Newly ordained Father Daniel Holgren is applauded by his fellow priests of the Diocese of San Diego after his ordination June 11 at St. Michael’s Parish in Poway.

Joyous Calling

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Priestly Formation Program

Diocese of San Diego • 2021-2022

Receive the sacrifice of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross.
Priests, Religious Women Rise to Challenges

The priests and religious women and men serving across the Diocese of San Diego have continued to plant the seeds of God’s love across the region, even as the coronavirus upended every facet of life in the last 20 months.

The U.S. Catholic Church observes National Vocation Awareness Week, Nov. 7 to 13, to foster an appreciation for all vocations and pray specifically for those discerning a vocation to ordained ministry and consecrated life.

Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged priests and religious men and women to find a way to continue to serve amid lockdowns and restrictions. They responded with creativity, compassion and a calming hand, even as they confronted their own fears and risked their own lives.

“I’ve never seen such human suffering in my entire life,” said Father Lawrence Agi, a chaplain for 15 years for all vocations and pray specifically for those discerning a vocation to ordained ministry and consecrated life.

Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged priests and religious men and women to find a way to continue to serve amid lockdowns and restrictions. They responded with creativity, compassion and a calming hand, even as they confronted their own fears and risked their own lives.

“One of the most difficult challenges has been keeping the RCIA candidates who work at Scripps Mercy Hospitals in Hillcrest and Chula Vista.

Sister Madeline Fitzgerald, OSC, from the congregation of Sisters of St. Clare, reached out to RCIA candidates from St. Francis of Assisi Parish via Skype, text, email and Zoom video-conferencing. She was committed to finding a way to keep their spiritual growth going despite the restrictions.

Father Agi and Sister Fitzgerald are among 200 priests and 228 religious sisters and brothers who serve in the San Diego Diocese. The priests include those of the diocese itself, from other dioceses and from religious orders, and the religious men and women include those based locally and those whose communities are based elsewhere.

This supplement highlights the contributions of a few of the religious orders that contribute to the diocese. Their members work tirelessly at parishes, schools, universities, religious organizations, prisons and jails, college campuses, nursing homes, and in other places where there is good soil to plant a seed of God’s love.

‘Shaping Wholesome Men, Not Just Holy Men’

The priests struggled to serve their communities amid the pandemic. As it gradually eases, they are gathering once more indoors, as they did on Oct. 17 for a special Mass at the Pastoral Center.

The diocese’s priests and sisters are busy planting the seeds of God’s love across the region. In four areas: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Applicants complete a comprehensive process that includes attending monthly Masses and breakfasts; meetings with the directors of the program; a psychological assessment; and a criminal background check.

The program’s participants attend the seminar housed at the Franciscan School of Theology instead of one out of town, as was the case previously.

“They will be well-prepared to tackle the challenges of the priesthood right here,” said Father Lauro Minimo, director of Priestly Vocations.

Kyle Schanzenbach, 30, is in his fourth year of the program. He initially phoned Father Minimo to find out about the priestly formation program. Within minutes, Father Minimo was contacting him. He is impressed that its directors focus on forming a person who is healthy in all aspects, not just the spiritual one.

“They have a strong focus on shaping wholesome men, not just holy men.”

His recommendation for any man considering the priesthood? Go to Explorer Day or contact Father Minimo.

“It’s completely worthwhile.”

Diocese’s Priestly Vocations Program: Father Lauro Minimo, (619) 291-7446, lminimo@sdcatholic.net; web: sdcatholic.org/vocations

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Franciscans Are Part of San Diego’s History

OFM

A Franciscan friar, St. Junípero Serra, founded Mission San Diego de Alcalá in 1769, one of nine he established in California, bringing Catholicism to that vast region.

Today, Franciscans serve in 100 countries. They have a significant presence in the San Diego Diocese, with congregations of friars and sisters serving in parishes and ministries.

The order was founded by St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th century, after he abandoned a life of wealth to preach the Gospel and serve the poor. His writings have had a major influence in the Church, most recently playing a foundational role in the work of Pope Francis.

“St. Francis had great focus and love for the marginalized. He found meaning and joy in difficult work. We have a call to continue that,” said Father Garrett Galvin, OFM, a regional leader in the Order of Friars Minor, one of three Franciscan orders in the Catholic Church, and the director of the Franciscan School of Theology.

A total of 15 Franciscan friars serve in the San Diego Diocese, in communities at Mission San Luis Rey, where the order has been present since 1885, and in central San Diego. Three friars serve the mission parish, including its pastor, Father Oscar Mendez, OFM, while others serve in the cemetery and retreat house.

At Immaculate Conception Church in Old Town, Father Galvin serves as the parish administrator and Father Vincent Mesi, OFM, as the sacramental and spiritual leader.

A total of 11 Franciscan sisters serve in the diocese, including Sister Kathleen Warren, OSF, who directs its Office for Women Religious. Nine are from congregations in the United States and Mexico and two are Sisters of St. Clare, also part of the Franciscan family.

School Forms Tomorrow’s Ministry Leaders

“Mission” is core to the identity of the Franciscan School of Theology.

The school “finds inspiration in the missionary zeal and educational heritage of St. Junípero Serra, who founded the first Franciscan mission” in San Diego, according to its website.

The school’s roots date back to 1854, when its precursor opened at Mission Santa Barbara. And more recently, the school was housed at Mission San Luis Rey. These days, it’s located at the University of San Diego, where it moved in 2019.

The FST is both a theology school and a seminary, which is used by the Diocese of San Diego for the intellectual formation of its seminarians. Other religious orders, like the Franciscans, also send their men there for this education.

The school offers a variety of graduate-level degrees, all grounded in Franciscan theology. Its mission is to prepare men and women for professional ministry in the Church, for career in religious education, “and for living a life dedicated to solidarity with those on the margins of society,” according to the website.

The degrees include a Master in Theological Studies, a Master in Arts, and a Master of Divinity, which has a lay track and one for seminarians.

The school’s director, Father Garrett Galvin, OFM, said that though the school has a service and a curricular affiliation with USD, it is completely independent, with its own enrollment, accreditation and fundraising.

The affiliation allows FST students to take courses that USD offers, such as nonprofit management and counseling, useful today in ministry work, he said.

Father Galvin said that the school was able to tap USD’s expertise with online learning to be able to develop a completely online degree that started in September, the Master in Theological Studies: Franciscan Theology.

“This degree is the result of a great partnership between USD and the FST,” he said. “We both contributed a lot to make this work.”

He said the online degree is perfect for those individuals who can’t attend traditional classes on campus for any number of reasons.

He added that the school is certified to teach the online degree in 33 states. In previous years, students from countries such as Korea, Vietnam and Mexico have studied at FST. The school also offers non-degree programs and continuing education courses.

Vocations Information: sbfranciscans.org/be-a-friar

Order of Friars Minor

Founded: 1209 in Italy
Active in the San Diego Diocese: 252 years
San Diego Leader: Father Garrett Galvin, OFM
Website: sbfranciscans.org
Phone: (510) 536-3722

Information about the Franciscan School of Theology is available online at fst.edu and by phone at (619) 374-7727.
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Nazareth School San Diego
Nazareth House San Diego

Sisters of Nazareth | vocations@sistersofnazareth.us | sistersofnazareth.com
The Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (SJS), founded in Mexico, have been present in the San Diego region for 94 years.

The congregation has 30 members serving the San Diego Diocese, from Calexico to El Cajon to San Ysidro, and points in between. Their dual ministries are the daily adoration of the Holy Eucharist and the religious education of children and youth.

The congregation was founded by Father Silviano Carrillo in Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco state, Mexico, in 1904. Today, its members serve not only across Mexico but in Guatemala, Peru, Chile, and the United States.

“Father Carrillo was a strong believer in education because that’s how people can get a better life,” said Sister Adriana Rebeca Zuro, SJS, superior for the Immaculate Conception Province, based in Bonita.

The congregation significantly contributes to San Diego Catholic schools, serving as principals, administrators and teachers.

The sisters first arrived in Calexico in 1927 and today they lead two schools there, Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy and Vincent Memorial Catholic High School. The congregation also administers Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in San Ysidro.

And it has a presence in El Cajon, where its Silviano Carrillo Center offers instruction in English and citizenship.

The community has three locations in Bonita: the provincial house, a formation house and a newly established retirement center.

The congregation offers an opportunity to explore religious life on Fridays, from 6 to 7 p.m., via Zoom, and in English and Spanish.

“We’re sister servants, devoted to the Eucharist,” said Sister Zuro. “Our service is to educate, to serve and to love.”
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Jesuits Are in a Class of Their Own

The Society of Jesus is the largest men's religious order in the world, with around 16,000 priests and brothers, many of whom work in education.

The Society was founded in the 16th century by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a soldier who had a profound religious transformation after being wounded and became a priest and theologian. The Jesuits became a leading force in modernizing the Church.

In the San Diego region, the Jesuits have served at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan for 81 years. Three minister the congregation, including Father Martin Silva, SJ, its pastor. A fourth serves as the principal of Our Lady's School. They are part of the 12-member Jesuit contingent who work within the diocese. They are led by Father Joaquin Martinez, SJ, president of Mater Dei Catholic High School.

Two Society members work in diocesan administration, Father Eduardo Samaniego, SJ, the director of the Office for the Permanent Diaconate, and Father Michael Ravenkamp, SJ, who works in the Tribunal.

“The central character of the Society is availability for mission, whatever we are asked to do, that is our mission,” Father Martinez explained. In 2019, the Society announced four new core preferences that would guide its mission for the next 10 years: to show the way to God through spiritual exercises; to journey with youth; to walk with the excluded; and to care for our common home. Pope Francis approved them. After all, he is the first Jesuit pope.

Order of St. Augustine to Mark 100 Years in San Diego

“The We’ve been in San Diego longer than San Diego’s been a diocese,” said Father Gary Sanders, OSA, provincial of the Province of St. Augustine in California. (The Diocese of San Diego wasn’t created until 1936.)

The Augustinians can trace their history back to the mid-13th century when various groups that were living according to the Rule of St. Augustine were united into a single community. The rule is an outline for communal living developed by St. Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century.

Today, there are about 2,800 Augustinians worldwide in almost 50 countries. The California province has more than 35 members, most of whom live in San Diego. With its members hailing from nine countries, Father Sanders said, the province is “a wonderful microcosm” of the world itself.

He likened his province’s membership to an hourglass: At the top are its elderly members; at the center is a smaller number of middle-aged Augustinians; and, at the bottom, are about as many younger members — priests, brothers and seminarians — as there are older members.

In the diocese, the Augustinians are closely associated with St. Augustine High School, an all-boys secondary school in North Park, which they founded in 1922. But they also have pastored neighboring St. Patrick Parish.

The California province has sponsored Casa Hogar La Gloria, an orphanage in Tijuana, since 1975. Meanwhile, the St. Augustine Foundation disburses about $1 million a year to charitable causes.

“Augsutine was a big promoter of spiritual friendship and community life,” said Father Sanders. “That sense of brotherhood is present in the way we live and, hopefully, the way we treat other people.”

The Order of St. Augustine

Founded: 1244 in Tuscany
Active in San Diego Region: 99 years
San Diego Leader: Father Gary Sanders, OSA
Website: californiaaugustinians.org
Phone: (619) 235-0247
Vocation Information: vocations@CalAugustine.org
The Sisters of Nazareth have a long history of caring for both young and old. That history began with Victoire Larmenier, then a novice with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Rennes, France. She was sent to London in 1851 as part of a small group of religious sisters, who were entrusted with starting a new foundation. The sisters opened the first Nazareth House in Hammersmith, England, in late 1857, where they served the elderly poor. By that time, they also had begun caring for poor and infirm children.

With the permission of the Holy See, the Hammersmith community separated from the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1861 and, three years later, was recognized as a new religious community called the Sisters of Nazareth. Larmenier, who would take the name Mother St. Basil, is remembered as its foundress and first superior general.

There are currently just over 200 Sisters of Nazareth worldwide. They minister to the elderly at Nazareth Houses, Catholic assisted living communities that welcome people of all faiths; there are 37 worldwide, including one in San Diego. They are also engaged in the education of children, as well as in caring for abandoned children in Africa.

In 2024, the Sisters of Nazareth will celebrate the 100th anniversary of their arrival in the United States. They first settled in San Diego, where they built and operated an orphanage at the site of Mission San Diego de Alcalá. In the mid-1970s, the orphanage transitioned into Nazareth School, a private Catholic elementary school.

Five Sisters of Nazareth are still in active ministry in the San Diego Diocese, with another three now retired and in assisted living at Nazareth House.

The Sisters of Nazareth’s Service Is Ageless

Joyous Encounter

The staff of Nazareth House in San Diego, including Sister Rose Hoye, center, celebrated the birthday of resident Mary Kapalla on June 14, 2021.

Members of the Women’s Religious Council in the San Diego Diocese attended a special Mass on Oct. 17 at the diocesan Pastoral Center to mark the beginning of a global consultation of Catholics. There are 187 vowed religious women from 34 congregations in the diocese. Three congregations work in the Imperial Valley—the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, and Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. In the photo, left to right, are Sister Vera Chan, CSN; Sister Mary O’Connor, RSM; Bishop Robert McElroy; Sister Guadalupe Vaklez, SSND; Sister Uchenna Ohuoba, RSCJ; Sister Katia Chávez, SS; and Sister Kathleen Warren, OSP. More information is available online at sdcatholic.org/office-for/women-religious and by phone at (858) 490-8289.
The Society of Divine Word (SVD) was founded 146 years ago by a German diocesan priest, St. Arnold Janssen, as a missionary order.

Today, its members are active in about 80 countries, with more than 6,000 missionaries across the globe. Within 20 years of the order’s founding, Divine Word Missionaries were already serving in the United States, including ministry among the African American population.

In 1923, the Society opened a seminary in Mississippi to form African American men as priests and brothers. The religious order later made history in 1966, when Father Harold R. Perry, SVD, was named the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, becoming the first known African American bishop. (A late 19th-century bishop was of mixed race but identified as white.)

The Society’s Western Province USA, which is headquartered in Riverside, Calif., and includes the Diocese of San Diego as well as five other dioceses, was established in 1964. It currently includes about 60 missionaries representing 19 nationalities.

The Society has had a consistent presence in the diocese for the past 14 years, said Father Soney Sebastian, SVD, who previously served as provincial for six years. Currently, nine Divine Word Missionaries reside within its boundaries.

Among them are the pastors of four local parishes — Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Blessed Sacrament, St. John the Evangelist (San Diego) and St. Kateri Tekakwitha — as well as a hospital chaplain and the director of the diocesan Office for the Missions, who is Father Sebastian.

“Our name is our mission,” Father Sebastian said of the Society. “We bring the Divine Word to others.”

Society of Divine Word Missionaries attended a Mass to honor St. Kateri Tekakwitha at Barona Shrine on July 23. On hand were Father Benjamin Le, SVD, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish; Father Yori Sodanango, SVD, Blessed Sacrament Parish; Father Herman Manuel, SVD, St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish; Father Raymundus Wen, SVD, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish; and Father Soney Sebastian, SVD, director of the diocesan Office for the Missions.

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In 1991, Mother Teresa of Calcutta visited the San Diego-Baja California region. A year later, she opened a home for four members of the order she had founded, the Missionaries of Charity. It was located in Southcrest, a neighborhood of dilapidated houses and apartments whose residents were struggling to live.

After all, the Missionaries’ focus is embracing the poor.

These days, the sisters no longer live in those first small bungalows. In March of 2017, they moved into an 8,000-foot convent custom-built for them by a Catholic philanthropist family.

Around 18 sisters live there. They are from the contemplative branch of the Missionaries, devoting much of their day to prayer. They also are active participants in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Jude Shrine of the West Parish, about a block away from their convent.

The Missionaries of Charity have a significant presence south of the border. They help the poor, single mothers, terminally ill patients and the homeless at locations in Tijuana and Rosarito Beach, the neediest populations St. Teresa of Calcutta aimed to reach and tenderly help.

They are part of an order with about 5,100 members serving in more than 130 countries. They include active and contemplative sisters and brothers; and fathers, a clerical religious community.

Mother Teresa was canonized on Sept. 4, 2016 by Pope Francis. “Her mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God’s closeness to the poorest of the poor,” he said at a ceremony. “Today, I pass on this emblematic figure of womanhood and of consecrated life to the whole world of volunteers: May she be your model of holiness!”

Missionaries of Charity

Founded: 1950 in India by St. Teresa of Calcutta
Active in the San Diego Region: 30 years
San Diego Leader: Sister Ancy Kollikolavil, MC
Website: motherteresa.org
Phone: (650) 355-3091
Vocation Information: Missionaries of Charity
1070 Union Avenue, Bronx, NY 10459

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