

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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**IN THE FACE OF DEATH:** Father Lawrence Agi, manager of Spiritual Care Services at Scripps Mercy Hospital's Hillcrest and Chula Vista locations, said he has "never seen such human suffering" as he has during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Taking the Shot

Local doctor debunks myths about COVID-19 vaccine. **Page 2**



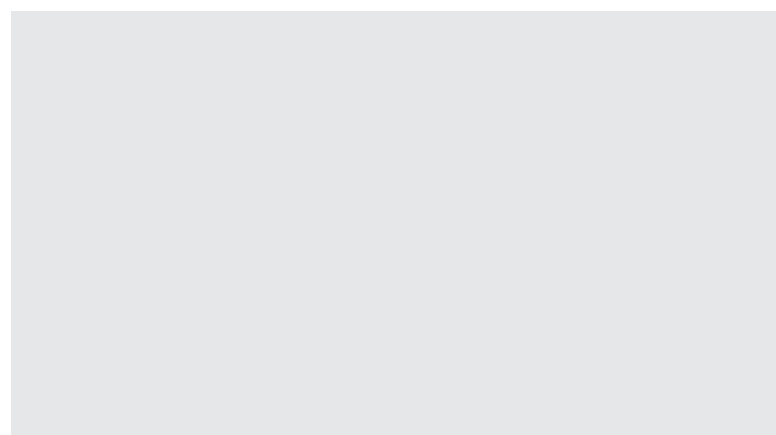
## Urgent Response

Catholic Charities San Diego mobilizes to help asylum-seekers. **Page 3**



## Spelling Success

Santa Sophia Academy student is countywide spelling bee champ. **Page 9**



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# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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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 98 parishes, 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 colored triangle indicates that we have more content related to a particular story in our digital edition, **thesoutherncross.org**, including photos, videos, and at times an extended version.

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# Rejoice in the Glory of God!

**The following is a message from Bishop Robert McElroy, of the Catholic Diocese of San Diego:**

This year, the joy of Easter reaches out to us with a special power as we witness the resurrection of our Lord against the backdrop of a world emerging from a time of hardship and suffering.

We sense the wonder and happiness that the disciples experienced at the moment when the risen Jesus Christ first appeared to them with the consoling message, "Peace be with you."

For, in that peace, we see God's power over every form of human suffering and even death itself. We see the breadth of God's love for us that has no boundaries, no beginning and no end.

The peace of the Resurrection tells us who we are and

what our mission is on this earth, that our life is a pilgrimage seeking to come closer to the God who has created us in our mothers' wombs and leads us onward to the kingdom of Heaven, where we shall encounter God face to face.

The peace of the Resurrection is also God's assurance that all those whom we have loved in this world and who have gone before us in death are not gone from us forever. Rather, we shall encounter them in the kingdom of God and embrace them, and see, and know, and love in them all that we saw, and knew, and loved in them in this world.

The sufferings of the past year have made this Lent an especially profound time of reflection and penitence. And today, those sufferings point to the glory of God, which surrounds us at this moment and accompanies us in every moment of our lives.



**SETTING EXAMPLE:** Father Ricardo Frausto was one of the clergy members who received the COVID-19 vaccine on March 4 at the Pastoral Center.

# Doctor Responds to Vaccine Myths

By Aida Bustos



As a family physician, Dr. Irma Covarrubias-Lugo has witnessed firsthand the toll COVID-19 has taken on families. And she knows vaccines are the way to bring an end to the devastating pandemic.

Some of her patients tell her that they don't want to be vaccinated, however. She said that many of the reasons they cite are rooted in misinformation, spread particularly on social media.

The doctor, who works for Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, urges everyone to turn to reliable sources in making this potentially life-saving decision.

In an interview, she shared some of the reasons she's heard for hesitating to take the vaccine, which has been proven to prevent the most severe effects of COVID-19 and death.

"Some people think we are injecting them with the virus," said the doctor. "That's not the case."

There is no live virus in the vaccines and people can't get the disease from them, she explained.

"Some people think that the vaccines use a chip that can be used to

track them," she said, another false claim bouncing around the Internet.

"Others think that by getting the vaccine that they are somehow a party to abortion," the doctor continued.

She tells her patients that the Catholic Church has analyzed how the vaccines were developed. And its leaders, from Pope Francis to San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy, have said that taking the vaccine is in line with the teachings of the Church. In fact, they have taken it themselves and urge all people of faith to do so.

The doctor is a Master Catechist, serves at St. Jude Shrine of the West Parish, and is a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Some of her patients said that they are afraid of the vaccine's side effects.

She said that many people do experience side effects, particularly after the second dose. These can include arm pain, headache, body aches, fatigue and fever.

"These are signs that your body is working to boost its defenses against COVID-19," she said, adding that they last only a day or two.

She said that individuals should consider the effect the disease can have not just on themselves but the people close to them.

In San Diego County, more than

3,500 had died from COVID-19 as of March 25, with nearly 15 percent under age 60.

She shared what happened to one of her patients.

"This grandmother loved her family," the doctor recalled. "She especially loved to cook for them."

One of her grandkids did not protect himself from the virus when he was hanging around with his friends.

"He caught the virus and didn't know it," she recalled, and he passed it to his grandmother. She fell gravely ill and was hospitalized.

"She fought the virus for a long time," the doctor said. "But died."

She said that this young man now lives with the pain of knowing what his lack of precaution had caused.

"We see cases like this all the time."

She offered advice for those who have already been vaccinated: Keep wearing a mask. Keep physical distance. Avoid indoor crowds.

Along with the vaccine, she said, these simple steps will make the end of the pandemic a reality.

More information from the Church, including videos, is available at [sdccatholic.org/vaccine](https://sdccatholic.org/vaccine).





# Catholic Charities Supporting Asylum-Seekers

By Aida Bustos



In one of its largest operations in recent memory,

Catholic Charities is once more assisting asylum-seekers being released by U.S. immigration authorities in San Diego and Imperial counties.

Between 100 to 200 migrants are being released daily in the San Diego border region, the majority women and children, who are arriving exhausted with just the clothes on their backs.

The organization responded to an emergency request from the California Department of Social Services to help receive the asylum-seekers, meet their urgent basic needs and assist them to travel elsewhere in the country to connect with family or friends. The agency is doing this work alongside Jewish Family Service of San Diego, which is managing this state-funded operation.

This is separate from the current wave of unaccompanied minors that are also appearing at the border. These families have received humanitarian parole from US immigration authorities, pending a hearing on their asylum request. They are not in the country illegally.

Catholic Charities alone will be managing a similar operation in the Imperial Valley. The goal is for that one to be up and running by April 1.

Catholic Charities' Chief Executive Officer, Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor,



JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ

**EXPULSED:** This migrant from Central America and his son walked near Paso del Norte international bridge in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on March 16. They had been deported by the U.S. They are among the thousands traveling to the border in recent weeks to seek asylum.

said this work is central to the organization's mission to help the vulnerable.

"We are welcoming the stranger, as the Gospel tells us to do," he said, "and in doing so, acknowledging the sacredness of every human person."

Within days of receiving the request for help, Catholic Charities responded by deploying five of its full-time staff members from its Refugees and Immigrant Services department to assist this operation. They started March 22, and will be working 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. six days a week. Days later, the agency hired two temporary workers to support the operation. And it planned to hire as many as 11 additional temporary workers by the end of April.

The operation to assist them involves several steps. The migrants receive a medical screening, which includes a COVID-19 test. Those who are found to be positive are quarantined. The migrants are housed at local hotels while they wait to travel across the nation to connect with loved ones, a process that can take a few days. The goal, however, is to move them out within a day or two.

In Imperial County, Catholic Charities plans to have as many as six staff members to receive the migrants, house and feed them, and facilitate their travel. The agency has deployed two 15-passenger vans that will be used to transport them to San Diego

and Riverside, where they can take a plane or bus.

At the end of 2018 and into 2019, Catholic Charities also stepped up as part of a coalition to assist a surge of asylum-seekers being released onto downtown streets. Its director said the dangerous conditions forcing families to flee their home countries have not changed.

"We give them hope," he said. "Miracles do happen."

Catholic Charities is seeking monetary donations to help the asylum-seekers to travel. They can be made at: [ccdsd.org](http://ccdsd.org).



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# House to Embrace Men Leaving Prison

By Denis Grasska



A new transitional housing facility for men recently released from prison or jail expects to welcome its first residents in April.

Kairos House occupies a two-story, approximately 5,000-square-foot building in the Hillcrest neighborhood of San Diego. St. John the Evangelist Parish, which owns the building, leased it to Restoring Citizens, the San Diego-based provider of reentry services that runs Kairos House.

"There is no reentry program like this anywhere in San Diego," said George Chappell, CEO of Restoring Citizens. He described it as "a home more than an institution."

Kairos House includes 14 bedrooms with a total of 32 beds, 11 bathrooms, a commercial kitchen where residents can prepare their own meals, and a chapel.

Men transitioning to life outside the prison walls will not only find a place to live at Kairos House, but also assistance in acquiring such essential items as ID cards and Social Security cards and with finding employment. They will be assigned a full-time case manager, who will work with them to set and meet their goals, and they will have access to a therapist if desired.

Chappell said that Kairos House will also have "that faith-based piece" that other re-entry programs lack.

Dr. Robert Ehn timer, director of the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice, which oversees Catholic ministry at 24 prisons, jails and other detention facilities in San Diego and Imperial counties, supported the effort to establish Kairos House.

"All of the ministries for the incarcerated are focused on accompaniment – being fully present and supportive with our incarcerated citizens," said Ehn timer, reflecting on the Masses, Bible studies, spiritual direction and other religious activities that comprise prison ministry.

Through Kairos House, he saw an opportunity to extend accompaniment to this population after their release.



**GOING TO THE CHAPEL:** Father Michael Ravenkamp, center, tours the chapel at Kairos House on March 2 with George Chappell, left, and Eddie Blajos, right, of the nonprofit Restoring Citizens. Father Ravenkamp says being Kairos House's chaplain represents "what evangelization is all about."

While residents are not required to participate in any religious activities, opportunities will be available, said Ehn timer, who tapped Jesuit Father Michael Ravenkamp to serve as Kairos House's chaplain.

Father Ravenkamp, who also serves as a volunteer Catholic chaplain for the San Diego County Sheriff's jails and who ministers at juvenile detention facilities, remembers responding almost immediately with "an enthusiastic yes" to Ehn timer's invitation.

"Most priests really have little contact with these populations," despite being called to go "out to the margins," explained the priest, who added, "This is what evangelization is all about."

Beyond a ministry of presence, he doesn't know the precise form that his chaplaincy will take.

"I can't assume I know what they will need," he said. "So, I'll depend upon feedback to start programs."

Spiritual direction appears to be a given. Initial ideas also include teaching various methods of prayer, including the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and perhaps even organizing a Bible study.

Because Kairos House is within walking distance of St. John the Evangelist Church, Ehn timer said, that parish

will be a natural fit for those men who are Catholic or interested in Catholicism and seeking a spiritual home.

In terms of how long the residents will stay at Kairos House, the "sweet spot" is about 90 days, said Ehn timer. However, some may be ready to move on sooner while others might be working through issues that require a longer stay.

Kairos House is a far cry from the quality of transitional housing that Eddie Blajos, co-founder of Restoring Citizens and currently operations manager of Kairos House, received after being released from prison in May 2017 after more than 42 years. At the facility where he was housed, the stove didn't work, there were no fans, and the promise of a job upon arrival wasn't kept.

"We'll make sure that they have the opportunity we weren't given when we were released," Blajos said.

Chappell too found himself in substandard transitional housing following his parole in 2009 after "quite a few years" in prison.

He noted that many nonprofits that provide transitional housing develop their programs with "the best intentions." But while law enforcement, lawyers, psychologists and others are consulted in the process, they rarely

solicit the input of the very population they seek to help.

By contrast, Restoring Citizens was founded in 2017 by three men with firsthand experience of life in prison and the challenges associated with successfully reentering society. Kairos House benefits from that knowledge.

When he was released from prison, Chappell said, it was his intention to make a clean break with his past, leaving his prison experience far behind.

But God seemingly had other plans, he said, "pushing" him in the direction of working with others who were making the arduous transition from prison life.

In the success of Restoring Citizens, he sees evidence of providence at work.

"We are where we're supposed to be," Chappell said, noting the unlikely odds that felons like himself and Blajos would have the opportunity to collaborate on their own nonprofit.

With confidence, he said, "This is supposed to happen."

Learn more about Restoring Citizens, the organization that runs Kairos House, at [www.restoringcitizens.org](http://www.restoringcitizens.org).



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# \$100 Million Pledged to Atonement for Slavery

By Carol Zimmermann



WASHINGTON —  
The Jesuit order is  
pledging to raise

\$100 million for descendants of enslaved people once owned and sold by their order as a way to make reparations and also help the nation move toward racial healing.

Church officials and historians told *The New York Times*, which broke the story on March 15, that the funds represented one of the most significant moves by an institution to atone for slavery, and “the largest effort by the Roman Catholic Church to make amends for the buying, selling and enslavement of Black people.”

The funds will be placed in a new partnership called Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation formed by the Jesuit order and the GU272 Descendants Association — named after the 272 enslaved men, women and children who were sold by the Jesuit owners of Georgetown University to plantation owners in Louisiana in 1838.

A news release about the partnership said it was the first of its kind between the descendants of enslaved persons and the descendants of their enslavers.

“Our shameful history of Jesuit slaveholding in the United States has been taken off the dusty shelf, and it



**RECOGNITION:** Isaac Hawkins Hall is seen on the campus of Georgetown University. The hall was renamed for one of the 272 slaves sold by Georgetown's Jesuit community in 1838.

can never be put back,” said Jesuit Father Tim Kesicki, president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

“Racism will endure in America if we continue to turn our heads away from the truth of the past and how it affects us all today. The lasting effects of slavery call each of us to do the work of truth and reconciliation,” he added.

The priest told *The New York Times* the Jesuits have already put \$15 million into a trust established to support the foundation, whose governing board will include representatives from other institutions with roots in slavery. He

also said the order has hired a national fundraising firm to help raise the rest of the funds within the next three to five years.

Joe Stewart, acting president of the new foundation, is a retired corporate executive and one of more than 1,000 descendants of Isaac Hawkins, an enslaved man sold by Georgetown University.

In the announcement of the new partnership, he said the group would “set an example and lead America through dismantling the remnants of slavery and mitigating the presence of racism.”

He also said it would “support the

educational aspirations of descendants for future generations and play a prominent role in engaging, promoting and supporting programs and activities that highlight truth, accelerate racial healing and reconciliation, and advance racial justice and equality in America.”

Cheryllyn Branche, president of the GU272 Descendants Association, said that from its start this group has worked to identify and rebuild ancestors’ families affected by slavery.

In San Diego, Father Eduardo Samaniego, SJ, said he was proud that his order was taking a leadership role in telling the truth about its history and pledging to make reparations. He reflected on that history, and what lessons could be drawn today.

“When you participate in an institutional sin, either as an individual or as a community, it’s not going away,” said Father Samaniego, who directs the diocese’s Office for Permanent Diaconate.

He said the Jesuits’ action should prompt people of faith to reflect on “whether they have been guilty of institutional sin, whether it’s racism, sexism, ageism, or other ‘isms.’ That’s God asking you: What are you going to do about it?”

*The San Diego Diocese  
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# We Need to Repair Adults to Protect Children



A quote from Frederick Douglass comes to mind when I think about child abuse.

"It's easier to build strong children than repair broken men."

An estimated 1,840 children died of abuse and neglect in fiscal year 2019, the latest figures available, according to the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That's up 60 from the previous year.

"Every day, four to eight children in the United States die from abuse or neglect at the hands of their parents or caretakers. No one knows the exact number, and there has been little progress in preventing these tragic deaths. Most of the children who die are infants or toddlers," said the Congressional Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities in its final report.

Obviously, something is not working right for this to happen. Neglect from adults, poverty and violence are the main drivers of these deaths, the commission said.

Authorities fear that abuse has surged during the pandemic, as parents have been forced to spend unending hours with their children at home out of public view.

At some point, the adults who abuse and neglect their children were children themselves. They perpetuate what they experienced; if they lived in a hostile environment, they learned to fight; if they were harshly criticized,

Associate Director,  
Family Life &  
Spirituality

**Ricardo Márquez**



they learned to criticize ... if they were abused, it's likely they will be abusers.

Preventing child abuse involves the growth and transformation of us adults. April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. It's a good opportunity for us to stop, even for a few moments, to remember the thousands of children who suffer at the hands of adults around the world – and to act.

We can find a way to talk about this problem with our family. We can pray for the healing of the children who are abused. We can commit to not using words that injure. We can ask forgiveness for the pain we inflicted. We can pray to become instruments of peace and compassion.

When we, as adults, neglect our responsibilities to model good values and practices, the children who see us and imitate us suffer the consequences. The future emotional health of humanity does not lie in changing the way children think, rather in changing the ways the adults that surround them think and behave.

It's not easy to repair adults, emotionally broken by their particular circumstances, but it's not impossible. This requires a will to change, to get help, to surround ourselves with diverse people or even a parish to sup-



port us and sustain us.

It requires acknowledging and embracing our needs, errors and weaknesses ... to remember St. Paul, who shared with us his internal struggle, his inner voice that told him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

"Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us," Pope Francis reminds us in his recent apostolic letter, "Patris Corde" (With a Father's Heart).

Changes don't come from judgment, rather from compassion that accompanies, heals and walks with our wounded brothers and sisters.

Preventing child abuse does not require extraordinary actions. Instead, we can approach each day with the intention and the responsibility of being better than we were the previous day and leaving the world a better place than how we found it. We can do this through the simple acts of patience, appreciation and compassion.

With adults who are "repaired," or in the process of being healed, our children will be safe and protected.

Read more of Ricardo Márquez's columns at  
[thesoutherncross.org/perspectives](https://thesoutherncross.org/perspectives).



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## Bilingual Earth Week Mass to thank our creator for all of his gifts

There has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and the humanity is one people, living in common home. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si #164)

Se debe integrar la justicia en las discusiones sobre el ambiente para escuchar tanto el clamor de la tierra como el clamor de los pobres. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si #49)

**Saturday, April 17th, 2:00 p.m.**  
**Sábado, 17 de Abril, 2:00 p.m.**

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Bishop of San Diego

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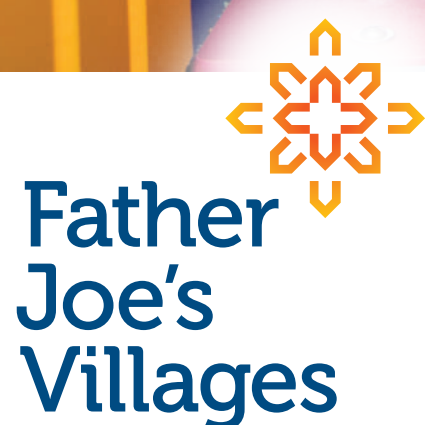
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# Schools Getting New Presidents

By Aida Bustos



Two of the San Diego Diocese's high schools, Cathedral Catholic and Mater Dei Catholic, are getting new presidents.

The director of schools, John Galvan, announced that the principal of Cathedral Catholic High School, Kevin Calkins, Ph.D., will become its president on July 1. The current president, Stevan Laaperi, is retiring.

Calkins has worked in Catholic education for more than two decades, including nearly six years at the helm of Cathedral Catholic. Around 1,600 students attend the high school, located in Carmel Valley.

His previous leadership experience includes serving as associate superintendent at the Archdiocese of New Orleans; as principal at St. Dominic Savio High School in Austin, Texas; and as dean of academics at Verbum Dei High School in Los Angeles.

Galvan cited the principal's "warmth, intelligence and humanity in guiding Cathedral Catholic out of this pandemic year and into a very bright future."

He called the principal "a true leader-servant for the campus community."

"He shows what it means to be a Don and he leads not just with words, but through example. He makes all of us – students, staff and administrators alike – want to be better people."

Galvan also announced the appointment of Jesuit Father Joaquin Martinez



**KEVIN CALKINS, PH.D.**, will lead Cathedral Catholic High School.

as the new president of Mater Dei Catholic High School and Mater Dei Juan Diego Academy. Around 850 students attend the high school, which has been led by John Rey, who is stepping down to spend more time with his family.

Father Martinez, 55, has served as the director of the Catholic community at the UCSD Newman Center for four years.

He's a lifelong educator who has worked as a science teacher and administrator in public, private and Catholic schools in California. He served as president of a large Jesuit high school in Ohio and administrator at St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco.



**FATHER JOAQUIN MARTINEZ, SJ**, will lead Mater Dei Catholic High School.

In Rome, he served as the international education coordinator for the Jesuit Refugee Service, where he led initiatives for refugees in 26 countries.

"Imagine our surprise, as we were gearing up for a nationwide search for the next Mater Dei president, that we find him 25 miles away," said Galvan in announcing the priest's appointment.

Father Martinez said the roots of his passion for working in education stretch back to his teen years when he attended a Jesuit high school in Manila, where he grew up.

"I wanted to be like them," he said of his teachers.

## SD Cristo Rey High School Wins Grant

The Conrad Prebys Foundation awarded Cristo Rey San Diego High School a \$150,000 grant to support its innovative educational model that serves low-income families.

The funds will be used to hire additional faculty, according to a press release issued by the school on March 23.

The Catholic school offers a rigorous education coupled with professional work experience. It is part of the respected network of 37 nonprofit Cristo Rey schools operating nationwide, including six in California.

The school began its inaugural year in San Diego in August, welcoming a freshman class of 62 students. They take college-prep classes and once a week work at the offices of the school's corporate partners, including hospitals, nonprofit organizations and law firms.

The school is accepting applications for students who will be entering the 9th and 10th grades next academic year. The goal is for the school to have a total of 160 students next year.

"The grant allows us to hire the additional teachers needed as the school more than doubles in size," said Robert Nascenzi, the school's president.

Families pay an average of \$70 per month for a Catholic education that offers valuable work experience.

More information is available at [cristoreysandiego.org](http://cristoreysandiego.org) or by phoning (619) 432-1899.



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RETREAT CENTER



# Champ's Next Stop: National Spelling Bee

By Denis Grasska



How do you  
spell "winner"?  
C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N.

Christian Antonio, a seventh-grader at Santa Sophia Academy, will represent San Diego County this July at the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Orlando.

On March 17, he won the 51st annual *San Diego Union-Tribune* Countywide Spelling Bee with his correct spelling of "huipil," a garment worn by women in Mexico and Central America. He was one of 37 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders participating in the competition, which was conducted via Zoom.

He is the second Catholic school student in the Diocese of San Diego to win the countywide spelling bee in the past five years. Ella Peters of Notre Dame Academy was the 2016 winner.

"We just wanted it to be a positive experience for Christian. We weren't even really talking too much about winning," said Christian's father, Marvin, who along with his wife, Valerie, watched the spelling bee competition live.

He and Valerie simply hoped their 12-year-old son would be satisfied with his performance. For about a month, Christian devoted about an hour every weekday and six to eight hours every weekend to studying the list of 4,000 words that he had received from the organizers of the spelling bee.

Valerie said she was "nervous and



**BEE-ING THE BEST:** Christian Antonio poses with his parents, Valerie and Marvin.

jittery" during the competition, which ultimately went 13 rounds during a Zoom call that lasted almost four and a half hours.

"I'm glad my hard work paid off, and I'm very excited to participate in the national spelling bee," said Christian, who has been a student at Santa Sophia Academy, his father's alma mater, since kindergarten.

The day before the spelling bee, the school community assembled in the

quad to wish Christian good luck, said Julianna Genna, fourth grade teacher and vice principal. When she heard the following day that he had won, she returned to the quad and screamed the good news "at the top of my lungs."

"Every class could hear me and, slowly, an eruption of cheers and applause could be heard from every classroom. It was unreal."

When the spelling bee champion returned on March 19, faculty and

students surprised him with a standing ovation, festive decorations, and handmade cards and posters.

"He came through the back office door thinking he was just going to walk to his classroom," said Genna. "Instead, he was greeted by the entire school with screams and cheers."

Kathleen Zuñiga, a teacher and the spelling bee coordinator at Santa Sophia Academy, praised Christian's "dedication, hard work and perseverance."

"Since Christian is an excellent student in all ways, his victory was not a complete surprise," she said. "It is a beautiful example to others of how hard work and studying can pay off."

Christian also earned kudos from the diocesan Office for Schools.

"He embodies what it means to be a Catholic school student in the Diocese of San Diego," said Dr. Julie Cantillon, the office's associate director. "He has shown that he is hardworking, determined and a responsible, faith-filled student."

When he isn't learning to spell challenging and obscure words, Christian also enjoys such activities as playing tennis and guitar, solving Rubik's Cubes, and experiencing international travel with his family.

To would-be spelling bee champions, he offers this advice: "Work hard and always try to make it fun for yourself."

He also counsels prayer and placing one's trust in God.

"He'll always be there for you" – even during spelling bees.



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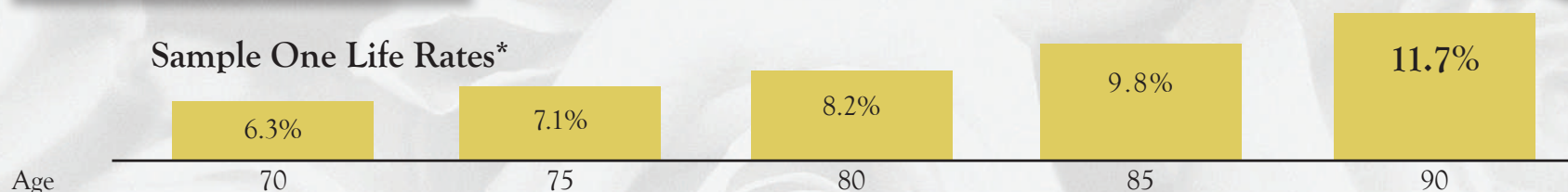
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# 'I've Never Seen Such Human Su

By Denis Grasska



Father Adnan Ghani saw an average of two to three deaths every day, and occasionally as many as four, between October and December of last year.

For the Augustinian priest, serving as a hospital chaplain amidst a global pandemic has been the most difficult period of his young priesthood.

Ordained in December 2019, he has served since last May as a chaplain at Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center and Alvarado Hospital Medical Center. He recalled one afternoon in mid-December when he had come to the hospital for the anointing of a single COVID patient and discovered that eight others also needed it.

Two of them died before he left the hospital and another died the following day.

"I never ever got tired before this pandemic happened," said Father Ghani, who was born in Pakistan and, at age 36, is among the younger priests in the diocese.

Yet the ministry has worn him down so much that he has returned to his monastery at times wanting nothing but "to lie down, and rest, and that's it."

Some 15 Catholic chaplains serve in hospitals in San Diego and Imperial counties, including those serving veterans and the military. Over the past year, they have found themselves on the front lines of a pandemic that has resulted in nearly 14,000 hospitalizations and 3,500 deaths in San Diego County alone as of March 24.

Their round-the-clock work, which has pushed them to their physical and emotional limits, has remained unknown, save for the pa-



**KEEPING THE FAITH:** Father Adnan Ghani, left, along with other chaplains at Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center, responded to the surge of gravely ill COVID-19 patients under physically and mentally grueling conditions.

tients they struggled to comfort in their final hours.

Chaplains have seen their ministry change dramatically in the past year, and Father Ghani is far from the only one on whom it has taken a toll.

## 'People die by themselves'

For Father Joe Masar, a desire to "spend more time with the dying" led him to step away from being a pastor and shift toward hospice and hospi-

tal chaplaincy years ago. Currently a chaplain at Scripps Green and Scripps Memorial hospitals in La Jolla, he has had his hands full in the last year.

"Before COVID hit, I rarely got a call in the middle of the night," said Father Joe, as he is known, who recalled an occasion in early February when he was feeling sleep-deprived after receiving multiple calls each night for four consecutive nights.

Before the pandemic, he had been able to reduce the number of such late-night calls by spending several hours at the hospital each day, checking in at the room of each Catholic patient. He provided counseling and prayer at the bedside of even non-terminal patients.

These days, he's limited to visiting only those who are near death.

Before the pandemic, too, family members often gathered around the beds of dying patients and sometimes he was able to facilitate the healing of family divisions, he said. COVID brought an end to such encounters.

COVID patients are in strict isolation. Chaplains are not allowed to enter their rooms. He's forced to pray with and for them from the outside.

"I've seen many people die by themselves, which is really a tragic thing," he said.

"I have eye-locked with patients behind those glass doors, where I just know they want me to come in there and I can't."

Father Joe is unable to make the sign of the cross on patients' foreheads and palms with the holy oils as part of the anointing of the sick.

He has instructed nurses and other healthcare professionals to do so with a cotton swab while he recites the accompanying prayers.

Sacraments are supposed to be "a hands-on thing," as he said, and such barriers to pastoral ministry are frustrating, but he focuses on the positive.

"We are doing the best we can with the circumstances that we're in and still doing everything that we can to bring the presence of the risen Christ to people," he said.

## 'I always have three masks'

Father Romeo Smith, who serves as a chaplain at Palomar Medical Center in Escondido and Tri-City Medical Center in Oceanside, returned to hospital ministry in November of last year. A native of the Philippines, he had previously served as a hospital chaplain from 2015 to 2018, before accepting an assignment as a parish pastor in the interim.

Father Smith, who goes by "Father John," the religious name he received during his 20 years as a Benedictine monk, also has seen his hospital rounds curtailed. He's been left waiting to receive calls about dying patients.

He spoke about the precautions that he takes when visiting the hospitals.

"I always have three masks," he said, explaining that he wears a surgical mask covered by both an N95 mask and a cloth facial covering.

In his car, he also keeps a jacket



**COLLABORATOR:** Father Adnan Ghani coordinates closely with the Alvarado Hospital medical staff to be able to serve patients under highly restricted conditions.



# Suffering in My Entire Life'

and a pair of shoes specifically for use in the hospital, removing them and spraying his shoes with disinfectant before returning to his car.

In addition to ministering to patients through glass doors of hospital rooms, Father John has utilized technology. At the recommendation of nurses, he has met with hospitalized COVID patients from his own rectory thanks to the FaceTime app.

Father Lawrence Agi said that the COVID-19 pandemic has "absolutely" been the most trying time in his 23 years as a priest and 15 years as a hospital chaplain. Father Agi, who is from Nigeria, serves as the manager of Spiritual Care Services at Scripps Mercy Hospital's Hillcrest and Chula Vista locations.

"I've never seen such human suffering [in] my entire life," said Father Agi, who explained that neither his seminary formation nor hospital drills for situations with mass casualties had prepared him for the unprecedented nature of the pandemic.

He jumped at the opportunity to do "tele-chaplaincy" to minister to patients using the phone or a computer. When patients were unable to receive visits from family members, he said, chaplains also connected them through video chats.

## 'It just does not happen'

Father Ghani shared that ministering to patients from outside of their rooms feels "kind of virtual, though I am present at the hospital."

Were it not for the pandemic, he would be visiting even those patients who were not in danger of death. He would sit at patients' bedsides, unmasked and without social distancing, and perhaps even hold their hands.

He recalled a recent occasion when he was called to the Kaiser hospital for a severely ill 26-year-old COVID patient. He wanted to enter the patient's room, with the family at the bedside, to administer the sacrament of the anointing of the sick in the traditional manner. Were he to do so, the hospital staff told him, he would be considered exposed to the virus and would have to leave the hospital immediately, not even being able to pray with the patient's other family members in the waiting room before his departure.

"Even when you would wish to go in and would like to do those things, it just doesn't happen, because the staff says it's better for the safety of all," said the priest, who ultimately blessed the patient through the glass divider.

The 26-year-old patient died within an hour of Father Ghani's departure.

Father Agi recalls the period after Thanksgiving through the holiday season as the worst of the pandemic because of an escalating number



**INTENSE TEST:** Father Lawrence Agi says the pandemic has been the most trying time in his 23 years as a priest. He manages Spiritual Care Services at the Scripps Mercy Hospital in Hillcrest (pictured) and Chula Vista.

of hospitalizations and deaths. The hospital opened up additional floors for COVID patients. Family members flooded his office with phone calls.

Before COVID, there might have been one or two deaths in a month, he said. During the worst of the pandemic, he said, there were perhaps 10 deaths a week and times when as many as four or five people would die in a day.

Father Agi said that, since last May, chaplains have compiled a list of the patients who have died of COVID and have been offering Masses for them in the chapel at Scripps Mercy Hospital in Hillcrest. The list only includes patients from the Hillcrest location. When he looked at the list on March 18, he said, it included 95 names.

Fortunately, Father Agi said, hospitalizations and deaths linked to COVID-19 have "significantly dropped" since the holiday season.

Recounting a recent visit to Scripps Mercy Chula Vista in February, he said, "It was breathtaking to see empty beds in ICU."

In a March 3 interview, Father Joe cautioned that we're "not anywhere near through this [pandemic] yet." But he expressed relief that things had "calmed way down" in the preceding three weeks, and said he had not received a single call from the hospitals about a COVID patient in need of a priest.

The chaplains interviewed said the experience of ministering during a



**TEAMWORK:** Chaplains have to work closely with hospital staff members to be able to bring some spiritual support to severely ill patients.

pandemic has changed them.

Father Ghani said it taught him that there is no certainty about the future and, rather than worrying about it, he should focus on the present.

Father Agi's perspective also changed.

"Life is very fragile," he said. "We can have it today; now it's gone. And so, it kind of deepened my understanding of humanity and how we can support each other."

Father Joe reports that his faith has been strengthened by the experience and, despite the volume of death and

dying he has witnessed, there have been happy endings, too.

"People who I didn't think would be alive by the time I got back down to my car, through the grace of God, have miraculously pulled through" after days or weeks on a ventilator, said the priest, who has spoken with patients who have beaten COVID.

"They have this second chance," he said, and realize "that they had been in the midst of death – all around them, people dying – and, for whatever reason, they've survived."



# This Toastmasters Club Has Sainthood Purpose

By Denis Grasska



There's something different about the Toastmasters club

based at St. Mark Parish in San Marcos.

Saints Toastmasters, as the club is named, opens and closes its weekly meetings with prayer and, as the group's members work on their public speaking, the Catholic faith frequently finds its way into their speeches.

This isn't something that has happened by chance.

In its mission statement, the club declares: "We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills (with emphasis on our faith), resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth."

Mike Saunders, the club's president and a St. Mark's parishioner for almost two decades, joined Toastmasters about five years ago as a member of a different club and credits it with significantly improving his ability to communicate effectively. As he grew in confidence and competence, he saw value in helping fellow Catholics to become better communicators.

Saunders noted that there are "a lot of good stories out there," but not enough people want to "step up" and share them with others. He said a dearth of Catholics willing to deliver brief witness talks has made it difficult to organize retreats.

In March of 2020, Saunders approached St. Mark Parish with his vision for a parish-based Toastmasters club. Its first meeting was held in early June, with members gathering virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the meetings have continued to be held every Tuesday from 7 until about 8:10 p.m. via Zoom.

Saints Toastmasters is one of the more than 16,200 chartered clubs in 145 countries that are affiliated with Toastmasters International, a 96-year-old nonprofit organization that promotes the development of communication skills. The club has about 20 members, ranging in age from early 20s to early 90s, and membership is



**SAY THE WORD:** Alex Sofishchenko speaks at Saints Toastmasters' March 2 meeting, while Mike Saunders, as that week's "Grammarian," reminds him of the "word of the day."

not limited to St. Mark's parishioners.

Each week's meeting follows the same format, including two club members delivering five- to seven-minute prepared speeches; all members participating in an activity called "table topics," where they practice their impromptu speaking for 45 to 75 seconds each; and evaluations are given for how the speakers did that week.

Saunders described the evaluation portion as Toastmasters' "secret sauce," which enables members to improve as speakers.

At each meeting, individual members also serve in one of the following roles: "Ah Counter," who keeps a running tally of vocalized pauses and other space-fillers; "Timer," who rates the speakers on their adherence to time limits; and "Grammarian," who gives a

"word of the day" for everyone to use during "table topics" and notes good and bad turns of phrase.

There is a different theme each week. Although they are not required to be religious in nature, Saunders said they often are. Previous examples have included "Blessings All Around," "Having a Fruitful Lent" and "Holiness Is for Everyone."

Toastmasters piqued Yoli McGalliard's interest about 20 years ago when she was being trained as a lector. She recalled how one of the veteran lectors "would always rave about Toastmasters" and recommended joining a club.

At the time, McGalliard was busy with her career as a registered nurse and with raising a family with her husband. But she never forgot about

Toastmasters. When Saunders invited her and her husband to join his new club, she jumped at the opportunity. Her interest grew upon learning that the club was faith-based.

"I knew it would help me become a better communicator," both in her professional life as well as in her ministry as a lector, said McGalliard, 53, who has been a St. Mark's parishioner for about five years. "At the same time, it would give me ... an opportunity for fellowship and to speak with others that are like-minded when it comes to our faith."

Alex Sofishchenko, who is currently going through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process at St. Mary Parish in Escondido, is also a member of Saints Toastmasters.

Originally from Ukraine, the 24-year-old Sofishchenko speaks English as a third language. Thanks to the club, he is no longer as nervous or frustrated when making the frequent presentations that are a necessary part of his work as a software engineer.

The club is "not just about building our communication skills. It's also about being part of this wonderful family of people who care about each other," he said.

At times, when members have been unable to attend a meeting because of illness or a family situation, they have asked for prayers, Sofishchenko said, and fellow club members have honored those requests by praying together on their behalf.

He said the speeches given at the meetings, many of which involve spiritual matters, also inspire members to reflect on "how great God is, and how much we should love Him, and how much He loves us."

"We're not trying to impose our faith on anybody," he said, "but yet we try to show people that this is who we are, this is how wonderful it is to be in this Catholic community."

**Saints Toastmasters**  
meets every Tuesday at  
7 p.m. via Zoom. For  
more information, call  
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### What are the benefits?

The primary benefit to the donor is to avoidance of paying income taxes on the IRA distribution. Because the charity receiving the rollover does not have to pay taxes on the income, the charity receives 100% of the rollover amount to support its mission.

### Who is eligible?

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### An Ideal Charitable Gift

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### How to support your favorite Catholic organization

Submit a distribution request to your IRA custodian requesting that the funds be transferred directly to the Catholic Community Foundation of San Diego for benefit of the endowment fund that supports your chosen organization. If a check is issued, the check should be made payable to the Catholic Community Foundation of San Diego. *Please note that the money must be sent directly to the Foundation from your IRA account.*

### An ideal Estate Plan gift

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**JUBILARIAN:** Sister Madeline Fitzgerald, with Bishop Robert McElroy, participated in the 2017 San Diego Walk for Life.



Ten religious sisters in the Diocese of San Diego are celebrating significant anniversaries of consecrated life. This year's jubilarians include:

## 60 Years



**Sister Madeline Fitzgerald** was born in Ireland in 1941. She entered the Sisters of St. Clare, professing first vows in 1961, and came to the U.S. in 1966. Formerly a Catholic school teacher, her current work includes jail ministry, RCIA, and serving as a member of the Clergy Caucus in collaboration with the San Diego Organizing Project. Now 80 years old, she said, "I hope to keep going as long as my health and my obedience allows. I will retire in heaven."



**Sister Fay Hagen**, who entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1960 and professed final vows in 1968, has ministered in Catholic education at several schools, including at St. Augustine High School and St. Therese Academy in San Diego. She later worked with Father Joe's Villages, helping to establish a facility for homeless individuals with AIDS.



**Sister LaVern Olberding** was a farm girl before joining the Clinton Iowa Franciscans. Her great aunt and three cousins were already longtime members. In addition to teaching, she has served as a pastoral associate at halfway houses for the formerly incarcerated. In 2012, she co-founded the Franciscan Peace Connection in La Mesa. "I am grateful for my family and the communities who continue to give me roots and wings," she said.



**Sister Rosanne Leonore McGrath**, born in Illinois and raised in Los Angeles, entered the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame on Sept. 8, 1961, and made her first vows in 1964 and perpetual vows in 1969. She served for seven years in Imperial Beach at St. Charles Parish. At age 60, she enrolled in Healing Hands School of Holistic Health and is now a full-fledged holistic health practitioner/massage therapist. She serves at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego, visiting with patients and their families.



**PATHBREAKER:** Sister M. Ancy Kollikolavil joyously led the construction of a new convent for the Missionaries of Charity in 2016 in the Southcrest neighborhood of San Diego.



**Sister Hilda A. Barrera** joined the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in 1959, making her first vows in 1961 and final vows in 1964. "I treasure and eternally thank God for my call," she said. Her first assignment was as a teacher at Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy in Calexico. She has exclusively ministered in California, including as a teacher at St. Mary's School, El Centro, and at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, San Ysidro, where she currently assists on the playground during lunch and recess.

## 50 Years



**Sister Olivete Brandão** is a member of the international Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Charity. A native of Brazil, she has served since 2011 at St. Therese Parish in San Diego, where she is engaged in faith formation and parish ministry. She is also superior of her local community, provincial councilor, and the vocation director for the Holy Family Province of her congregation. Over the past 50 years, she has strived at "making God's love visible in the world."



Born in Chicago, **Sister Patricia Weldon** entered the congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa, after earning her bachelor's degree at Mary Crest College in Iowa. "My greatest gift in life is being Franciscan," she said. She has spent most of her religious life in the San Diego Diocese, where she taught and later became principal of St. Kieran School in El Cajon and St. Michael Academy in Paradise Hills. She has also served with Catholic Charities and the Center for Immigrants in San Diego County.



**Sister M. Ancy Kollikolavil**, a native of India, joined the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta in 1969 and made her first vows in December 1971. During her first nine years in India, she worked closely with Mother Teresa. After professing final vows in December 1977, she was sent to New York. She came to San Diego in 2015 as regional superior of the West Coast Province, which includes Los Angeles, Cuba, Nicaragua and Tijuana.

## 40 Years



**Sister M. Angelica Li Tam** was born in Peru to Chinese parents, and immigrated to New York as a teenager. She has been a member of the contemplative branch of the Missionaries of Charity since 2013. Previously, she had been a member of the active branch since 1978. She made first vows in Rome in May 1981. She served in several countries before becoming a contemplative. Her work has included ministry to the elderly, orphans and AIDS patients, as well as street ministry and religious education. She came to San Diego in 2019.

## 25 Years



Born in Puerto Rico, **Sister M. Carmelita Carrillo Pérez** is a member of the contemplative branch of the Missionaries of Charity. She joined the order in 1992 in the Bronx, N.Y., and made her first vows in May 1996 and final vows in 2002. She has served in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Nicaragua. In the latter, her ministry at one time included visiting poor families on the mountainside and teaching prayers to their children. She has been in San Diego since 2012. Her apostolate has included prison ministry, where she played her guitar and sang with the young men to lift their spirits.

Please find an extended version of this story at:  
[thesoutherncross.org/042114](https://thesoutherncross.org/042114)





# Prayers for 13 Who Perished in Border Crash

By Roman Flores



**HOLTVILLE** – Catholic clergy have led the prayers at makeshift memorials for the departed souls of the 13 Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants who died in a horrific collision on March 2, one of the deadliest border crashes on record.

Authorities suspect the crash, which left 12 passengers gravely injured, occurred after an overfilled SUV ran a stop sign and was struck by a 2-trailer semi-truck. It occurred at the intersection of Highway 115 and Norrish Road, about 4 miles away from Holtville, east of El Centro.

All 25 in the SUV are suspected of having crossed the border illegally about 30 miles east of Holtville, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

A makeshift memorial with wooden crosses, decorated signs, flowers, and Catholic saint candles popped up at the accident site.

Father Edward Horning, pastor of the Catholic Communities of Brawley & Westmorland, led a memorial service for the victims two days after the crash. He presided over a short liturgy of commendation for the deceased at Potter's Field, a graveyard in Holtville where unidentified migrants are buried, then at the crash site.



**REMEMBRANCE:** Deacon Marcos Lopez led a prayer service at a makeshift memorial beside Highway 115 in the Imperial Valley, where 13 migrants died in a crash on March 2.

"The accident is a terrible tragedy," Father Horning said. "We lift up in prayer those who have died, pray for the families, and feel the urgency to move our country towards a just and humane immigration reform."

He has shared news about the crash on Facebook @EdwardHorning, which has carried prayer services live.

Deacon Marcos Lopez, of St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church in Brawley, visited the site on March 7 after Sunday Mass and said "it was like a special day of mourning."

On March 10, a small caravan of San Diego-based activists traveled

from Chicano Park in Barrio Logan to the crash site to join mourners from the valley, including Deacon Lopez and other deacons, for a Liturgy of the Word service. The activists were from Gente Unida, a nonprofit organization dedicated to humane immigration reform.

"I feel the pain for these people," Deacon Lopez said at the service. "Until the end of my time in this life, I will pray for them every day."

"We really do need prayer, especially for these souls to make it home to God in His heavenly kingdom," he said.

The activists from Gente Unida held

another event at the site on March 17.

The founder of Gente Unida is a longtime border activist, Enrique Morones, who was a classmate of Father Horning at St. Augustine High School.

"We have got to remember – whether we're in the Imperial Valley or wherever we're at – that this type of situation is happening all over the world," Morones said.

"Every life is important," he continued, "so we wanted to honor these people ... and remember that they're human beings that simply wanted to have a better life."

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**S O C I A L**





# New Film Is Compact Biblical Epic

By Mark Pattison



WASHINGTON – The new biblical epic “Resurrection” is the

kind of movie where “families can get together” to watch it, said one of its producers, Roma Downey, still best known for her on-camera role in the television series “Touched by an Angel.”

Families indeed have that chance, as “Resurrection” has been streaming since March 27 on the Discovery+ subscription service.

Downey said she can remember as a child gathering around the “telly” to watch movies on Easter like “The Ten Commandments” and “The Greatest Story Ever Told.”

“Resurrection,” at one hour and 35 minutes, is fairly compact for a biblical epic. In fact, you could watch it three times in the time ABC allotted for its Holy Saturday screening of “The Ten Commandments” April 3.

“We’ve been able to condense the story and I don’t think we’ve lost any of the emotional punch it delivers. It comes together so beautifully,” Downey told *Catholic News Service* during a March 16 phone interview from California.

Reprising his portrayal of Jesus is Juan Pablo Di Pace. He had played Christ in “A.D.: The Bible Continues,” which also was produced by Downey and her husband, reality-show



‘JESUS’: Juan Pablo Di Pace stars as Jesus in a scene from the feature-length film “Resurrection,” streaming on Discovery+ starting March 27.

producer Mark Burnett. Other actors of note in the cast include Greta Scacchi as Jesus’ mother and Joanne Whalley as Claudia, the wife of Pilate. Whalley also played Priscilla in the 2018 biblical film “Paul, Apostle of Christ,” starring Jim Caviezel and Olivier Martinez.

While Scripture is seen as timeless, some of the dialogue in “Resurrection” may resonate with many viewers after a year of upheaval in medical, political and societal circles.

“We’re all needing some sort of resurrection in our own lives right now. We’ve all been in our tombs, we’ve all been isolated in our own ways by this pandemic,” Downey said.

“I think the film can be seen through piercing hearts and the eyes that

have lived through this year. There’s a message of hope that this film can offer. And we need hope more than ever.”

Viewers also will be able to note a transition from biblical times to the present day, as a flood of images including those of Pope Francis, a kneeling woman in a church clutching a rosary and an aerial view of a large statue of Jesus fill the screen.

“We just started playing around with different ideas of how to end the film – bring the story up close and personal for people,” Downey said. The montage, she added, serves as “an amazing reminder that just from a handful of disciples we are now over 2 billion Christians in the world.”

*Catholic News Service*

## JPCatholic Announces Film Program

John Paul the Great Catholic University, also known as JPCatholic, has announced the creation of a Feature Film Program, which will provide students with the opportunity to collaborate with alumni and professors each year to bring a new feature film to life.

The program will enable students to earn multiple Internet Movie Database (IMDB) credits, beginning as production assistants and working their way up to key leadership roles as seniors.

The annual productions will take place over six quarters, beginning in spring and reaching an initial cut by the end of the following summer. The first project will be entering development in spring 2021 and production in June 2022.

The university has committed an annual budget to the Feature Film Program, and students may seek out additional funding to increase their film budget. Each project will be crewed primarily by JPCatholic faculty, students and alumni, with production taking place in the San Diego area.

Over the coming months, students and alumni are invited to develop their story ideas, leading up to a pitching event on-campus this May. A single project will be greenlit by next January.

For more information, visit [jpcatholic.edu/go/feature](http://jpcatholic.edu/go/feature).



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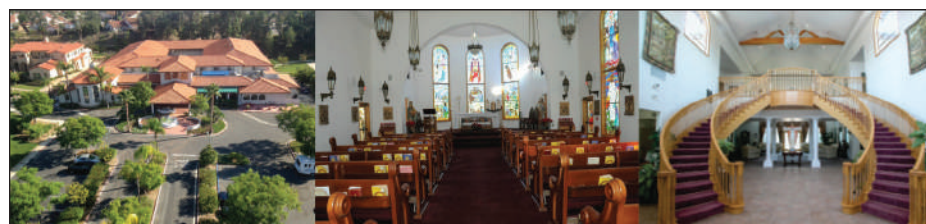
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# Book Shares 'Basic Stuff' to Engage Hearts

By Denis Grasska



As host of the popular radio program "Catholic Answers Live," Cy Kellett is on the air every weekday afternoon, helping callers with questions about the Catholic faith.

During his four years with the show, Kellett has realized that many people are "innocently ignorant of almost everything Christian" because they have grown up in secular homes and attended secular schools.

He said that many don't even know "very basic stuff," like how long ago Jesus lived.

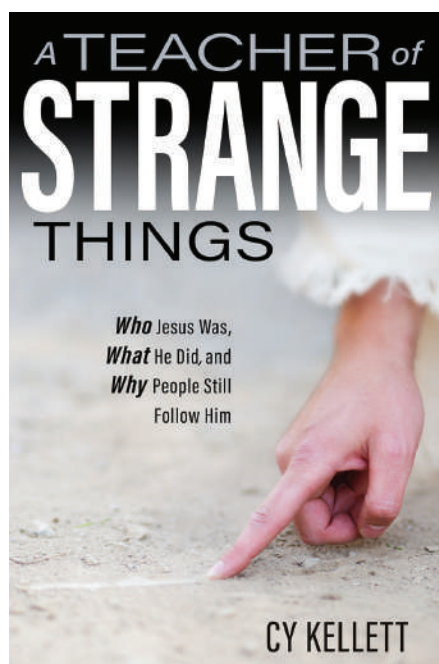
With his new book, *A Teacher of Strange Things: Who Jesus Was, What He Did, and Why People Still Follow Him*, Kellett goes back to basics.

"It's not high theology; it's written in very simple terms," he said of the book, which was published by Catholic Answers Press and will be available in late April. "The idea is, when you get done with it, you have a picture of who Jesus was and what He did."

*A Teacher of Strange Things* is divided into three sections: "Who Jesus Was," "What He Did," and "Why People Still Follow Him."

In the first and longest section, "Who Jesus Was," Kellett attempts to situate Jesus and His ministry within the historical period, geographical location, and society in which He lived. Noting that all of the biographical information we have about Jesus was written down by people who were convinced of His divinity, he then explains why the details of Jesus' life cannot be considered independently from that central claim.

Through a series of six chapters devoted to individual "moments" in Jesus' life, including the Finding in the Temple and the Calling of St.



Matthew, Kellett also reflects on what these stories can tell us about Jesus' personality, giving readers a sense of what He was like as a person and what it would have been like to talk to Him or listen to Him.

The second section, "What He Did," looks at what Jesus taught about morality and religion, as well as the meaning of His death on the cross.

In the final section, "Why People Still Follow Him," Kellett explains "what it's like to be a follower of Jesus."

Kellett is an impassioned proponent of radio, which he describes as "a wonderful medium."

"The best way to share the Gospel is talking with somebody. ... That's the way Jesus did it," he said.

But he also acknowledges that one of radio's limitations is that on-air explanations can't be as comprehensive as one might like. That's where books have an advantage.

Kellett is no stranger to the written word. He was on the staff of *The Southern Cross* from 1996 through 2007, serving for 10 years as its editor.



**STRANGER THAN FICTION:** Cy Kellett, host of the radio program "Catholic Answers Live," is author of the new book *A Teacher of Strange Things*.

In 2013, he published *Ad Limina: A Novella of Catholics in Space*, a futuristic tale about the first native-born bishop of Mars making his way to the Vatican. The book, which was Kellett's first, offered moral insights under the guise of science-fiction.

Kellett said he wrote *A Teacher of Strange Things* primarily for people like himself, Catholic parents with children in their 20s "who either have rejected the faith, or are not sure about the faith, or [are] just wandering around not practicing the faith." He envisions the book as something that such parents can give to their children.

Among his children's friends, Kellett sees young adults who appear to be "stumbling through life," lacking a strong connection to God or an understanding of what it truly means to be human.

"My absolute dream is that somebody, somewhere in that situation, will sit down with this book and, at the end of it, will go 'Ah, I know the direction to go. I need to be closer to Jesus.'"

*A Teacher of Strange Things* is currently available for pre-order at both [shop.catholic.com](http://shop.catholic.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).





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# Memory

IN LOVING

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Rev. Msgr. Jeremiah O'Sullivan	01/05/2021	Sacred Heart Church in Coronado
Elena Salcido Ypina	01/06/2021	Goodbody Mortuary
Ricardo De Casas Jr.	01/07/2021	St. Anne Catholic Church
David D Dowling	01/08/2021	Goodbody Mortuary
Mary Jane Barrack	01/14/2021	Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá
Diane Murray Soto	01/15/2021	Goodbody Mortuary
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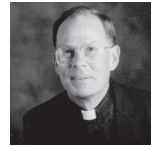
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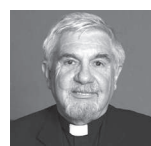
## Obituaries

### Father James Flynn, SJ



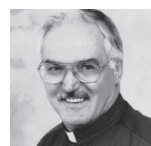
Jesuit Father James Flynn, who served at San Diego's St. Francis de Sales Seminary in the 1990s, died March 5. He was 78. Born in Los Angeles, he was ordained to the priesthood on June 15, 1973, for the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. In the Diocese of San Diego, he served for a year as both director of spiritual formation at St. Francis Seminary and as diocesan director of priestly spirituality, beginning in July 1996. He left the diocese in July 1997. Funeral arrangements are pending.

### Father John Howard, CJM



Father John Howard, a member of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary who ministered for over 40 years in the Diocese of San Diego, died Feb. 23. He was 80. Born in Quebec, Canada, Father Howard was ordained in 1967 for the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, also known as the Eudists. He arrived in the San Diego Diocese in 1976 and served as associate pastor and then pastor of St. James Parish in Solana Beach until his retirement in 2017. A funeral Mass for Father Howard was celebrated March 27 at St. James Parish.

### Father A. Ben Bachmeier



Father A. Ben Bachmeier, a retired priest of the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota, who ministered in the Diocese of San Diego, died Feb. 15 at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego. He was 82. Father Bachmeier was ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 1968. He came to San Diego in 1992, serving as a chaplain at Mercy Hospital until his retirement in 2004. Father Bachmeier remained in the San Diego Diocese, where he served as a supply priest at several parishes. He was to be buried in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

## News Briefs

### Two Local Pastors to Retire

The Office of the Bishop has announced that the pastors of two parishes in the Diocese of San Diego will be retiring on June 30.

Father Jerry O'Donnell, who has served in the diocese since his ordination in 1972, will retire after 15 years as pastor of All Hallows Parish in La Jolla.

Father Peter Bosque, who began his service in the diocese on July 1, 2014, will retire as pastor of St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro.

### Bishop to Lead Online Holy Saturday Retreat

Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan will lead an hour-long retreat on Holy Saturday via Zoom. The theme will be "A Walk in the Garden" and will include reflection on the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden of the Empty Tomb, and the Garden of Eternal Life, using the paintings of early Renaissance artist Blessed Fra Angelico.

The retreat will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Saturday, April 3.

Register at <http://christ-ion.com>.

### Hope Available for Troubled Marriages

Retrouvaille SoCal/San Diego will host a virtual version of its weekend program to help struggling couples to restore their marriages on April 8-11.

An offshoot of Marriage Encounter, Retrouvaille was founded in Canada in 1977 to heal marriages so damaged that they needed more than basic marriage-enrichment. Since then, it has spread internationally.

Retrouvaille is a three-part program that begins with a weekend experience led by a presenting team of three married couples, all of whom are Retrouvaille alumni, and

a Catholic priest. After the weekend, participants attend a series of six follow-up sessions and then join an ongoing alumni community.

During the weekend, presenters share their personal stories and equip the struggling couples with tools to communicate better with one another.

The registration fee for the Retrouvaille weekend is \$175 per couple.

For more information, visit [www.helpourmarriage-sandiego.org](http://www.helpourmarriage-sandiego.org), call (951) 259-9474, or email [6016@retrouvaille.org](mailto:6016@retrouvaille.org).

### Catholics Invited to 'Encounter' Jesus

"Encounter," a Spirit-filled evening of inspiring music, powerful prayer and Eucharistic adoration, is held monthly at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

The next installments will be held from 7 to 8 p.m., Thursdays, April 8 and May 13.

Those interested may attend in-person or watch it live on the parish's YouTube channel.

For more information, visit [www.olmcsandiego.org](http://www.olmcsandiego.org).


### Marriage Encounter Hosting Virtual Weekends

Catholic couples who would like to transform their good marriages into great ones are in luck.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter, the world's largest faith-based marriage-enrichment organization, is offering two virtual weekend retreats – April 9-11 and June 25-27 – for San Diego couples.

For more information, visit [www.wvme-sandiego.org](http://www.wvme-sandiego.org) or call (760) 659-9102.

News Briefs continued on Page 19



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## News Briefs

### Bilingual Mass for Earth Week

Bishop Robert McElroy will celebrate a bilingual Mass in honor of Earth Week.

The liturgy, which can be attended in-person or watched via livestream, will be celebrated at 2 p.m., Saturday, April 17, inside St. James Church in Solana Beach.

More information is available at [sdcatholic.org/2021EarthDayMass](http://sdcatholic.org/2021EarthDayMass). Contact Father Emmet Farrell at [Efarrell@sdcatholic.org](mailto:Efarrell@sdcatholic.org) or (619) 419-8345.

### Teen Dating Workshop

"Dating in Today's Digital World: Pitfalls for Teens & Parents," a free workshop originally scheduled for Feb. 24, has been postponed to April 21.

The workshop will address such topics as healthy relationships, digital dangers, teen dating violence, and how to access help and resources. It is sponsored by Ascension Parish's Safe Place Faith Community Outreach Team, a domestic violence outreach.

The event will take place from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 21, at Ascension Parish, 11292 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., San Diego 92124.

Free palm cards and pins will be available for all participants. The event will be held outside, weather permitting; masks and social distancing practices will be observed.

Attendance is limited to 200. RSVP by April 12 to Angela Elfman at [Angela.elfman@san.rr.com](mailto:Angela.elfman@san.rr.com) or (858) 775-4828.



**2018 PENTECOST:** The diocese brought together cultural communities for a multicultural celebration.

### 'Pentecost for All People' May 22

All of the diocese's faithful are invited to the fourth annual "Pentecost for All People" celebration, to be held on May 22 at Good Shepherd Parish.

The event includes an outdoor Mass at 11 a.m. to be celebrated by Bishop Robert McElroy, accompanied by Auxiliary Bishops John Dolan and Ramón Bejarano, and the diocese's clergy.

It's the largest diocesan event that brings together its cultural Catholic communities and parishes for a feast of languages, cultures and traditions.

"This Pentecost celebration is where all people of faith can come together as part of one family, as God intended us to be," said Vicar General Father Michael Pham, who directs the Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities, which organizes the event.

"This unity is more important than ever in these divided times."

More than 2,000 people attended this event in 2019. Last year, however, COVID-19 restrictions prompted the diocese to share the Pentecost Mass over the Zoom video application.

This year, the diocese's cultural communities will participate once more, sharing their faith traditions. They include African American, Hispanic, Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese, Pacific Islander, Italian, German, among many others.

The Mass also will be livestreamed through [sdcatholic.org/Pentecost2021](http://sdcatholic.org/Pentecost2021), where more information is available.

### Mass to Pray For Asians on April 15

San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy invites all faithful to a special Mass on April 15 to pray with and for the Asian and Pacific Islander community at a time its members are enduring harassment and attacks across the country.

The Mass will be held on the eve of the one-month anniversary of the shootings in Atlanta that left eight people dead, including six Asian American women. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been a spike in anti-Asian assaults that have shaken members of that community.

One organization, Stop AAPI Hate, said it received more than 2,800 first-hand reports of verbal and physical assaults against Asians from March 19 and Dec. 31 of last year, according to *National Public Radio*.

The diocese's evening Mass will be held at Good Shepherd Parish, 8200 Gold Coast Drive, in Mira Mesa, and also will be livestreamed at [sdcatholic.org/asiansolidarity](http://sdcatholic.org/asiansolidarity).

More information is available at [adiaz@sdcatholic.org](mailto:adiaz@sdcatholic.org) or at (858) 490-8306.



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## Dear Friends and Family of Catholic Charities,

The centennial year for Catholic Charities was not what we expected.

In place of a celebration came the most painful and prolonged reminder of why our programs and services are so crucial to communities across San Diego and Imperial counties.

There were no galas. No gatherings. Not even a moment spared to reflect or to take a break. 100 years later, almost to the date, the coronavirus pandemic forced us to revisit the very roots and reasons why we began. Let me explain.

At the height of the Spanish flu in 1919, also known as the influenza pandemic, Catholic Charities was created in San Diego to care for the survivors impacted, from the elderly, to the homeless, to the orphans. In 2020, we found ourselves not so much reflecting 100 years later, but rather, reliving 100 years earlier. And, once again, the trauma and suffering were met with courage, sacrifice, selflessness, dedication, and collaboration.

A year ago, in March 2020, I made one of the most difficult decisions in my life; and it was to commission Catholic Charities to remain fully open and operational across all offices and facilities. There was fear. There was danger. But above all, our calling was clear. Hope began to overshadow the fear and distress however, there was strong belief that through all the uncertainty, we, as an organization would bond together and make a difference. In the months that followed, our team and volunteers worked side by side, in person, round the clock, not only to uphold our existing services; but, accelerated and expanded our programs, new services were created and implemented that would help our neighbors around us who were, and are continuously struggling.

Our fellow neighbors were hit especially hard by the coronavirus pandemic; and, as people were losing their livelihoods and incomes, we foresaw its impact. But we were ready for the second wave of this disease, which was hunger. Catholic Charities Emergency Food Distribution Network Plus (EFDN+) delivered over 1,424,517 pounds of food, or 1,187,098 meals, with 1,227 volunteers contributing 22,448 hours to put food into the hands of the hungry.

**It was like someone came out of the woodwork and said, Hello, we re here to help,” said Billie, a homebound woman who had lost 40 pounds in 18 months from undernutrition. I didn t know anyone was out there. It was a miracle.**

Urey, a rideshare driver whose work evaporated, was living in her car with her newborn before we matched her with a temporary foster family and, later, pooled funds internally for an extended stay hotel. Soon, we were able to help her secure transitional housing.

**I didn t know there were organizations like Catholic Charities in existence, Urey said. They went above and beyond. Who would you even call in that situation otherwise?**

Bianca was battling food insecurity. Ivonne was recovering from an abusive relationship. Henry was running from the real life nightmare of losing his wife to cancer. The stories are many and all too real; I hope you will visit our website and read their stories and struggles. Like you and me, these are everyday people fighting horrific situations, but determined to change their fates. Read how we put our faith in action and understand on a human level why our work is truly essential.

Our staff has been pushed to their limits, working overtime, and making sacrifices to show our neighbors that we are here and willing to help. We recently had to bury one of our dedicated team members. Our cook for the senior nutrition program in the Valley passed away after 28 years of service. His family could not afford a service for him; and, although it was not a gathering, our team pitched in and made his burial possible because he is a part of our family. We continue to feed the most vulnerable in honor of his service.

Most pressingly, Catholic Charities needs your support now to continue to serve our neighbors. The pandemic is slowly subsiding, but the need as I see it with my own eyes, and from what I hear from our team, is more widespread than ever. We are not stopping or slowing down; nor, will we ever return to the normal we once knew. Just like 100 years ago, Catholic Charities mission is etched in history, with strength and hope ~ join us as we say in our campaign motto **You and Me** together, for the future ...

Give today using the pre paid envelope included or by visiting [ccdsd.org/giving](https://ccdsd.org/giving).

I pray that our good Lord keep you, your loved ones, our country, and world safe.



Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor  
Chief Executive Officer



Be the

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