76 permanent deacons were ordained
- 28 priests were ordained
- 2 bishops were consecrated
- 1 bishop was installed as our ordinary, who would later become a cardinal – Cardinal McElroy
- 2 bishops’ funeral Masses were celebrated — Bishop Cirilo Flores and Bishop Robert H. Brom

The relationship between Bishop Brom and Brian was special.

Brian knew the special brands of hosts, altar wine and altar candles that Bishop Brom preferred and kept them in stock. They often collaborated on music for the prison ministry that Bishop Brom enjoyed in his retirement.



**BRIAN AVEY**

I had to chuckle whenever Bishop Brom would walk into the Liturgy Office, look around and, when he saw Brian wasn’t in, he would sadly say, “Oh, he’s not here,” and walk out.

You might know that among Brian’s other amazing talents was that he spoke five languages, but you probably don’t know that he was also a great impersonator.

One day, when we were in the Pastoral Center Chapel, I asked Brian to test out the ambo microphone.

While my back was to the ambo, I was suddenly shocked to hear Pope Francis praying the “Our Father” in Latin.

I had recently asked Brian if he was

working on Pope Leo praying the “Our Father” in Latin with a Chicago accent.

It might surprise you to learn that Brian was raised Mormon.

He told me that, when he was in elementary school, he would go over to St. Therese, San Diego, after school, to play with friends there. But while the other kids were playing outside, Brian shared that he liked to go into the church. He said the smell of the candles really drew him in.

It is clear to me that the Lord was calling him into a deeper relationship with him in the Catholic Faith even at an early age. It took strength and courage to follow that call, become Catholic, and to go on to serve the Church for most of his life.

His strong faith kept him going, continuing to serve. In fact, just a few weeks ago, he asked me how he could volunteer for the office. He started on a project at home, working for the Lord to the very end.

Brian quietly suffered from poor health for as long as I’ve known him, yet, instead of focusing on himself, his attention was on serving others.

Most importantly, Brian deeply loved his wife, Sunny, and always wanted only the best for her. Let us keep her in our thoughts and prayers in this difficult time.

The best way to remember and honor Brian is to let him be our model of strong faith and service to the Lord, to give what we can, to as many as we can, for as long as we can.

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# Dare to Change Your Heart



We live in times marked by war, polarization, the fragility of institutions and the incessant flow of information that keeps us permanently exposed, but not necessarily more conscious.

We have never had so much data, so many images, so many opinions; however, confusion, anxiety, depression and the weariness of the soul grow. Something in the way we live, the way we relate to and understand one another appears to have unmoored from its center.

In this context, Lent is not a time for routine rituals, nor pious tradition for distracted believers. It's a radical challenge. The word that intersects it —

Columnist

**Ricardo Márquez**



*metanoia* — does not simply mean to repent of moral errors; rather, it means to change one's mind, to reorient our conscience, to see where we're standing and toward what we're moving as a society.

Lent began with the imposition of ashes that remind us that we're fragile, that we are not self-sufficient, that we do not control everything. In a culture obsessed with performance, image and productivity, ashes disarm pride and lay bare an uncomfortable truth: We're vulnerable and needy. This truth, far from weakening us, profoundly humanizes us.

Lent symbolically places us in a desert. And the desert, in the Bible, is not only a place for trial, but for revelation. It's the space where false securities drop, where noise decreases and where essential words can be heard.

Today, that desert is not always a geographic one; it's an interior and cultural one. It implies learning to stop talking, to discern which voices we allow to enter, to recognize how certain technologies, accelerated rhythms and constant consumption inhibit us more than we believe.

Here, the prophetic character of Christian *metanoia* emerges powerfully. Conversion is not about meekly adapting to a sick system, nor about taking refuge in an intimate spirituality. It's daring to live from another center, to resist what dehumanizes, to recover the value of relationship, of mutual care, of time shared. Authentic conversion always has personal and societal consequences.

That's why *metanoia* is not a solitary road. In times of fragility and uncer-

tainty, we need communities that don't demand perfection, rather truth; parishes that are networks of care rather than solely spaces for rituals; families and groups capable of sustaining, listening to and accompanying the vulnerable, which includes the immigrant. Christian faith is not lived in isolation: It is embodied in relationships that heal and in practices that restore hope.

Lent invites us to return to the heart of the Paschal mystery: the death and resurrection of Jesus. But returning to the heart is not about shutting oneself away. It's about reviving intimacy and communion with the Lord from where it's possible to live with freedom, peace and compassion. In a troubled world full of potential, *metanoia* continues to be an urgent call: Transform your perspective and heart to be able to transform life, and do it, not alone, but accompanied by fellow travelers also wandering in the desert.

Ricardo Márquez can be reached at [marquez\\_muskus@yahoo.com](mailto:marquez_muskus@yahoo.com).

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# 'Moment of Blessing' for Women Religious

## The Southern Cross



"Not every diocese sponsors such a gathering, and its

existence here is a testament to the deep respect and high esteem in which the bishops of the Diocese of San Diego have long held the women religious who serve so generously in our Local Church."

That is how Sister Kathy Warren, OSF, described the 26th Annual Bishop's Appreciation and Jubilee Celebration for Women Religious, to be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

Continuing a tradition that began under his predecessors, Bishop Michael Pham will welcome the religious sisters of the diocese for Mass, followed by a festive luncheon. Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido will preside at this year's Mass.

"This annual event, sponsored by our bishops — both current and past — is a truly wonderful celebration," said Sister Warren, who heads the diocesan Office for Women Religious.

"This gathering is a moment of blessing, faithfulness and profound gratitude to the God who calls each of us and sustains us in our ministries. Joined by our bishops, we rejoice in the privilege of continuing to help build the Reign of God in this corner of the world, ever mindful of the many collaborators who have walked with us over the years," she added.

About 70 religious sisters and their guests, representing many of the 28 congregations present in the diocese, are expected to attend this year's event.

A highlight of the annual gathering is the recognition of those religious sisters who are celebrating milestone, or jubilee, anniversaries in religious life.

This year's jubilarians include four

who are celebrating 60 years — Sisters Mary Jo Piccione, SP, Mary Waskowiak, RSM, Virginia Sturgeon, SSND, and Cora Weismantel, SSND; one celebrating 50 years — Sister Angela Cardoso, CSC; and two celebrating 25 years — Sisters Maria del Cielo Gudiño, MC, and Candida Massabo, HMSBS.

**Three of them shared their stories with us:**

### Sister Mary Jo Piccione



Sister Piccione was born in 1948 in Indianapolis, Indiana. She was the second of seven children in her Irish/Italian family.

After her graduation from high school in 1966, she entered the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, where she earned a degree in Education and Religious Studies.

In 1976, she went on to receive a degree in Nursing from the University of Indianapolis.

Sister Piccione professed first vows in 1969 and final vows in 1978.

She then ministered as head nurse in her community's infirmary.

In 1984, Sister Piccione was missioned to California, where she was blessed to minister with and to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary in hospitals, clinics and other outreach programs.

She then moved to Washington, D.C., where she first ministered at the archdiocesan nursing home and later responded to a call for nurses to minister with Health Care for the Homeless in shelters and outreach programs.

Returning to Los Angeles in 1993, Sister Piccione ministered with L.A. County Public Health's TB/HIV program in East L.A. for the next eight

years. At the invitation of the hospital chaplain, she joined the Pastoral Care Team at St. Jude Hospital in Fullerton, California, where she served for eight years, before moving on to St. Mary's Hospital in Apple Valley for the next 13 years.

In 2022, Sister Piccione joined with other religious sisters in San Diego to apply for a grant from the Hilton Foundation ministering to those who lived alone. This ministry provided the privilege of collaborating with members of other congregations.

Her most recent calling is with the Pastoral Care Team at Scripps Mercy Hospitals in Hillcrest and Chula Vista.

Sister Piccione believes her life experiences and missions have led her to be a healing presence. Her gifts of family and friends and community have allowed her to be an instrument of God's providence and to live out her community charisms of love, mercy and justice.

### Sister Virginia Sturgeon



Sister Sturgeon settled in La Mesa with her family in 1952. She and her brothers attended St. Martin of Tours

Academy, where they were taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

In 1964, after graduating from the Preparatory Institute of Notre Dame in Sunland, California, she entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame on Aug. 15.

After completing university studies and teaching in Illinois, Missouri and Los Angeles, Sister Sturgeon returned to San Diego to teach at University of San Diego High School, then later for the San Diego Unified School District at Horace Mann Middle School and Scripps Ranch High School. She also has served as an administrator at San

Diego and Mira Mesa high schools.

From 2016 to 2023, she mentored aspiring teachers during their semesters of supervised practice as part of their credential programs at the University of San Diego, San Diego State University and National University.

Currently, she shares her love of creation, especially the wild places of San Diego, as a volunteer for the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, as well as an occasional trail guide. She continues to explore San Diego's wild places with her family, with other sisters, and with friends in the San Diego Hiking Club.

### Sister Mary Waskowiak



Sister Waskowiak was born in 1948 in San Francisco, California. She grew up in the Bay Area and entered the Sisters

of Mercy in Burlingame, California, in 1966.

She professed first vows in 1969 at Mercy Convent in Burlingame and final vows in 1975 at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco.

Sister Waskowiak's ministries have included secondary education, vocation and new membership for the Sisters of Mercy, director of the Mercy Spirituality Center in Burlingame, elected leadership with the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, spiritual direction and executive leadership coaching.

Currently, Sister Waskowiak is the founding director of Casa de Misericordia, an intentional community in San Diego. Her primary focus is immigration and the needs of migrant persons.



**FELLOWSHIP:** Men and women religious serving in the Diocese of San Diego gathered for an evening of prayer and fellowship at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church in San Diego on Feb. 2, which included a meal prepared by parishioners. Those in attendance included, from left: Sister Margarita Gallardo-Rodriguez, SJS; Sister Martha Enriquez, SJS; Father Alejandro Olayo Mendez, SJ; Sister Maureen Brown, CSJ; and Brother Jim Sabak, OFM. For details, see [thesoutherncross.org/consecrated2026](https://thesoutherncross.org/consecrated2026).

## Obituaries

### Sister Fay Hagen, CSJ

Sister Fay Hagen, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, died Jan. 17. She was 89.

Born on Oct. 18, 1936, in Salem, Massachusetts, she moved to the San Diego area with her family when she was 7 years old.

She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1960, after years of working at Mercy Hospital. Her early years of ministry were in grade schools and high schools.

Sister Hagen particularly loved her ministry with Father Joe's Villages. In addition to feeding the hungry, clothing the poor and serving those in need, they were able to open the first elementary school in a homeless shelter in conjunction with the San Diego Unified School District.

Among other services at Father Joe's Villages, she served as a cook for the residents. She also ministered as director of Joshua House, a community for men with AIDs.

Sister Hagen taught at St. Augustine High School and at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace. At the latter, she also served as vice-principal.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 11 at St. Joseph's Chapel, the Carondelet Center chapel, in Los Angeles. Interment followed at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City.

### Sister M. LaVern Olberding, OSF

Sister M. LaVern Olberding, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Clinton, died Jan. 11 at The Alverno in Clinton, Iowa. She was 81.

Sister Olberding was born Sharon Rose Olberding on Jan. 15, 1944, in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent in Clinton on Sept. 8, 1961.

Sister Olberding earned a bachelor's in Chemistry at Marycrest College in Davenport, Iowa, and a Master of Religious Education from Seattle University in Washington.

In 2004, she moved to the San Diego area, where she promoted active nonviolence and peacemaking. She served as a catechesis coordinator for St. Kieran Parish.

In 2012, Sister Olberding co-founded the Franciscan Peace Connection in La Mesa and ministered as its director until its closure and her retirement in 2024.

At St. Martin of Tours Parish in La Mesa, she served on the religious education staff and was active in social justice outreach.

During her time in California, she served on the board of directors for the Peace Resource Center of San Diego, acting as vice president and president.

She moved to The Alverno in Clinton on Sept. 16 of last year and remained there until her death.

## Priest Assignments

*The Office of the Bishop has announced the following priest assignments, effective July 1, 2026:*

With the permission of his provincial, **Father Gabriel Afeti, AJ**, as pastor of St. Adelaide of Burgundy Parish

**Father Christopher Bongato** as associate pastor of St. Thomas More Parish, Oceanside

**Father Evan Bui** as associate pastor of Good Shepherd Parish

**Father Sebastian Bukenya** as pastor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish and Santa Ysabel Indian Mission

**Msgr. Francisco Cinco, III**, as administrator of Our Lady of the Valley Parish

**Father Manuel Del Rio** as pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Calipatria, and canonical pastor of St. Thomas Indian Mission

**Father Ignatius Dibeashi** as pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Fallbrook

**Father Minh Do** as associate pastor of Good Shepherd Parish

**Father Rolando Gabutera** as pastor of St. Michael Parish, San Diego

**Father Guillermo Hernandez** as associate pastor of St. Michael Parish, San Diego

**Father Edward Horning** as pastor of St. Richard Parish, Borrego Springs

**Father Clement Iorliam** as pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Ramona

**Father Ricardo Juárez Frausto** as pastor of St. John of the Cross Parish, Lemon Grove

**Father Brent Kruger** as pastor of St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish, Carmel Valley

**Father Niranjana Kanmury** as pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, San Diego

**Father Bernardo Lara** as pastor of Our Lady of Angels Parish

**Father Emilio Magaña** as pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Lakeside

**Father Reynaldo Manahan** as pastor of Mary, Star of the Sea Parish, La Jolla

**Father Antonio Morales** as pastor of Sacred Heart and St. Margaret Mary parishes in Brawley, and St. Joseph Parish, Westmorland

**Father Patrick Mulcahy** as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Coronado

**Father Roldan Nuñez** as pastor of St. Columba Parish

**Father Dominic Obour** as associate pastor of St. Mark Parish, San Marcos

**Father John Phan** as associate pastor of Holy Spirit Parish

**Father Anthony Saroki** as pastor of Holy Trinity Parish, El Cajon

**Father Anthony Stanonik** as pastor of Christ the King Parish

With the permission of his provincial, **Father Andrés Ernesto Torres, CJM**, as associate pastor of St. Jude Shrine of the West Parish

**Father Christopher Tozzi** as pastor of St. Gabriel Parish, Poway

**Father Derek Twilliger** as pastor of St. Thomas More Parish, Oceanside

**Father Matthew Vasquez** as associate pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, San Diego



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# Pray, Give Alms and Fast from Plastic

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Ph.D.



During Lent, it is customary for Catholics to reflect on their behavior — examining their consciences and repenting, a word derived from the Greek *metanoia*, which literally means to change one’s mind. We pray, fast and give alms to nudge ourselves toward a transformation that brings us closer to God. It isn’t always easy! Acknowledging the struggle and sacrifice involved, we often say we are “giving something up” for Lent.

Reflection on our care of creation offers another way to examine our behavior, and taking action in response to the cry of the earth might just be the Lenten intention you are seeking. Here are some ideas!

## Pray with an Ecological Examen

The “Laudato Si” Movement’s prayer book includes this excerpt from the Ecological Examen, contemplating our relationship with God, our brothers and sisters around the world, and the gift of creation that connects all of humanity:

“In my desire for reconciliation with creation, I ask God for forgiveness and



the grace of ecological conversion.

“I acknowledge the ways in which I personally have chosen convenience, selfishness, and greed over ecological and social justice.

“I also acknowledge the ways structures, patterns, and cultures of sin impact my life, the lives of people on the margins and the earth.

“Through my recognition of where I have fallen short in caring for creation and my brothers and sisters, and through God’s mercy, I pray for a conversion of heart to amend my ways.

“I seek through my prayer and actions to reconcile myself with God, creation and humanity. Amen.”

## Support Catholic Aid Organizations

Foreign and domestic Catholic aid organizations provide much assistance to people who are vulnerable to environmental impacts. Those living in less developed areas often lack the infrastructure capable of absorbing storms and natural disasters. Poverty challenges communities exposed to drought with food insecurity, as many typically farm their land to complement what food they can afford to purchase. A lack of access to good health care often compromises the well-being of poor communities, making them more susceptible to disease, at risk of extreme heat, and/or vulnerable to air pollution and other toxins. Catholic



Charities, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Relief Services, and Maryknoll are excellent examples of organizations worthy of our support, particularly as U.S. funding to these groups has been drastically cut.

## Fast from Single-Use Plastics

Promoting their Ignatian Carbon Challenge for Lent 2026, the Ignatian Solidarity Network



argues, “While traditionally associated with food, fasting is a practice that reminds us we are ultimately dependent on God, not the resources of this world.” Scan this QR code to learn how our recycling systems cannot keep up with the rate of plastic production and how our waste places a burden especially upon those living on the margins.

And once you’ve given this plastic fast a try, challenge yourself to stick to it, to change your mind and welcome a new life with Easter and our risen Lord who redeemed all the earth!

Espanol: [bit.ly/SOX\\_ESPmarzo26](http://bit.ly/SOX_ESPmarzo26)



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*Memory*

INTO THY HANDS, O Lord, we commend the spirits of these beloved ones who are gone before us into the realm of thy eternal happiness and peace. *AMEN*

*Am I Called?*

Do I think about being a Brother, Sister or Priest?

Does the idea come to me often?

Does the idea scare me?

**I SHOULD CONTACT**  
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## Diocese to Celebrate Mass For Divorced and Separated

By Denis Grasska



The second annual Mass for the Divorced and Separated will be celebrated on Wednesday, March 11, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

The bilingual liturgy, to be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido, will begin at 6:30 p.m. A reception will follow, with testimonies from those involved with divorce ministry and the opportunity to learn about the annulment process.

Janelle Perego focuses on ministry to the divorced and separated as an associate director in the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality.

She described the Mass for the Divorced and Separated as “an opportunity to build community.”

“It helps immensely to find community among other Catholics who know this unique pain, but who also recognize that our deepest human healing can only be found through Christ,” she said.

About 80 people attended the Mass last year, said Perego. She saw Mass-goers leave with “so much palpable joy and relief.”

Bernice Abellera, 52, attended last year’s Mass and plans to attend this year’s, too.

Abellera, a member of St. Michael Parish in Paradise Hills, was separated in 2006 and divorced in 2009, after seven years of marriage.

“The very fact that this event was organized for the divorced and separated in our diocese is a big deal,” said Abellera. “We are never talked about in our parish, much less during Mass. I felt seen and cared for.”

Patricia Talamantes, a 59-year-old member of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Little Italy, also attended last year.

She felt “completely devastated” after her marriage “fell apart” after more than 27 years. She experienced healing through Church-sponsored support groups for the divorced and separated.

At last year’s Mass, she said, it was “wonderful” to see those who had attended the support group with her.

“I will always attend these Masses and gatherings,” she said. “They saved me.”

Karla Ordaz, 45, is a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Chula Vista.

She told *The Southern Cross* that, even though her marriage was “never a true covenant in the eyes of the Church,” she and her former husband had promised to “love each other forever.”

Following their separation, she endured “a dreadful depression.”

Ordaz found healing through Isaias 41:10, a Spanish-language support group for the divorced and separated, which she now serves as coordinator.

Last year’s Mass was “a wonderful experience” for her.

“I am excited to attend this year as well, in hopes that more people take advantage of this beautiful opportunity,” she said. “All should come and be part of this experience. Give yourself this gift, come meet other people, find a ministry that is best for you, and see ... that you are part of a Church that supports what Jesus so much instructed: to love one another.”

For more information, email [jperego@sdccatholic.org](mailto:jperego@sdccatholic.org) or call (858) 490-8282.



## News Briefs

### Women Invited to Explore ‘Mysteries of Lent’

A morning of reflection, “The Mysteries of Lent: A Journey with Mary,” will be held on Saturday, March 7, at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Point Loma.

There will be refreshments and a social at 8:30 a.m., followed by the program from 9 to 11 a.m.

The free event is sponsored by the Whispering Winds Women’s Auxiliary and will feature Cathy Sperrazzo and Mattie Scull as speakers. For more information, email [Laurie@whisperingwinds.org](mailto:Laurie@whisperingwinds.org).

### Lectio Divina to Be Theme of Upcoming Retreat

IMPERIAL BEACH — The South Bay Deanery of Catholic Women will hold a retreat, “Deepening Our Relationship with God: Lectio Divina,” at 10:30 a.m., Monday, March 9, in St. Charles Parish Hall in Imperial Beach.

Janelle Perego, associate director of the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, will be the guest speaker.

The retreat is open to all. A free-will offering will be accepted. Lunch will be provided after the retreat. RSVP by Sunday, March 1. Text or leave a message at (619) 249-0904.

### Diocese Hosting ‘Explorer Day’

The next “Explorer Day,” an informational session for men interested in exploring a possible vocation to the priesthood, will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., Saturday, March 28, at St. Francis Center on the campus of the University of San Diego.

The event will be hosted by Father Marc Gandolfo, the diocese’s director of priestly vocations.

Pick up a registration form at your parish office or call St. Francis Center at (858) 490-8389 for more information.

### Retrouvaille Offers Hope for Troubled Marriages

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.

Retrouvaille retreats will be held in English and in Spanish, at separate locations, during the April 17-19 weekend.

For more information, visit [helpourmarriage-sandiego.org](http://helpourmarriage-sandiego.org). Register for the English-language retreat at (951) 259-9474 or [JoseandMary@helpourmarriage.org](mailto:JoseandMary@helpourmarriage.org); register for the Spanish-language retreat at (619) 423-0182 or [Retrouspanolsd@gmail.com](mailto:Retrouspanolsd@gmail.com).

### Widowed, Divorced Invited to Healing Weekend

OCEANSIDE — Beginning Experience, an international ministry that helps the widowed, divorced and separated move beyond grief, will hold its next retreat during the May 1-3 week-

end at Prince of Peace Abbey.

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

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

### Mass to Be Offered for Souls in Purgatory

OCEANSIDE — A Mass is being offered every month for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

It is held on the third Thursday of each month at St. Margaret Parish in Oceanside. Many priests from across North County and from St. Michael’s Abbey in Silverado, California, have come to celebrate Mass for souls in Purgatory.

This marks the first time that North County has had a regularly scheduled Mass for the Purgatory Society.

Eucharistic adoration and confessions are at 5 p.m., with Mass at 6 p.m., followed by the rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet. For more information, call (760) 941-5560.

### Ministry Offers Practical Tools for Newly Married

Growing in your marriage is truly a lifelong project.

“T(w)o Become One: Marriage Mystagogy,” a ministry for newly married couples, meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first Monday of each month at the diocesan Pastoral Center for fellowship and practical, hands-on tools to help couples in their marriage.

For more information, email [jprust@sdccatholic.org](mailto:jprust@sdccatholic.org) or call (858) 490-8256.

### 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](http://youngcatholicprofessionals.org/chapter/san-diego).

### Women Invited to Discern 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 Basilica 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.



## Walk with the Suffering

WALTER JOHNSTON

**CORRECTION:** This photograph depicting the Walk with the Suffering on April 19, 2019, in downtown San Diego, was taken by Walter Johnston, not Maria Valencia, as was published in the February 2026 edition. This year’s Walk with the Suffering will be held on Good Friday, April 3.

## Knights Launch Video Series

The Southern Cross



NEW HAVEN, Conn. — The Knights of

Columbus has launched a new, five-part video series titled “Into the Breach: The Dignity of Work.”

The series focuses on the Catholic vision of man’s mission in the world, by examining the nature of work and its role in a man’s life and his

sanctification, as well as its role in ordering creation. The five episodes offer a general vision of the dignity and purposes of work and help men embrace and live this vision in their own work lives.

It builds on the Knights’ previous video series, which have received over 3 million views.

For more information, visit [kofc.org/live-your-faith/into-the-breach-video-series](http://kofc.org/live-your-faith/into-the-breach-video-series).





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